Welcome

This is the second issue of the redesigned Magazine. It’s also my second issue as editor. I’m delighted we have had a positive response to its new appearance and contents. I feel very fortunate to have been appointed following the rebranding, and with the decision to use full colour throughout, both of which have provided the Society with greater potential for a visually beautiful publication.

In order to reflect the immense scope of Morris’s work and ideas, I want to publish a rich variety of material whether received, sought or commissioned. Barry Clark and Stephen Williams, for example, submitted their carefully researched article on William and Will Mellor, father and son bookbinders and socialists to whom Morris was a true hero. I’m really pleased to include it here. Concerned that we try to reflect Morris’s many talents and passions through a combination of different types of articles, we would like to include some that result from historical research and others that look at whatever contemporary thought and practice can be perceived as part of his legacy. The article on The William Morris Craft Fellowships is an obvious example, the first in an occasional series that we are publishing to reflect a closer relationship with the SPAB.

Topical features may stem from anniversaries or exhibitions, such as Colin Simpson’s article on Harold Rathbone and the Della Robbia Pottery, which I commissioned to draw attention to the forthcoming exhibition at the Williamson Art Gallery in Birkenhead. We had hoped to arrange an interview with 2015 Turner Prize winners Assemble, but I have written instead on both Assemble and the Chilean practice Elemental, as a couple of prominent examples of collaborative practice in architecture and design. In The Lesser Arts of Life Morris said ‘this art of building is the true democratic art, the child of the man-inhabited earth, the expression of the life of man thereon’. This may be an opportunity to become reacquainted with Morris’s five principles guiding the practice of the present-day ceramicist cited in Colin Simpson’s piece, and to make a comparison with Assemble’s Granby Workshop Rules. I know that you will draw your own conclusions about the appropriateness or otherwise of such an article within this publication and I hope that you let me know what they are. The communications committee and I want to encourage contributions from you.

This issue also includes a poem by Marianne Burton suggested by member Carol Dilworth, which I’ve paired with one read by Sophie Herxheimer at the William Morris Gallery during David Mabb’s exhibition ‘Announcer’. We have a quiz compiled by member and Kelmscott Manor volunteer Helena Nielsen, Journal editor Owen Holland’s account of ‘How I came to Morris’, and contributions from Peter Faulkner within the Bulletin and Books pages.

If you have a relevant piece of information or an event to announce for the Bulletin or Calendar section, know of a recent or forthcoming pamphlet or book to include in our listings, or feel compelled to write a letter for publication, do please send it to me. If you have a suggestion for an article, would like to review a relevant exhibition or talk, or to write your own account of ‘How I came to Morris’ please contact me early, well before the copy deadline, so that I can advise on whether and when it could be included, and on the number of words needed. The autumn issue’s deadline is 4 August, for publication at the end of September. Several articles are already lined up, including a detailed report by its organiser, Anna Mason, on the sell-out May Morris Conference.

Susan Warlow, Editor
The Della Robbia Pottery: from Renaissance to Regent Street

Colin Simpson recounts the ideological and empirical origins of Harold Rathbone’s Arts and Crafts ceramics factory in Birkenhead

In 2016 the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum in Birkenhead is holding its latest celebration of the town’s principal contribution to the Arts and Crafts Movement: the Della Robbia Pottery, in production between 1894 and 1906. It is an exhibition looking at the work and vision of founder Harold Rathbone (1858-1929). Rathbone found inspiration on extensive travels with his family in northern Italy. The Pottery’s name is taken from the early Renaissance family of artists based in Florence who specialised in producing architectural pieces of figurative ceramic sculpture. By the middle of the nineteenth century the work of such quattrocento artists was just beginning to be taken seriously again. The colour and vivacity of the figures gave Harold Rathbone the desire to emulate their spirit, without copying them. In addition to architectural plaques, the Pottery produced a considerable quantity of hollowware chiefly decorated using the traditional technique of sgraffito, scratching into the clay to create a design; a true demonstration of the link between hand and eye that William Morris would have approved: ‘As in the making of the pot, so in its surface ornament, the hand of the workman must be always visible in it.’

Further inspiration for the Della Robbia Pottery came from Morris and from Ruskin, who was a friend of the Rathbone family. Although the Pottery was set up as a commercial business and limited liability company, Rathbone’s motives for its foundation were not primarily profit. Spared from the family businesses to become an artist, Harold’s background as a junior member of an extensive and influential Liverpool family, schooled in Nonconformism and philanthropy, led his intention to be both creative and altruistic. His father, Philip, was a leading member of Liverpool’s artistic community as a patron and collector. He sat on the central committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, at whose first congress in Liverpool in 1888 William Morris gave an address ‘Art and its Producers’. The NAACAI was a short-lived and easily overlooked attempt to promote the ideals of art in industry and which in many ways acknowledged the essential place of machinery in production.

