Magazine

Spring 2016

[Image of an embroidered tapestry with animals and text]
You will see a child of Strawberry prettier than the parent and so executed and so finished! — Horace Walpole

Lee Priory (circa 1780) designed by James Wyatt (1746 – 1813)

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Welcome

Welcome to the new William Morris Society Magazine. And welcome too to our new Editor, Susan Warlow.

The launch of a Magazine and the new visual identity for the Society are all part of our celebration of the Society's sixtieth anniversary. You will see the visual identity here, in the Journal (and welcome too to our new Journal Editor, Owen Holland), on our website, on our Twitter feed and other social media, and in our publications. It has been developed for us as a contribution to the Society in its anniversary year by leading design agency Pentagram, and the partner who led on the project, Angus Hyland, is interviewed in this edition.

Design was one of Morris's touchstones and the Society intends to make more of this valuable heritage bequeathed by Morris, in the future. This launch edition of the Magazine reflects this design-led approach. Our programme this year also reflects this emphasis, and includes a visit to David Mellor's cutlery factory at Hathersage outside Sheffield as part of our AGM on 21 May and our Kelmscott Lecturer this year, the ceramicist Edmund de Waal, on 13 September.

The Society is refocusing how it does things to engage a wider and younger audience. As well as the Magazine, which will appear three times a year in future in February, June and October, we now have a regular e-bulletin to keep members, supporters, and visitors to our Museum in touch with Morrisian developments as they happen. Sign up through our website, williammorrissociety.org.uk, if you are not already on the distribution list. We also have an active presence on Twitter and Facebook. From now on the Magazine will also appear in pdf form. This will enable us to remain in contact with our overseas members, especially in North America, without incurring crippling postage costs. UK members can receive the Magazine as a pdf too, as well as the US Newsletter (which will no longer be distributed in print form to UK members). Let us know if you would like to. The Journal will continue to be published twice yearly – in February and October – in paper form.

The Society's premises at Kelmscott House are undergoing some significant improvements and refurbishment as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund supported Arts and Crafts Hammersmith project during 2016. On completion they will enhance both the Society Museum and exhibition space and make the Society collection and archives accessible on line for the first time. There will be an exhibition celebrating the Society's sixty years during much of the year and members are warmly invited to come and visit it.

Finally, I want to thank all those who have put so much time and energy into developing and carrying through the Society's new visual identity, particularly the Chair of the Society's Communications Committee, Rebecca Estrada-Pintel, and Alice Woodhouse. I hope you enjoy the results.

Martin Stott, Chair, The William Morris Society

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Kathy Haslam writes on a significant acquisition for Kelmscott Manor

Michael Hall meets the Pentagram partner behind the Society's rebranding

David Saxby examines the working lives of the weavers trained by Morris & Co

Claire Longworth on the De Morgan Foundation and its current display at the Watts Gallery

Andrew Curry considers David Gentleman's Kelmscott Lecture
May Morris is as integral a part of Kelmscott Manor’s narrative as her father. She knew – and felt a deep attachment to – both the Manor and village almost all her life, and it is to May that we owe the survival of the Manor, a prism through which we can examine the inspirational qualities which the house, site and locality held for William Morris and the rich creative legacy both he and succeeding generations have made in response. It is fitting, then, that the Society of Antiquaries has recently acquired the Homestead and the Forest cot quilt, designed by May Morris and embroidered by her mother Jane. This significant acquisition, which will provide a new highlight for visitors to the Manor, and an imaginative entrée to the collections for our younger visitors, has been made possible through the generosity of individual donors, the Friends of Kelmscott Manor and grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

Designed for a child’s cot-bed, the quilt is embroidered with silk thread on a silk ground. At the centre of the design is a stylised representation of Kelmscott Manor standing amidst gardens and an orchard enlivened by domestic and farmyard animals and poultry; it is a vision of domesticity, order and productivity, harboured within the encircling Thames, which is in actuality a mere 250 metres from the Manor. Beyond, a miscellany of wild and exotic birds and beasts inhabit a flower-studded landscape, a nursery-style evocation of nature’s diversity. The quilt’s border incorporates twelve quotations and proverbs.

The quilt is an exceptional example of the collaborative work of May and Jane Morris: May, talented embroideress and designer, embroidery historian, and Director of Morris & Co’s embroidery department from 1885 to 1896; Jane, an outstanding embroideress well-practised in translating designs into finished embroideries. Her transcription of May’s design for the quilt is, in Linda Parry’s words, ‘a masterpiece in its application of technique using the minimum of stitches to retain May’s own drawing style.’ Research into the history and significance of this delightful object is ongoing but much has already been established, due in large part to the diligence of Jill Halliwell, a member of the Manor’s invaluable Volunteer Research Group.

The Morris & Co embroidery workshop ledger records the extensive repertoire of designs executed by May Morris between 1892 and 1896, which included a small number of cot quilts only one of which, an 1893 commission for a Mrs Whitley (for whom May created three variants of the design), is described as depicting animals. In 1889 May appears to have designed another quilt of similar, though apparently less complex design, described as incorporating a house and garden containing domestic birds and

Kathy Haslam writes on a significant acquisition for Kelmscott Manor, designed by May and worked by Jane Morris

The Homestead and the Forest cot quilt
animals, with an American eagle soaring above.\(^3\) The current whereabouts of this piece are
unknown, rendering a comparison impossible. However, it is evident that such subject matter
was rare within May's oeuvre.

In 1890 the 'Homestead & the Forest' quilt was
one of eight pieces designed by May Morris to be
exhibited at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition
Society's third exhibition, which was reviewed in the
Illustrated London News. The quilt was given
a particular mention praising both the
complexity and originality of its design: 'In a
glass case is arranged a cot quilt, designed by
Miss Morris and worked by Mrs Morris with a
goodly array of animals from the Noah's Ark
order of feature…bordered with…lines from
Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright by William Blake.
Perhaps of all the pieces contributed by the
Morris family this is one of the best and most
original.'\(^4\) Almost another hundred years went
by before it was displayed in public again, when
in 1989 it was included in the William Morris
Gallery's exhibition described as being 'amongst the most important
works featured.'\(^5\)

There is particular significance in the fact that
the design of this exceptional piece dates to 1889
or early 1890, the months preceding May's
marriage to Henry Halliday Sparling, and during
which she spent time at Kelmscott in
preparation for her new role, as her mother's
correspondence relates: 'May is away at
Kelmscott Manor alone learning cooking and
how to live on a few shillings a week.'\(^6\) Given that
this was a transitional time in her life, it is
pertinent to question whether the quilt's child-
like composition perhaps reflected a newly-
awakened maternal awareness.\(^7\) It is thought
probable that the Sparlings had a still-born
child,\(^8\) and although it is unlikely that we will
ever establish indisputably whether the quilt was
intended for May's own lost child, what we can
be certain of is that it held particular personal
significance for her, as a written account from
the 1920s demonstrates. In March 1925 Elfrida
Manning, daughter of the sculptor Hamo
Thornycroft, visited Kelmscott Manor and
recorded the occasion in her diary, providing a
highly-detailed and reliable account
subsequently published in the Journal of the
William Morris Studies. She describes taking tea
with May prior to giving an account of the pieces
of embroidery that May selected for her to see:
'Miss Morris showed us some coverlets…embroidered with silk…A charming
one for a child, with a little house, a river and
every kind of animal - foxes, ducks, a smiling
lion and a weak-kneed elephant, etc., and round
them was a border of mottoes: "First plough
your furrow, then God will send the seed",
"Better unborne [sic] than untaught", and an
Italian one, a German one and a Persian one…”\(^9\)
She was also shown a pair of bishops' gloves
embroidered by May to a design by Charles
Ricketts,\(^10\) and a coverlet embroidered with
plants which grew wild in the fields around
Kelmscott at that date. For May, living in a house
filled with gems from which to select items to
show her young guest, these were evidently
especially treasured possessions.

There is much still to establish about the
sources used by May in designing the various
animals, birds and fishes depicted on the quilt.
Stylistically, the anthropomorphised 'smiling
lion' referred to by Elfrida Manning references
seventeenth-century stump-work, for example; however, far more specific sources for some of the
other creatures have been identified. Perhaps
most obviously, the little fox seated, lower right,
surely references the fox in the Forest tapestry.
The design for the heron was adapted from an
illustration in Thomas Bewick's A History of
British Birds Vol II, History and Description of
Water Birds (1804); William Morris owned a
copy of the first edition. The heron was to be
repeated, in a rather less naïve manifestation, on
the bed-cover May would design twenty years
later for her mother to embroider in memory of
her father.\(^11\) May designed the spotted giraffe or
camel-leopard, the stag and the porcupine after
illustrations, again by Bewick, in Ralph Beilby's
1791 General History of Quadrupeds, a second
edition of which (also 1791) her father also
owned.