The Memorandum of Association of the Della Robbia Pottery Company simply states that it was to establish and carry on the business of ‘production of pottery and decorative work’ by erecting kilns and workshops as required. But much fuller indications of Harold Rathbone’s intentions are seen in an article in the Pall Mall Gazette of 8 January 1894, immediately after the opening of the premises: “The first object of the company will be the production of an architectural decoration in earthenware, with figure or ornamental design… It is also intended to manufacture pottery for various purposes, the distinction of which shall consist in the freedom of its shape and design, and in the quality of its colour.” And: “The movement partakes (we are told) of the nature of an educational movement but not in the purely theoretical manner generally adopted. The company will take apprentices, whereby a younger generation will be taught and trained in a practical manner, a tradition perpetuated, and a healthy esprit de corps generated… It is hoped to foster the growth of a new school of architectural decoration, capable of becoming within a short time independent and self-
supporting upon the merits of the work done.”

Harold Rathbone had an art training as good as any that was available at the time, at Heatherley’s School of Fine Art and the Slade School of Art in London, as well as in Paris at the Académie Julien. Because of his father’s influential position, Rathbone moved in the best of artistic circles, mixing with Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. On the advice of Burne-Jones he became a pupil to Ford Madox Brown, who included a portrait of Rathbone in one of the Manchester Town Hall murals. They remained close until Brown’s death in 1893. Rathbone owned a collection of Brown’s drawings, some of which were used as designs for Della Robbia panels. Himself a competent draughtsman and painter, Rathbone sustained his career as an artist with a London studio and exhibited extensively. Just prior to throwing all his energies into the Pottery, in 1893 he held a retrospective exhibition at the Hogarth Club in Piccadilly.

The papers to set up the Della Robbia Pottery were signed at the end of 1893. Harold Rathbone succeeded in recruiting two sculptors to assist in the enterprise; while we have established that he was a talented artist, he had no evident experience of a malleable medium or of working in three dimensions. The more famous of the two sculptors was Conrad Dressler, who had developed a significant career as a portrait sculptor, producing flamboyantly-bearded busts of Morris and Brown. Dressler became very close to Ruskin in sculpting a bust of him. Inspired by Ruskin’s ideas, Dressler lectured on ‘The Curse of Machinery’ at several places around the country, including Liverpool in April 1895, where his text was published by the Liverpool Ruskin Society. He exhibited plaster reliefs and pottery examples from the early 1890s, possibly inspired by his friendship with William De Morgan. In the Walker Art Gallery’s 1893 Autumn Exhibition Dressler exhibited eight works, described as ‘Della Robbia ware’.

Rathbone and Dressler would have had countless opportunities to meet one another in London or Liverpool. Together in September 1893 they visited Mary Seton Watts, wife of the painter George Frederick Watts (who sat on the Della Robbia Pottery’s council and was quoted approvingly in their publicity), evidently full of their own plans and prospects for the future. In 1895 she started her own pottery evening class, which in time became the Compton Potters’ Arts Guild.

Previously it has been thought that Rathbone’s catalyst for founding Della Robbia was William De Morgan’s connection with the Cantagalli factory near Florence, where he spent his winters in the 1890s. As well as its artistic and lustred production, from 1878 Cantagalli was turning out plausible copies of Renaissance della Robbia plaques and tin-glazed earthenware in many shapes and sizes. While the architectural wares may have influenced Rathbone and Conrad Dressler in seeing what was possible, it could be that the structure of the factory interested them more than the products. An account of Giuseppe Cantagalli’s factory shortly after it opened recorded, ‘He employs between 40 and 50 men
and boys, all taken as green hands, to be practically instructed by successive stages in every department. His best designers and painters a few months ago had no skill in art whatever, but such is the aptitude of the Tuscan labourer for this work that they have become in this brief time very competent artists, and are themselves originating novel forms and new designs, besides accurately reproducing old ones with much freedom, breadth, rapidity, and lightness of stroke. The only instruction received is in the factory itself."

The innovation represented in this exhibition is the suggestion that, rather than drawing influence from Giuseppe Cantagalli, Rathbone found alternative sources, both mediaeval and contemporary, that introduced to him the technique of sgraffito decoration and helped formulate some of the stylistic traits to be seen in the ware.

The relationship between Rathbone and Dressler soon soured. One apparent bone of contention was that, true to Morris’s principles, Rathbone and Dressler were keen to use local materials for production. Rathbone stated: ‘The fact that a certain type of clay that would take the necessary high glaze was procurable near Birkenhead led to the location of the works on the Cheshire side of the Mersey. Now, however, we go further afield for our clay…”

Wirral was home to a number of brick works. It is thought that in the pottery’s early days clay was brought from Moreton, about five miles away, but that it proved unsuitable for earthenware. It is unclear how long they persisted but Dressler was unhappy with the change and found an alternative patron while in Birkenhead, the soap manufacturer Robert Hudson. In 1896 Hudson moved to Medmenham in Berkshire, taking Dressler and his family with him. The Medmenham Pottery was established with much the same ideals as Della Robbia – local clay and local labour – but practical considerations again intruded. Having completed some significant commissions, it closed within ten years. Ironically, given his early rejection of machinery, Dressler went on to develop a tunnel kiln capable of continuous mass production of plain tiles that, as far as the pottery industry is concerned, is his lasting legacy.