It seems likely that more of the birds and beasts
depicted on the quilt will prove to be linked to
illustrations in volumes belonging to William
Morris's library, a ready and available source of
inspiration for May and one she evidently made
extensive use of in developing the design. The same is true of the quotations and proverbs selected by May with which to decorate the quilt’s border. Several of these are bound by common themes – the rejection of materialism, self-fulfilment through education and application, and dealing fairly and kindly with one’s fellow man – all broadly tenets of Socialism and reflective of May’s political activism through her involvement with the Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League at this time. For example ‘Better unborn than untaught’ is adapted from a line in Plato’s Republic: ‘It is better to be unborn than untaught for ignorance is the root of misfortune.’

The ongoing research project by American scholars William and Sylvia Peterson to reconstruct William Morris’s personal library as an online resource has facilitated, establishing that May selected almost all the quotations from books her father owned. Thus the quilt encapsulates not only her creative collaboration with her mother but also the intellectual and political bond between herself and her father. It remained in May’s hands until her death and was then consigned to the forlorn auction of the Manor’s contents that took place there in July 1939. Its purchaser was Mrs May Elliot Hobbs of Bradshaws Farm in Kelscott; she paid £26. The quilt then remained in the Hobbs family until its recent acquisition.

May Elliot Hobbs was the daughter of a noted Scottish agriculturalist and stockbreeder. Born in 1877 and privately educated, she went on to study piano in Germany and embarked on a career as a concert pianist, cut short in 1906 when she married farmer and breeder of the renowned herd of Kelscott shorthorn cattle Robert Hobbs, who happened also to be Morris’s Kelscott Manor landlord. Independently minded, May Hobbs supported the women’s suffrage movement, served during the First World War with a Quaker ambulance unit based in France, and later joined the Women’s Land Army. She also had a great love for and knowledge of rural life and was, along with Cecil Sharpe, a founder member of the English Folk Dance Society. This ‘rural social worker’ toured America in 1919, speaking on farming, English Folk Dance and Song and, of course, Kelscott. She was in sympathy with many of May Morris’s concerns and the two women became friends. Both were particularly interested in the role of women in rural society and together were the driving force behind the foundation of Kelscott’s Women’s Institute in 1916. For many years thereafter they both continued to demonstrate their concern for the welfare of Kelscott’s poorer inhabitants and were at the heart of the social life of the village, initiating and participating in communal activities.

The Homestead and the Forest cot quilt is an object with many facets; beside its attributes as a complex piece of design with close associations with the Manor, it is an exemplar of the creative, political and intellectual interconnectedness within the Morris family. It also draws together the Hobbs and Morris families, and the link between the Manor and its history as a working farm within an isolated village community which the Morrices so valued and did much to contribute to, and into which their legacy has become assimilated. The Society of Antiquaries invites you to visit Kelscott Manor during the 2016 open season and see its beguiling new acquisition for yourself.

Kathy Haslam, Visitor Experience Manager at Kelscott Manor and WMS trustee

1 Linda Parry, statement in support of acquisition of the ‘Homestead and the Forest’ quilt
2 V&A MSL/1939/2636
3 Margaret Swain, Figures on Fabric (A&C Black 1980) pp94-95
4 Illustrated London News, 11 October 1890, p454
5 Exhibition catalogue May Morris 1862-1938 (William Morris Gallery 10 Jan-11 Mar 1989) cat no 6
7 Linda Parry, statement in support of acquisition of the ‘Homestead and the Forest’ quilt
8 See Fiona MacCarthy, William Morris: A Life for Our Time (Faber & Faber 1994) p650
9 Effirda Manning, ‘A visit to May Morris, 1925’ in JWMS 4.2 (Summer 1980) pp18-19
10 V&A T71&A-1939
11 KM233 Society of Antiquaries, Kelscott Manor
12 http://williammorrislibrary.wordpress.com
13 University of Iowa Libraries, Special Collections Dept, MSCD150, prospectus for May Elliot Hobbs’s US tour
Any member who consults our website, or looks at our Facebook page, will know that the Society has adopted a new visual identity. But despite the ascendancy of digital media, the change seems more potent in physical form. Not only our striking new ‘Bird’ logo, but also the radically refreshed appearance of the magazine you are holding – a newsletter no longer – is the culmination of eighteen months of work by the trustees and communications committee to give the Society an attractive and coherent look that conveys our purpose with renewed force and clarity.

Our partner for this project, chosen after we’d invited a number of designers to pitch for the job, was Angus Hyland, a partner in one of the world’s best-known design agencies, Pentagram. To find out more about the thinking behind his redesign of the Society’s public image, I went to talk to him in Pentagram’s spacious studios, tucked away in a blind alley off Westbourne Grove, in the heart of Notting Hill. The alley is called Pentagram Yard – is that, I ask, how the firm got its name? ‘No – it’s the reverse – the Yard was named after us. We’re called Pentagram because there were originally five partners.’ Founded in 1972 by three graphic designers, Alan Fletcher, Colin Forbes and Mervyn Kurlansky, an industrial designer, Kenneth Grange, and the architect Theo Crosby, Pentagram has a distinguished history. Older members may recall, for example, the visual rebranding in 1981 of the publisher Faber, undertaken by John McConnell, who in 1974 became the sixth partner of Pentagram.

The firm has grown to encompass offices in Berlin, New York, San Francisco and Austin as well as London and its clients are astonishingly diverse, from the Royal Academy and the Art Institute of Chicago to Great Western Railways and Berry Bros. and Rudd. But it has remained loyal to its original identity as an organisation of designers run by designers. ‘Our “offer” is that all the people who run the firm are creatives – we’re design driven,’ Angus explains. ‘We are essentially artisans, if you like – our output is tangible. What we do is not strictly branding, it’s about brand identity – the visual identity of an
organisation. Apart from a few start-ups, most of what we do is in fact rebranding, and is driven by changes to an organisation's business strategy, and therefore its brand strategy. Our job is to visualise that brand strategy.'

Angus joined Pentagram as a partner in 1998. Now in his early fifties, he trained at the London College of Printing (subsequently the London College of Communication) and the Royal College of Art, where he studied for an MA in graphic design. For a decade from 1988 he worked for himself as a freelance designer with his own studio in Soho. He's written several books, most aimed at the industry, such as Symbol, on trademarks, but he recently had a great success with The Book of the Dog, on the dog in art, published last autumn. He intends it to be the first in a series – 'It needs a companion, so I'm planning a similar book on cats, and then – glancing down at his new logo for the William Morris Society, 'birds'.

Individual partners in Pentagram work with their own teams of designers and usually have specialist fields. 'I tend to focus more on editorial and publishing than some of my partners.' But his clients have nonetheless been extraordinarily varied – 'I'm currently working with the National Museum in Qatar – that's been going on for years. I've overseen the rebranding of the television channel Eurosport and the relaunch of Roadbook, which moved from being a magazine about vintage vehicles to a men's lifestyle magazine.'

This all seems far removed from creating a new look for The William Morris Society, but the project began in the same way as almost everything Angus works on. 'We had initial meetings to establish what was driving the Society's wish for a new visual identity, and to help us understand the context of the organisation and what makes it distinctive. We asked how does the Society relate to the broader legacy of William Morris? Then we did some research on what you might call competitive or complementary offers – Morris & Co, for example, or the William Morris Gallery.'

'It quickly became clear to us that the Society was distinctive in the way that it emphasised Morris' political and social legacy, whereas the identity of most other Morris organisations was based on his Arts and Crafts legacy. That's possibly one reason why the Society was rather underdeveloped in terms of its visual identity – it appeared serious, but that can mean that you appear dry. What we wanted to do was to give the Society an image that was eloquent, truthful to its identity and would make it more attractive to anyone interested in Morris.'

'Then we looked at what visually speaking you had in your toolbox – what is unique that you own and can be leveraged to give the correct impression of the Society. We considered using, for example, a Morris signature, one of his tile designs or a motif from one of his political pamphlets. Very quickly the bird motif came to the fore. The bird that forms the Society's new logo is taken from one of the treasures of its archive, the original design for 'Bird', a woven woollen cloth first produced by Morris & Co. in 1878. As Helen Elletson explains in her article on the design (p28), Morris used the fabric in the drawing room at Kelmscott House as hangings. They were similar to the set that survives in the dining room at Emery Walker's House at 7 Hammersmith Terrace, possibly bequeathed to Walker by Philip Webb.

Why was the bird so appealing? 'It was beneficial to have something that immediately separated out The William Morris Society from all the other Morris organisations. There's also a long tradition of birds as symbols or logos – think how publishing houses such as Penguin have used birds as logos. Particularly as designed in a rich red, it works well across the platforms that the Society has – its website, its Facebook page, and as a Twitter handle. And people just like birds – it's much more emotive than a word or set of initials or an abstract pattern.'

Once the bird was decided on, the rest of the logo's design followed on relatively easily. Having decided not to use one of the typefaces designed by Morris or used in his books – partly because that option had already been adopted by the William Morris Gallery, among other organisations – Angus chose a contemporary typeface with a distinctive historical ancestry. This is Garda, designed as recently as 1998, but inspired by the work of the 16th-century Italian calligrapher Francesco Cresci: 'I like it because it's got real personality, particularly the crossed strokes of the W.' After much debate about whether the logo should read 'William Morris Society' or 'The William Morris Society', 'we opted for the latter: 'you are The William Morris Society, after all, but we set the definite article down in size a bit for visual reasons'.

The bird was redrawn by Pentagram with a certain amount of freedom, particularly in the way that the foliage that forms a background to the bird in Morris's design was edited down to a sprig held in its beak. Angus laughs when I ask whether it was a conscious decision to echo the dove of peace, with an olive branch in its beak. Perhaps! Is it a dove? Or a woodpigeon? I don't know. Is that an olive branch? In a way it doesn't matter. People will bring their own meaning to it. That's the whole point of symbols – they are open ended. People see an awful lot in the Apple organisation's symbol, for example – does the bite out of it mean that it's the Apple of Knowledge, bitten into by Eve? I think the truth is that when the designer came up with it, Steve Jobs or someone said it could be a cherry, so the bite was added to give it scale. The choice of a bird was happier than Angus at first realised, since he hadn't made the connection with Emery Walker and his Dove's Press – 'that was a happy coincidence'.

After the logo was accepted, Angus and his team then rolled it out into designs for all the Society's forms of publication and communication – from the Journal and Magazine covers to letterheads and business cards. Now he is eager to know what members make of it, well aware that many people resist the idea of discussing an organisation such as The William Morris Society in terms of a 'brand'. In addition, 'people generally loathe rebranding of something they are familiar with because it means change, and that's one reason why there are so many hostile stories about organisations spending gazillons on a new logo. I think one thing to remember about all brand identities is that they have to work, and they do so by telling a truth – if they don't, they will quickly be found out.'

'Perhaps one of the best known redesigns of all was that of the Guardian newspaper in 1988' – by David Hillman, a Pentagram partner – 'it horrified people who saw themselves as keepers of the flame, but leap forward in your Tardis and try putting back a design to what it used to be and you'll see why redesign and rebranding are necessary. And, as I understand Morris, he was forward looking as well as backward looking – he wasn't only concerned with heritage, he wanted change.'

Michael Hall is a trustee of The William Morris Society and chair of the Emery Walker Trust.
The San Graal tapestry weavers at Merton Abbey

David Saxby examines the working lives of the weavers trained by Morris & Co
In April 2015, as I was about to start my talk about William Morris and his workers at Merton Abbey for the Society at Kelmscott House, member John Kendall showed me two unpublished photographs of the tapestry weavers at Merton Abbey with their names and dates. I had been researching these weavers and other Morris & Co workers for many years and finally to see their faces was rather overwhelming. The photographs date to 1891 and 1894, which corresponds with the beginning and the end of the weaving of the San Graal tapestries.

In 1992, as an archaeologist for the Museum of London I supervised an archaeological excavation of Morris’ former works at Merton Abbey, on the banks of the river Wandle in Colliers Wood. This uncovered the cellar of a 17th-century house, rebuilt in the 18th century, which in Morris & Co’s days became the apprentice boys’ house. Unknown to Morris at the time, the stone walls included 13th century carved stone from the Augustinian Merton Priory, which originally lay on the southern part of the company’s works.

In May 1879 William Morris started his first tapestry Acanthus and Vine in his bedroom at Kelmscott House. He finished it in mid-September after 516 ½ hours at the loom. Satisfied with the results, he set up a loom at the Queen Square workshops and taught tapestry weaving to the 19 year-old John Henry Dearle, an apprentice draughtsman in the stained glass shop. Morris was so delighted with Dearle’s progress that in 1880 or early in 1881 he took on two 13-14 year old tapestry apprentices, William Sleath and William Harold Knight, to help Dearle in the newly-formed tapestry department.

William Sleath was born on 14 January 1867 in Belgrave, Leicestershire and his family soon moved to Bloomsbury in London. His father left and the family was split up, his mother and siblings moving to Lambeth.

William Harold Knight was born on 29 September 1867 at 22 Great College Street, Camden Town, London. In 1877 his father Henry died, aged 38 of typhus and pneumonia. Henry’s widow Juliana, a seamstress, had to look after five children and now had a rooming house. A woman staying there noticed that young William was always drawing and, knowing that Morris was looking for apprentices, put Juliana in contact with Morris who took on William as the second tapestry apprentice.

Both Sleath and Knight moved into Rossie House, a home for working boys at 35 Lamb’s Conduit Street: a short walk from the Queen Square workshops. At Queen Square during 1880 and the early part of 1881, Dearle and now Sleath and Knight wove trial verdure panels, furniture coverings and cushion covers.

However, with limited space at the Queen Square and Great Ormond Yard workshops, Morris needed larger premises and after searching several sites moved to Merton Abbey in June 1881. Morris converted George Welch’s former table-cover printing works to suit his needs. The two-storey timber workshop to the rear of the High Street was adapted as a dye house, with the first floor a stained-glass studio and a single-storey weaving shed adjacent. A second timber workshop across the river Wandle housed the carpet and tapestry workshop on the ground floor, its first floor being used for block printing. A mill house, mill pond, large meadow, orchard and vegetable garden were also contained within the grounds of the picturesque seven-acre site.

The large 18th-century house became home to Sleath and Knight. Morris wrote to Aglaia
Ionides Coronio on 23 August ‘I suppose in about a fortnight I shall be beginning to get the house on the premises at Merton Abbey into trim, & shall be glad to show you the place when the weather is fine some day’. The house had ten rooms including a garret and a basement. The boys had views of the garden and the river Wandle and may have had a room each; unlike the cramped accommodation at Rossie House. Morris furnished a couple of rooms for himself and initially stayed there three or four days a week. He thought a great deal of Sleath and Knight and supplied them with a library for their education. Knight later said that Morris was like a father figure and that he had to get Morris’ permission to do anything outside the works, including moving to his own accommodation.’ ‘To look after the boys and run the house, Morris needed a housekeeper. In Clapham, Morris found the 47 year-old Annie Martin who had been working as a cook for over ten years for the wine merchant John Reuss, to take on that role.’

Dearle, Sleath and Knight now started their first tapestry at Merton, Goose Girl from an illustration by Walter Crane from Grimm’s Fairy Tales, which was completed in March 1883. Morris then turned to Edward Burne-Jones, who provided designs for Flora and Pomona, which the three weavers completed in 1885, followed by The Woodpecker.

In 1885 Morris expanded the tapestry department, adding a third loom. Needing a new apprentice he took on Annie Martin’s 13 year-old nephew who had just left school in Hampton Wick. This was Benjamin John Martin (known simply as John Martin) who George Wardle later said ‘made an excellent tapestry worker’. In 1887 Sleath (20), Knight (20) and Martin (15) wove The Forest. After six or seven years at the loom, Sleath and Knight were highly proficient tapestry weavers. Webb, writing of The Forest, for which he had designed the animals, said of the weavers ‘I scarcely need say that Morris’ well-taught weaving lads did the work to perfection and with Morris’ scrolled leafage the beasts looked perfectly at home.’ Further tapestries followed in 1887 with a succession of single Burne-Jones figures: St George, St Agnes, St Cecilia and Flora, and repeats of St Cecilia and St Agnes and Peace in 1888-89.

In January-February 1888, The Adoration of the Magi tapestry designed by Burne-Jones for the chapel in Exeter College, Oxford, was started. Dearle added designs for the background decoration. It took Dearle, Sleath, Knight and Martin two years to weave, being finished in February 1890.

From 1890 the tapestry department became really busy and Morris took on five 14-15 year old tapestry apprentices in 1890 and 1891. The boys came from different backgrounds – including the sons of a dentist, a bricklayer, a compositor and a carpenter – and from all over London: Hammersmith, Kennington, Marylebone and Wanstead.

In order to make room for the new boys, Sleath, Knight and Martin moved out from the apprentice boys’ house to board with local families. Annie Martin, helped by the 15-16 year old Ada Purver, now had five teenage boys to look after.’ They were George Priestly, Robert Uther Ellis, Jesse Keech, Walter Taylor and George Merritt. Dearle would have trained the new apprentice boys, and when competent they would have helped Sleath, Knight and Martin. Morris also took on two experienced tapestry weavers: William Haines (24) and George Eleman (26), who had both worked at the Royal Windsor Tapestry workshop until its closure on Christmas Eve 1890. When they were apprentices at Windsor in 1880-81 George Eleman was a boarder at the Haines family home.’

During 1890 the weavers completed Minstrel Figure and The Orchard. At the end of that year and the beginning of 1891 the second Adoration of the Magi was begun for Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. This was finished in 1894. Also in 1890 the mining millionaire William Knox D’Arcy commissioned Morris & Co to decorate Stanmore Hall. Morris persuaded D’Arcy to decorate the large dining room with six narrative and four verdure tapestries depicting The Quest
of the Holy Grail. The series was started in 1891 and finished in 1894; the greatest and most ambitious set of tapestries ever made at the Merton workshops. The weavers also undertook the weaving of Greenery in 1892.

The Attainment was the first San Graal tapestry finished and was exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in the New Gallery in the autumn of 1893. A reporter for The Daily Chronicle interviewed William Morris there (published on 9 October 1893) and Morris was clearly pleased with the results. He described the process of making the tapestry: 'It occupied three persons [Sleath, Knight and Martin], as many as can comfortably sit across the warp, for two years. The people who made it, and this by far the most interesting thing about it, are boys, at least they’re grown up by this time, entirely trained in our own shop. It is really free hand work, remember, not slavishly copying a pattern, like those “basse lisse” methods, and they came to us with no knowledge of drawing whatsoever, and have learnt every single thing they know under our training. And most beautifully they have done it! I don’t think you could want a better example than this of the value of apprenticeship. Our superintendent, Mr. Dearle, has of course been closely watching the work all the time, and perhaps he has put in a few bits, like the hands and faces, with his own hands; but with this exception every bit has been done by these boys. We have had no working drawings, we don’t believe in doing the same thing twice over. You see Mr. Burne-Jones’s drawings hung underneath; they have no colour and no detail. These we added, subject to his supervision.’

The San Graal was immediately followed in 1894 by Angeli Ministrantes and Angeli Laudantes and a third Adoration of the Magi was woven for William Simpson, a Manchester calico printer. In 1895 the young men moved out from the
apprentice boys’ house to board with local families. The house was then occupied by John Pickett, the clerk of the works, and his family.

In 1895 a fourth Adoration of the Magi was woven for Eton College and between 1895 and 1896 three of the San Graal panels were woven for Laurence Hodson of Wolverhampton. In 1896 Primavera and small versions of the early Flora and Pomona were also woven.11

George Elemen left Morris & Co in 1896 and lived on a private income until his death in 1959 at the age of 94 in Brentwood, Essex. His old friend William Haines also left in 1896 and in 1908 opened a tapestry restoration workshop at 216 Merton Road, South Wimbledon where he employed three local girls as tapestry restorers. He died in 1916 and the business was continued by his wife Annie, until her death in 1949.11

The entire San Graal series was repeated in 1898–99 for D’Arcy’s mining partner, George McCulloch. Many more tapestries were woven at Merton but it wasn’t until 1901 that Morris and Co took on a new tapestry apprentice, a 14-year-old local boy from Wimbledon called Gordon Cedric Berry. Before the San Graal tapestries were finished George Priestley left the firm, later becoming a dentist in Finchley, North London.

William Sleath left Morris & Co in 1900, weaving tapestries on a private basis from 1896 onwards. He also earned his living as an artist, lodging at 137 Clapham Road; after marrying Edith Gwynne Lewis in 1907 he moved to Mitcham. People who knew William Sleath described him as a very quiet, softly-spoken person who was a prolific painter in both oil and watercolours, and he had a tapestry workshop at his home.12 He returned to Morris & Co in 1914 to weave The Arming of the King with John Martin. The tapestry workshop closed two years later but when it reopened in 1922 Sleath was again employed by Morris & Co until at least 1927 to help weave The life of St George: The Crusade for Eton College Lower Chapel. He also worked as a tapestry conservator for the Firm. William Sleath died in 1942 at the age of 75, having worked for Morris & Co for 25 years. In 1899 William Harold Knight had joined the stained glass department. It is said that William was a very quiet and reserved man with a good sense of humour. He was a keen athlete and would cycle to work from Thornton Heath to Merton.13 On the death of John Henry Dearle in 1932 Knight became the principal designer for the Firm. He remained with Morris & Co until it went into liquidation in May 1940 and then worked as a freelance consultant on tapestry.14

William Harold Knight died on 27 April 1950, age 84. He worked for Morris & Co for 60 years, its longest serving worker.

John Martin left Morris & Co in March 1917, having worked for the firm for 32 years and contributing to 40 tapestries. He then became the first tapestry restorer at the Victoria and Albert Museum and also carried out freelance tapestry cleaning and repair work for a number of private clients and London dealers. He left the V&A in March 193715 and died on 23 July 1956 in Hampton Wick, age 84.

Whilst working at Merton, Walter Taylor furthered his studies at Putney in 1895–96, Westminster in 1896–97 and the Royal College of Art in 1897–1900. He studied to be a teacher and in 1909, after working for Morris & Co for 19 years, left to take up a teaching post. When, in 1920, tapestry weaving was introduced to the Central School of Arts & Crafts in London he became head of the weaving department. A number of ex-servicemen attended the classes, the first of these being Percy Sheldrake and Edward Russell, who after completing three years training were employed by Morris & Co.16 Walter Taylor lived in Epsom and spent the last five years of his life at his son’s house at Hyde, near Chalford, Gloucestershire, where he died in 1965 at the age of 90.16

Robert Uther Ellis left Morris & Co in 1906–7, having worked 15 years for the Firm. In 1907 he emigrated to Canada but died a few months later in Ontario at the young age of 33. Jesse Keech left Morris & Co in 1900 having worked there for ten years. He took up his father’s profession, becoming a bricklayer, but by 1911 he was a Metropolitan Police Officer. Jesse died at the age of 87 in 1964. George Merritt left Morris & Co in 1902 after 11 years. He became a clerk in the engineers department of the London County Council and died on 16 July 1964, age 88. Annie Martin probably left Morris & Co when the last of the boys moved out in 1895. She moved to Ashstead in Surrey and lived out her remaining years with a private pension. Ada Purver probably also left Morris & Co in 1895 and continued as a domestic servant, working for Frederick Brassington in Kingston Upon Thames. In 1905 she married William Lane and they ran a shop in West Croydon. Ada died in 1936 in Penge.

In 1905 the apprentice boys’ house was inhabited by a stained-glass window glazier, Walter Harold Wright, and his family.17 They continued to live in the house until the works closed in May 1940. A few months later, in October, the house was destroyed by a bomb. A worker from the adjacent Board Mills searched through the rubble and found a small oil painting of Merton High Street including Morris’ works and the Merton Abbey Branch of the Socialist League. Although a little battered, on the lower right hand corner are the initials of the artist – ‘WHK’ – William Harold Knight, Morris’s second tapestry apprentice! The finder of the painting was the grandfather of a local lady from Wimbledon, Ann Bremner. The painting is safe on Ann’s wall and remains a reminder of the house of the tapestry weavers.18

David Saxby is a Senior Archaeologist with MOLA.

Many thanks to John Kendall.

References

1 The photographs were part of a collection of Walter Taylor ephemera purchased by John Kendall in 1979
2 Interview with Dorothy Knight, 22 April 1997 by Ann Bremner
3 1881 Census returns, Sunday 3 April
6 Interview with Dorothy Knight, 22 April 1997 by Ann Bremner
7 1891 Census returns, Sunday 5 April
8 Parry, p133
10 1891 Census returns, Sunday 5 April
11 1881 Census returns, Sunday 3 April
12 Parry, p157
13 ibid, p131
14 www.williamsleath.com
15 Notes from Ann Bremner
16 Parry, p130
17 ibid, p131
18 ibid, p160
20 Electoral returns and Post Office Directories
21 Ann Bremner, personal communication
Evelyn De Morgan
The Gilded Cage
oil on canvas
1900-1919
In the past two years there have been significant changes for the De Morgan Foundation. The De Morgan Centre in Wandsworth closed to the public in June 2014 when our lease came to an end and we have relocated our office to the Watts Gallery in Compton, Surrey. We have been working hard to create new opportunities for the display of our collection, commencing with an exhibition at Compton of ceramics and oil paintings by William and Evelyn De Morgan.

The De Morgan Collection is the largest single collection of works by the De Morgans. It consists in the main of oil paintings and works on paper by second-generation Pre-Raphaelite painter Evelyn Pickering (1855-1919) and earthenware ceramics by her husband, the ceramic designer William De Morgan (1839-1917). William was a close friend and colleague of William Morris and worked alongside him and Edward Burne-Jones on ceramic and stained glass production prior to starting his own company in 1872.

Evelyn’s sister, Mrs Wilhelmina Stirling, formed the De Morgan Collection. She inherited some pieces from her sister and brother-in-law and actively sought out other works to add to her collection, which could be publicly accessed by appointment at her home, Old Battersea House. When Mrs Stirling died aged 99 in 1965, she bequeathed the collection to be looked after in trust, and the De Morgan Foundation was formed to discharge this duty.

The first task of the newly-formed charity was to remove the collection from Mrs Stirling’s leased home and find new places to store and display it. For many years parts of the collection were on loan to Cardiff Castle and various National Trust properties and in the late 1980s some pieces returned to Old Battersea House, which was then under the tenure of the Forbes family. In 2002 the De Morgan Collection was brought together for the first time in more than 30 years at the De Morgan Centre in Wandsworth, south-west London. During this period the 3000 objects that make up the collection were catalogued and many of them conserved. Exhibitions highlighting lesser known aspects of the collection were curated and in addition art works were loaned to a number of prestigious exhibitions both in the

Claire Longworth on the latest developments for the De Morgan Foundation and its current display at the Watts Gallery
UK and internationally, helping to cement the importance and reputation of the collection.

The leased De Morgan Centre was never a long-term solution to the housing and display of the De Morgan Collection and a permanent and sustainable home for it has yet to be found. Following a review of the organisation’s mission, objectives and activities in spring 2015, however, a new strategy of forming partnerships with complementary organisations has been developed, in order to provide access to and raise the profile of the collection across the country. In addition the Foundation has plans to provide enhanced web-based access via its online catalogue and to continue to undertake educational and other activities to promote appreciation and understanding of the collection.

The first of the De Morgan Foundation’s partnerships was launched last spring with the Watts Gallery Artists Village and a two-year exhibition of highlights from the De Morgan Collection opened there in August. The partnership is eminently fitting as the De Morgans were close friends with the founders of Watts Gallery: the artist George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) and his wife, the artist and designer Mary Seton Watts (1849-1938). They were regular visitors to the Wattses’ home Limnerslease, which is a short walk from the Watts Gallery and is once more part of the estate and open to the public.

William De Morgan collaborated on several projects with the Wattses – including advising Mary on the construction of the bottle kiln which she built in the grounds of Limnerslease to service the Compton Pottery. De Morgan also produced ceramic tablets for Watts’ memorial to unsung heroes in Postman’s Park in the City of London. Evelyn knew of Mary from their days at the Slade School of Art and was introduced to Watts by her uncle, Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, who had trained under the great master in the 1850s. Watts famously declared of Evelyn that ‘I look upon her as the first woman artist of the day – if not of all time’ and many parallels can be drawn between the two painters’ work.

The exhibition at the Watts Gallery features nine oil paintings by Evelyn De Morgan, including early works such as Ariadne in Naxos, painted when Evelyn was just 22. It was executed shortly after she left the Slade and like many of her early pieces it is painted in a neo-classical style and inspired by Greek mythology. The painting is housed in a Watts Frame, so-called because it was a style favoured by Watts. The design of a Watts frame is inspired by Italian cassette frames and generally consists of a lap-jointed back frame set with applied fine mouldings on both the sight edge and back edge. Ariadne was a theme that also appealed to Watts and he created several works inspired by the subject.

Both Evelyn and Watts were preoccupied with the subject of greed and to draw on these parallels Evelyn's painting The Worship of Mammon is displayed in the exhibition. It was painted in 1909, some 15 years after Watts first tackled the subject in his painting Mammon: Dedicated to his Worshippers, the oil study for which is also on display at the Watts Gallery. The motivations of the two artists were different, however. Watts increasingly believed that society was being made rotten by the worship of wealth and riches and his painting is an indictment of the greed of Everyman. Evelyn’s take on the subject matter was inspired by her religious principles, and in particular the passage from Matthew's Gospel ‘You cannot serve two masters... you cannot serve God and Mammon.’

Both the Wattses and the De Morgans were passionate about women’s rights and in particular their right to receive an education. Evelyn was a signatory to the Declaration in Favour of Women’s Suffrage in 1889 and William served as vice-president of the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage in 1913. Evelyn was well aware that her class and financial wealth placed her in a position of privileged independence that was available to few women. Her painting The Gilded Cage, shown in the exhibition, illustrates her views by depicting a woman trapped in the domestic sphere, unable to step out into the wider world. A young woman, dressed in sumptuous gold robes, looks wistfully at revellers outside. Her entrapment in a patriarchal society that dictates her confinement is echoed by the golden-caged canary in the top right of the painting.

One of two portraits that Evelyn painted of her husband is displayed prominently in the exhibition and helps to connect her work to the bountiful display of his pottery in the gallery. De Morgan was the foremost ceramic designer of the Arts and Crafts Movement and his vibrantly-glazed pots and decorative tiles continue to be
highly sought after today. His rediscovery of metallic lustre glazes and designs inspired by medieval and middle-eastern motifs was hugely influential upon the decorative arts of the nineteenth century. Amongst the exquisite objects on display at Watts Gallery is a gorgeous ruby lustre vase, which was made and gifted to De Morgan by his pottery staff at Christmas 1897. It is inscribed with the words ‘ALL THIS • OF POT AND POTTER • TELL ME THEN • WHO IS THE POTTER, PRAY • AND WHO THE POT’. These lines derive from Edmund FitzGerald’s free translation of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam – a poem that, along with the decorative arts of Persia, fascinated De Morgan.

The range of tiles on show include designs such as Long Stemmed Daisies and Rose and Trellis, which were inspired by William Morris patterns and created to complement Morris interiors. De Morgan remained lifelong friends with Morris and sold his wares through Morris and Co’s store. The focal point for the exhibition however is the spectacular Galleon Tile Panel. Depicting galleons in full sail with sea creatures, landscape and sunrise, it was designed for P&O’s ss Malta and is typical of the schemes which De Morgan designed for 12 P&O passenger liners between 1882 and 1900.

The exhibition not only showcases the artistic achievements of the extraordinarily creative marriage of the De Morgans but also celebrates the artistic friendship between the De Morgans and the Wattses. ‘It helps to strengthen the idea the Compton was enjoyed and regarded as an artists’ village.

The Watts Gallery is not, however, the only place where you can see works from the De Morgan Collection. We are delighted to be able to announce a new touring exhibition called Sublime Symmetry which, starting in March at Towneley Hall, Burnley, will take more than 80 objects from the De Morgan and V&A Collections to five venues across England during the next 18 months. A full list of current loan venues is available on the Foundation’s website: demorgan.org.uk and we look forward to announcing further loans and partnerships in 2016 and 2017.

Claire Longworth is Curator/Manager of the De Morgan Foundation
The distinguished artist and illustrator David Gentleman gave the 2015 Kelmscott Lecture in November, and he used the occasion to look back at his own career for points of contact with William Morris. I thought I knew his work quite well (when I was a television producer I worked briefly with him on a short film based on his book *A Special Relationship*) but the range of the work he shared during the lecture was, frankly, stunning. Everything from a huge number of stamps to the New Penguin Shakespeare covers to Charing Cross Station to political posters to his more conventional illustrated books.

Listening to his talk, I think I discerned three themes that Morris would have recognised.

First, that good art and design should be accessible to everyone. It should be out in the streets, rather than in galleries. Some of the stamp designs, for example, were classics of pocket expression. His Charing Cross Station murals, seen everyday by thousands of people who don’t have a clue who designed the panels on the Northern Line, were the products of two years work. As he said, and members of the audience confirmed, there’s a whole generation who associate Shakespeare with his covers.

Second, his careful interest in the craft of design. In part, this may be because of the more generalist visual education he enjoyed at the Royal College of Art in the 1950s, but I suspect it is also a cast of mind. He spoke of his early love of Thomas Bewick’s wood engravings, and the difference between these and the woodcut. He showed some of his lithographs, and talked about the way that each colour needed its own plate. And he talked about the pleasure he got from being involved in the layout of his books, aligning images with text.

The third element is his quiet radicalism. He showed some posters he had designed for the campaign against driving a road through Petworth Park. *A Special Relationship*, published towards the end of the Cold War, is a scabrous look at the relationship between Britain and the United States. Gillray would have been proud of some of these illustrations. He has also contributed posters and images to the Stop the War movement, most notably the ‘Blair’ poster.

But this same radicalism is also seen in other work. When researching the Charing Cross mural, and the royal mediaeval coffin procession that gave the station and the area its name, he...
looked into the work that women did (the dirty undesirable work of mixing the mortar, it turned out, which is represented in the mural).

Similarly, my brother has a favourite image in Gentleman’s London book of a street person rummaging through a bin beside the regenerated retail complex that is the modern Covent Garden.

Gentleman told a couple of interesting stories about stamps, and specifically about the Queen’s head, which used to be depicted as a sort of locket portrait. When designing the Battle of Britain stamps, he concluded that they would look better without the head on them, so he asked Tony Benn, then the Postmaster-General, if the Palace would consider such a thing. Benn asked the Palace, and it turned out that they would not. But later they agreed to Gentleman’s suggestion that the head would work better on the stamps in profile, which lasts to this day.

And in the starched protocol of the 1960s, the presence of the Queen’s head on the stamps caused other problems. The stamps issued to commemorate Churchill have that mysterious white line down them because the Queen couldn’t share the same visual space as a commoner. Really.

I think there’s a fourth connection too, a contextual one. Morris’ work was done at a time when industrial manufacturing was booming in Victorian England. Much of it was of low quality, and the associated pollution was enormous, as a quick reading of News from Nowhere reminds us. David Gentleman grew into adulthood at a time when consumer culture spread rapidly, in Britain and Europe.

Perhaps the environmental costs weren’t quite so high by then, but the cultural costs — such as the rapid spread of advertising into everyday life, which we now take completely for granted — were higher.

Similarly, the two men are connected by periods when the development of the built environment was driven mostly by speculation. In her Kelmscott Lecture in 2002 (Morris, Hammersmith and Utopia) Ruth Levitas spoke about how Morris’ Hammersmith was experiencing a huge wave of building development following the arrival of the tube network.

As she writes, ‘Most of the major civic buildings and landmarks were built or rebuilt during this period.’ She quotes a contemporary account by William Blake Richmond: ‘In 1870 … from my garden, looking over fields, old Hammersmith Church was visible. The mall, now utterly ruined, was lined with delightful old houses… We were not yet built round nor did hellish factories belch out the suffocating smoke which now lies like slime on our beautiful rivers… Wretchedly-built streets cover what was once fertile meadowland.’

Similarly, David Gentleman has lived through a period in the 1960s and 1970s when speculative builders did their worst; developers destroyed far more of Georgian and Victorian London than bombing did.

Although his city books are sometimes (wrongly) regarded as coffee-table books, they have a sharp eye for these tensions between the new city and the old.

Looking at the connections between the two men, both Morris and Gentleman chose to dissent from the world they saw around them, and turned to their craft and their art to try to make a difference to it.

Andrew Curry is a futurist who lives in Hammersmith and blogs at The Next Wave.
THE WILLIAM MORRIS NETWORK

The William Morris Network gathered on 12 January at Standen, the National Trust house designed by Philip Webb. Here the Network heard of the many activities planned by member organisations and properties for 2016, most notably: the imminent start of the refurbishment at Kelmscott House and 7 Hammersmith Terrace, and Edmund de Waal as this year’s Kelmscott lecturer; the discovery of more designs and embroidery tracings by May Morris in the V&A collection, in connection with research into the Morris & Co Daybook; the Pre-Raphaelite Society Book Club meeting on 28 April, a walk around Bloomsbury on 2 March; extensive research into the Standen/Beale archives by Anne Stutchbury, plus the Garden Festival at Standen 18-30 June to celebrate the garden restoration project, complete with rediscovered swimming pool; May Morris study days and workshop at both the Ashmolean and the Winterthur Museum, Delaware; plans for Red House Revealed to recreate its original decorative scheme by electronic illusion; Kelmscott Manor’s acquisition of the Homestead and the Forest cot quilt, and a display marking the centenary of Kelmscott Women’s Institute; forthcoming exhibitions at the William Morris Gallery, plus the active young curators’ programme, and the May Morris Conference on 13-14 May, which is already fully booked.

Jan Marsh, President of The William Morris Society

BURNE-JONES ARCHIVE AT THE ASHMolean

The Ashmolean has acquired the illustrated letters of Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Mary (May) Gaskell. The archive consists of more than 200 letters dating from 1892 up to the year of Burne-Jones’s death; three albums of intimate letters from the artist to Mrs Gaskell; two albums of illustrated letters to Mrs Gaskell and her daughter, Daphne; and other ephemera such as the artist’s brushes which he used when painting his famous portrait of Amy Gaskell. Many of the letters were published by Josceline Dimbleby, May Gaskell’s great-granddaughter, in her book, A Profound Secret (2004), which recounts the author’s research into her family’s history. Following conservation, they will be made available as an invaluable resource to students and scholars of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and will be published online.

ashmolean.org

ARTS AND CRAFTS HAMMERSMITH

Celebrating and sharing the legacy of William Morris and Emery Walker

It is 12 months since the William Morris Society’s partnership project with the Emery-Walker Trust secured £631,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to support a programme of capital refurbishment, cataloguing, and digitising, and learning and participation. We now stand at the threshold of the project’s main phase – a time of great excitement and challenge.

The autumn of last year was an intense time, as the entire contents of 7 Hammersmith Terrace, Emery Walker’s former home and an important and authentic Arts and Crafts interior, were packed, listed, categorised and shipped to our secure temporary storage facility in Stockwell, south London. Over 4,000 items – ceramics, paintings, furniture, textiles, carpets and much more – and 55 boxes of paper archives are now safely stored. 7 Hammersmith Terrace is empty and ready for the builders to move in.

A willing band of volunteers supported the project team in this meticulous process, and we are eternally grateful to every single one of them. They will now be working with us in the next phase at the Stockwell base – cataloguing (using our newly-commissioned MODE5 software), digitising, and carrying out delicate conservation and cleaning tasks.

Builders are moving into 7 Hammersmith Terrace in late February/early March, to carry out essential repairs and refurbishment. Upon completion they will move into Kelmscott House for a smaller but equally essential range of works, including the upgrading of storage facilities, redecoration, and the refurbishment of kitchen facilities and toilets. The precious collections in storage at Kelmscott House will similarly be packed and shipped; the cataloguing of the Society’s archive, collections and library is already underway. There may be minor disruption to activities during the building works at Kelmscott House in the late spring but we aim to maintain as much public access as possible.

A writing project with Fulham Cross School, Hidden Stories, which goes beneath the surface to discover the untold stories of the two houses and their occupants, started in October – more are planned in 2016 and 2017.

We are delighted that many other funders and supporters have joined HLF, taking us to within...
£70,000 of the total £1 million funds needed. Charitable organisations such as Garfield Weston Foundation, Charles Hayward Foundation and Ashley Family Foundation sit alongside contributions from landfill tax credit funds via Viridor Environmental, and over £10,000 of personal gifts. We’d love to hear from you if you feel suitably inspired to contribute time or funds to this thrilling partnership venture.

If you would like to know more, contact simondaykin@artsandcraftshammer smith.org.uk, follow us on Twitter @ArtsCraftHam, or like our Facebook page. Simon Daykin, Project Manager for Arts and Crafts Hammersmith

LETS SPONSOR WILLIAM MORRIS! You may be aware of the funding cut the People’s History Museum suffered in April, its hopes to fill the £55,000 funding hole for 2015/16 and its uncertain future beyond that.

The museum celebrates the lives and works of radical thinkers as part of their ‘Support The Radicals’ campaign. So we want to raise money for the Society to become a sponsor for its list of ‘100 Radical Heroes’ for Morris.

We are aiming to initially raise £1,000. To make up this amount we will gladly accept any size of contribution size. If we as a Society as a whole are able to raise £1,000, the SPAB will match the amount and do the same, meaning that our joint contribution would really help the PHM to celebrate Morris!

Please send all contributions to our office, marked Radical Morris, with cheques made payable to the William Morris Society: phm.org.uk/support-us

WILLIAM MORRIS IN THE 21ST CENTURY
Rosie Miles reports on our Symposium at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, September 2015

As I live in Birmingham I was delighted to see the Society head north of London for this event, organised as part of its diamond jubilee year. Jan Marsh opened by reminding us that Morris’s 1879 lecture Art and the People was delivered at the BML. She spoke of how ‘startlingly in fashion’ Morris remains, mentioning Charlotte Higgins’ nomination of Morris for the redesign of the £20 note. In a global context of disquiet, change and uncertainty Morris continues to challenge us to consider ‘how we live and how we might live’. Jan concluded by citing the positive spirit of disagreement and debate that is part of the ‘good fellowship’ of Morrisian gatherings. Jan’s excellent introduction can be found on her blog: janmarsh.blogspot.co.uk.

This symposium was about the continuing relevance of Morris’s politics and Ruth Leavis commenced with her paper All for the Cause, named after one of Morris’s Chants for Socialists. Her presentation featured photos of banners paraded on recent anti-austerity demos, including that of the Strawberry Thieves Socialist Choir; and Philippa Bennett and Martin Stott of the Society carrying the Hammersmith Socialist League banner. Ruth finds Morris’s substantive writings on politics to be under-utilised as a resource in countering current reactionary political thought. Contemporary politics can display a short historical memory, treating situations as new or unprecedented although, for example, Morris was ‘worrying’ at such complexities as whether or not to engage with the electoral process back in the 1880s. Understanding the responses Morris made to his times, and the processes by which he came to his ideas, can be useful.

Tony Pinkney spoke on Morris and the Return of Communism, citing the philological approaches of William Empson, and Raymond Williams in Keywords as the starting rationale for his renewed focus on Morris as communist. There are at least five mentions of communism in News from Nowhere, three in The Pilgrims of Hope and many more in his political lectures. Williams cites socialism as being a tougher word than communism in the 1880s, whereas now communism is very often conflated with a Stalinist/Maoist version, violent and repressive. Tony mentioned the renewed interest in communism manifest in Alain Badou’s The Communist Hypothesis (translated 2010) and Jodi Dean’s The Communist Horizon (2012), together with the work of David Mabb. It’s more than possible that a suggestion was made to form the breakaway Communist William Morris Network.

During the lunch break attendees could take in Jeremy Deller’s Love is Enough. William Morris and Andy Warhol exhibition at Birmingham Art Gallery, or make purchases from the stalls of Northern Herald Books and Five Leaves Bookshop; I was aware of some serious radical pamphlet buying going on. After lunch David Mabb discussed his Announcer exhibition at the William Morris Gallery, showing his juxtapositions of pages from the Kelmscott Chaucer with El Liszticky’s illustrations for Far the Voice (1923). Mabb’s work is theoretically sophisticated and visually arresting. He had created a dialogue between the Chaucer and Liszticky’s images by removing Burne-Jones’s woodcuts, effectively inserting a modernist, rectangular space into Morris’s organically-ornamented pages. Mabb argues for the need to rethink how we look at the past, including putting things that seem incompatible into our reimaginings of it. He is anti ‘antiquarian’ notions of Morris that reify him in some heritage-hued past. I was struck by the beauty of the images; their balance, weightings and interlacings. For Mabb the Kelmscott Press was a mark of defeat, Morris turning away from activism.

Owen Holland gave the final paper on Morris and Education. He acknowledged his debt to Pippa Bennett’s paper on the same topic in the JWMS (2013) and cited the rhetoric of social mobility that accrued around education for the Victorians and pervaded most of the twentieth century. Now the gains of social democracy appear to be lost, as young people contemplate futures that seem less certain and financially secure than the lives of their parents. Owen referred to Morris as an autodidact: if he didn’t know how to do something, or about something, he taught himself. We were reminded of Miguel Aberansour’s formulation of Morris as being concerned with ‘the education of desire’ as cited in the 1976 edition of E P Thompson’s biography of Morris. From the start of his political activity, education was at the heart of what Morris spoke about and the Socialist League’s Commonweal masthead was ‘Agitate, Educate. Organise’.

The day concluded with a lively panel discussion about how relevant and necessary Morris still seems. I (wearing my Strawberry Thief Doc Martens) was drafted in at the last minute to join the other speakers for this and somewhere in the mix the phrase ‘Making Morris Happen’ took root. It was a stimulating and energising day and I left the event looking forward to more opportunities to ‘make Morris happen’. Thanks to all the speakers and participants, and particularly to Jan Marsh for her consummate and inclusive chairing. Rosie Miles teaches English Literature at the University of Wolverhampton and is a former Editor of the Journal of William Morris Studies.
MORRIS EVENTS
All forthcoming William Morris Society events are detailed in our enclosed events leaflet but a few highlights are listed below.

FELLOWSHIP IS HEAVEN: SIXTY YEARS OF THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY to 31 May
Kelm scott House, London
Highlighting some key achievements and significant acquisitions.
williammorrissociety.org.uk

THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY AGM
21 May, 3pm, Sheffield (tbc)
To be followed by a tour led by Corin Mellor of the David Mellor factory at Hathersage, designed by Hopkins Architects.

THE KELMSCOTT LECTURE
13 September, 7pm
Art Workers Guild, London
‘I do not want art for a few’: Crafting Democracy by Edmund de Waal

SOCIETY TRIP TO ICELAND 2016
22 July - 1 August 2016
10 nights, 11 days
Cost: £2,190 per person
Single supplement: £620
Flights or surface travel to and from Iceland is extra.

The William Morris Society is pleased to announce that, in association with Excellentia Global Travel Consultants of Reykjavik, it is organising a visit to Iceland for Society members, family and friends in 2016.

Various flight options are available from different airports, and these can be booked through Excellentia Global Travel at an additional cost.

Accommodation will be in three and four star hotels; all travel in Iceland will be by first class coach.

If interested, please contact the Society office. Once confirmation of your participation is received, the travel agent will require a £300 deposit per person. Deposit payments are refundable apart from a booking fee of £25.

To register, and for full itinerary, terms & conditions, registration form, and flight information etc., contact Carol Henrey on admin@williammorrissociety.org.uk or 020 8741 3735.

EXHIBITIONS
WILLIAM AND EVELYN DE MORGAN
Watts Gallery, Compton, Guildford
to 13 April 2017
Showcases the work of William and Evelyn De Morgan alongside the partnership of GF and Mary Watts wattsgallery.org.uk

HOUSE PROUD
Manchester Art Gallery
to 1 April
20th century ceramics, glass, metalwork and furniture – including items designed for industrial production by Laura Knight, Eric Ravilious and John Piper manchesterartgallery.org

PRE-RAPHAELITES: BEAUTY AND REBELLION
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
to 5 June 2016
Paintings which have never been on public display before are included in this exhibition which shows how the Northern art scene rivaled London in Victorian England liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker

SOCIAL FABRIC: AFRICAN TEXTILES TODAY
William Morris Gallery, London
to 29 May

How the printed and factory-woven textiles of eastern and southern Africa mirror the changing times, fashions and taste of the region wmgallery.org.uk

PHILIP WEBB AND ‘THE FOREST’
V&A, London
to 1 May
Display of Webb’s 1887 tapestry supported by drawings recently acquired by the National Trust vam.ac.uk

PHILIP WEBB 1831-1915
V&A, London
to 24 April
Drawing on the V&A and RIBA’s unparalleled collection of designs and archives, this display brings together his diverse projects and roles as architect and designer. vam.ac.uk

NIKOLAI ASTRUP: PAINTING NORWAY
Dulwich Picture Gallery
to 15 May
Radically innovative works by the Norwegian painter and printmaker (1880-1928) in this first major exhibition outside Norway dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk
IN THE MAKING: RUSKIN, CREATIVITY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP
Millennium Galleries, Sheffield
to 5 June
Explores Ruskin’s ideas on making through a broad range of historical and contemporary art and craft museums-sheffield.org.uk

JOHN LIMBREY ARTIST AND ARTISAN
Court Barn, Chipping Campden
to 13 March
One of Chipping Campden’s most talented craftsmen, for over 40 years Limbrey was responsible for making the majority of silverware designed by John Welch courtbarn.org.uk

BAWDEN BY THE SEA
The Higgins Bedford
from 13 February
Edward Bawden’s nostalgic and whimsical depictions of Britain’s seaside towns are the subject of the latest exhibition in the Edward Bawden gallery thehigginsbedford.org.uk

UNDERGROUND: 100 YEARS OF EDWARD JOHNSTON’S LETTERING FOR LONDON
Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft
12 March to 11 September
How a friendship between Gill and Johnston led to a typeface which is still seen across London to this day ditchingmuseumartcraft.org.uk

ARTIST AND EMPIRE
Tate Britain, London
to 10 April
Includes the Imperial Federation Map of 1886 by Walter Crane who, according to curator Alison Smith, used the border decoration to subtly show the unequal distribution of wealth among peoples of Empire tate.org.uk

SHAKESPEARE IN ART: TEMPESTS, TYRANTS AND TRAGEDY
Compton Verney, Warwickshire
19 March to 19 June
Organised in association with the RSC, the exhibition includes painting, photography, film, sound and light comptonverney.org.uk

FROM RENAISSANCE TO REGENT STREET: THE DELLA ROBBIA POTTERY
Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead
18 June to 4 September
This exhibition will look at the Pottery’s founder Rathbone himself, his own painting and collecting, and his and his contemporaries’ interest in Italy, and put Birkenhead’s Della Robbia into a contemporary context, as the truest Arts & Crafts pottery put onto the market williamsonartgallery.org

PRE-RAPHAELITES ON PAPER: VICTORIAN DRAWINGS FROM THE LANIGAN COLLECTION
Leighton House, London
to 29 May
Organised by the National Gallery of Canada and featuring more than 100 drawings and sketches by the Pre-Raphaelites and their contemporaries rbkc.gov.uk/subsites/museums

MODERN SCOTTISH WOMEN PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS 1885-1965
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
to 26 June
Eighty years which saw an unprecedented number of Scottish women train and practise as artists nationalgalleries.org

Left: Rhubarb, 1911, Oil on canvas, Nikolai Astrup. The Savings Bank Foundation DNB/The Astrup Collection/KODE Art Museums of Bergen. Photo © Dag Fosse/KODE.
Above: Arthur Hughes, In the Grass (detail), oil on canvas c.1864-5, © Museums Sheffield. In ‘Pre-Raphaelites: Beauty and Rebellion’ at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
EDWARD PRIOR: ARTS AND CRAFTS ARCHITECT  
by Martin Godfrey Cook  
The Crowood Press, 208 pp, £20hb, £25 pb  
crowood.com

Highly regarded by critics such as Ian Nairn, Edward Schroeder Prior was a contemporary of Voysey and Lethaby. He designed the cathedral of the Arts and Crafts Movement, St Andrew's Church, Roker, perfected the butterfly plan in his houses, and published what is still the seminal work on medieval gothic art in England in 1900.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE  
by William Morris  
The Folio Society, 320pp, £100hb  
foliosociety.com

The first facsimile of Morris’s famous work, bound in fine leather, blocked in gold with a design by Neil Gower inspired by Morris’s style; printed on Korilla Laid Ivory paper in two colours throughout, with gilded page edges.

ARTS AND CRAFTS ARCHITECTURE: HISTORY AND HERITAGE IN NEW ENGLAND  
by Maureen Meister  
University Press of New England, 328pp, $45 hb, $39.99 eb  
upne.com

Maureen Meister, a member of The William Morris Society in the US, writes ‘Morris plays an important role in my story…’ Other figures…such as Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, and even Sydney Cockerell…were well known by the leading figures in the Arts and Crafts movement in Boston, and I describe their friendships and relationships, analysing how Arts and Crafts ideas travelled from England to New England to be embraced and transformed.’

WONDERLANDS: THE LAST ROMANCES OF WILLIAM MORRIS  
by Phillippa Bennett  
Peter Lang, 230pp, £60 hb  
peterlang.com

Provides a critical account of Morris’s last romances and their essential role in promoting the continuing importance of Morris’s ideas. Approaching these romances through the concept of wonder, the book supplies a new way of understanding their relevance to his writings on art and architecture, nature and the environment, and politics and Socialism. To be reviewed by Professor Ruth Kinna in the Journal of William Morris Studies.

THE DELLA ROBBIA POTTERY: FROM RENAISSANCE TO REGENT STREET  
edited by Julie Sheldon  
Liverpool University Press, 128pp, £14.99 pb  
liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk

The catalogue to the exhibition, From Renaissance to Regent Street, at the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum in Birkenhead (see exhibitions listing). The Della Robbia Pottery was established by Harold Rathbone in 1894 along the lines advocated by Morris, using local labour and raw materials. Much of the book’s content is concerned with Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement.

A LITTLE JOB FOR WILLIAM MORRIS: A MEMOIR OF ROBERT CATTERSON-SMITH  
by Ronald Sly  
RCS Collection, 211pp, £40 hb, £35 sb, £25 eb  
rscollection.co.uk

Describes the work carried out by the painter Catterson-Smith for Morris in the production of books for the Kelmscott press, including the Chaucer. He was responsible for translating Burne-Jones’s drawings into black and white, ready for the woodblock cutter, W H Hooper.

HOW WE LIVE AND HOW WE MIGHT LIVE  
by William Morris  
Five Leaves Bookshop Occasional Paper 5, 28pp, £4 sb  
fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk

The text of a lecture Morris delivered to the Socialist Democratic Federation in at Kelmscott House in 1884, the expression of his maturing socialist and utopian philosophies.

MORRIS AND THE MINERS  
by John Stirling  
Within North East History, vol 46, 2015, £9 inc p&p, cheques payable to ‘NELH’, via Brian Bennison, NELH Secretary, 27 Ivy Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 1DB

On Easter Monday 1887 Morris addressed crowds of striking miners on the banks of the River Tyne. Society member John Stirling has written an article exploring Morris’s visit in detail along with the surrounding campaign by the Socialist League.

THE KELMSCOTT CHAUCER  
Charles Winthrope & Sons, £59.95 hb  
bradfordexchange.com

Recreated from a first edition copy of William Morris’s 1896 The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer Now Newly Imprinted, this high quality publication reproduces the original’s size and format, with illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones and Morris-designed leather bindings.
From the collection

DESIGN FOR BIRD, 1878
The first in a series of features highlighting different items from The William Morris Society’s collection at Kelmscott House, described by its Curator, Helen Elletson

Consisting of a range of original items, the majority of the collection was acquired through the generous gift of the late Mrs Helena Stephenson, a keen Morris enthusiast and collector, who also bequeathed Kelmscott House to the Society in 1970.

It includes Sussex Chairs, wallpaper, textiles, Kelmscott Press books, typographical samples, Socialist pamphlets, Morris & Co catalogues, designs on paper, William de Morgan ceramics and an original Albion hand printing press. Amongst the designs for mural decoration are a number for several major commissions, namely, St James’ Palace, the repainting of the Oxford Union debating Hall ceiling in 1875 and for the ceiling of the drawing room of No 1 Holland Park. Textiles in the collection range from cotton and silk damask samples to Hammersmith rugs and woollen curtains. Original designs consist of drawings for wallpaper, stained glass, murals, embroideries and woven textiles, including the design for Bird illustrated here.

The Society holds an impressive collection of original designs by Morris & Co. It is particularly appropriate that the design for Bird resides in our collection at Morris’s former home because it was created by Morris specifically for the drawing room at Kelmscott, in 1878. Bird was taken as the inspiration for our new visual identity due to its historic importance and because of the major significance to Kelmscott House.

On 25th March 1877 Morris wrote to Thomas Wardle, ‘I am studying birds now to see if I can’t get some of them into my next design.’ This is the first of a group of designs showing pairs of facing birds, perched and in flight. Morris’s inspiration for these designs came from 16th and 17th century Italian woven silks seen in the collections of the South Kensington Museum.

Morris leased Kelmscott House in April 1878 and designed Bird to hang in the house. The photographs show it draped around the walls of the first-floor drawing room. This double-woven woollen fabric hung from picture-rail to floor and, together with the Tulip and Lily carpet, would have resulted in blue and green being the predominant colours of the room.

May, Morris’s younger daughter, believed the pattern intimate and friendly… the most adaptable to the needs of everyday life. It suggests not the wealth of the Millionaire but the modest competence of a middle-class merchant who lives… with the few beautiful things he has collected slowly and carefully.’

The Society owns examples of the Bird woven wool as curtains in both of the available colourways of blue and red. The original design for Bird and a sample of the textile are currently on display as part of the Fellowship is Heaven; Sixty Years of the William Morris Society exhibition (until 31 May).

Members wishing to view any aspect of the collection are welcome to do so, by contacting Helen Elletson at Kelmscott House.

Top left: William Morris, Design for Bird woven textile, pencil and watercolour, 1878.
Top right: Bird curtain, designed by William Morris, 1878. Manufactured at Queen Square, later Merton Abbey. Hand-loom jacquard-woven woollen double cloth.
Above: Eastern side of the drawing room in Kelmscott House, showing the Bird hangings, © Hammersmith & Fulham Archives.
Nick Cox Architects combines experience and expertise in conservation with an enthusiasm for new and innovative design solutions. Our clients include the National Trust, the Churches Conservation Trust, Blenheim Palace, Woburn Abbey, The Goldsmiths’ Company, Winchester and Wells Cathedrals. We also work for a number of private clients on projects of varying size and complexity.

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