The second sculptor in the architectural department was an Italian, Giovanni Carlo Manzoni. Originally from Turin, Manzoni had come to London in an effort to carve a career for himself but without great success. He had exhibited a few works, including a ‘vase in hand-modelled terra cotta’ at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1889 in London. Manzoni lived within a couple of doors of Dressler, in Glebe Place in Chelsea, and they must have known each other. By June 1894 Manzoni was living at Dressler’s house in Hamilton Square, then moved to Rathbone’s address a few doors away.

Manzoni remained in Birkenhead for only one year before leaving to set up his own pottery, the Minerva Art Pottery in Staffordshire, using remarkably similar techniques and styles. After two years, in June 1897, he once more tried his luck in London, setting up the Bounds Green Pottery as a ‘school of decorative ceramics’ in true Arts and Crafts style. A little over six months later he was back working for Rathbone and he remained in Birkenhead until his death in 1910.

Rathbone’s ideas in setting the style for the Della Robbia Pottery ran very close to Morris’s as announced in his lecture ‘The Lesser Arts of Life’ in 1882. Here Morris celebrated the magnificence of early Renaissance Italian majolica, the use of the hand over tools and machinery, and denigrated the influence of the Oriental. He was no potter but he established five principles to guide the practice of the ceramic art. Although these were followed inconsistently, the Della Robbia potters did not use moulds where other means were more appropriate, did not use printed decoration and the line ‘we must not demand excessive neatness in pottery’ would have been enthusiastically embraced by some of the potters. A comment from earlier in the lecture about hand decorating the surfaces remained consistently true in Birkenhead throughout the Pottery’s years of production.’

Colin Simpson is Principal Museums Officer for Wirral Museums Service, at the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead.

Liverpool University Press has published a book of essays to accompany the exhibition, edited by Julie Sheldon of Liverpool John Moores University, with additional contributions from Sandra Penketh, Colin Simpson, Juliet Carroll, Enrico Venturelli and Colin Trodd. See page 23 for details of the exhibition The Della Robbia Pottery: from Renaissance to Regent Street

2 ‘Art Items’, Pall Mall Gazette, 8 January 1894
3 ibid
5 The Sketch (9 March 1898), p.294
6 Morris, op cit.
The current and future challenges of urbanisation, urban decay and urban renewal are highlighted by the selection of Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena as both this year’s winner of the profession’s most prestigious award, The Pritzker Prize for Architecture, and director of the main exhibition at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. At the heart of his design philosophy is the absolute necessity of including the community in the architectural process in order to find a successful solution that can be built upon.

His practice, Elemental, was established in 2001 to focus on public space, infrastructure and transportation. Its participatory design process was famously used to devise a plan for the sustainable reconstruction of the city of Constitución, which was almost entirely destroyed by the 2010 Chilean earthquake and tsunami. Discussing the consultative process Aravena speaks of asking the right questions, not finding good answers to the wrong questions. ‘We started by asking people… about their complaints and dreams for the city. They said: repair the historical debt of public space and provide democratic access to the river. So, we thought that against geographical threats we had to offer geographical answers. Instead of resisting the waves’ energy, our strategy was to dissipate it by introducing friction. Instead of heavy infrastructure we proposed a forest to mitigate tsunamis.’ The forest also provides the desired new public recreational space.

Elemental is also known for designing the social housing that it calls ‘half of a good house’. Like the half-built, self-build houses one sees in many countries, their steel rebars poking skywards out of a lower storey in anticipation of upward expansion, these designs leave space for the residents to complete their houses themselves. This incremental housing allows social housing to be built on more expensive land closer to economic opportunity, enabling residents to raise themselves up to a higher standard of living while giving them a sense of accomplishment and personal investment. An 80 square metre house can be realised eventually by its owners, rather than building a 40 square metre house that becomes intolerably small as a family expands. The first of these projects dates from 2004, the Quinta Monroy complex at Iquique in Chile, where the blockwork housing’s potential was initially expressed externally in the future infill areas left between dwellings.

Another example of Elemental’s participatory design and incremental housing to rehouse slum dwellers is its 2010 Lo Barnechea project in Santiago. Using a subsidy of $10,000 per family, which would allow them to own their own house, land in a desirable area was bought at $4000 per plot, infrastructure laid in for $3000 and ‘half a house’ built for $3000. Arranged around a communal courtyard, the brick-built terrace housing allows for incremental interior growth. Commencing with one bedroom (plus a temporary bedroom) on the ground floor, each unit can grow into a house with a living-cum-dining room on the ground floor, two bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor and a master bedroom on the second floor.
Residents were consulted over whether they wanted a bath or a water heater since there was not enough money to pay for both. Where professionals would have tended to choose a water heater, all the residents opted for a bath. Coming from slums where they had no water supply and no sewage, and showered using a can in a courtyard, a bath represented privacy. Furthermore at the time of moving in the new owners could not afford the gas bills, so the water heater was deferred until such time as they had become more established. While it may seem harsh that this choice had to be enforced, these dwellings offer a far superior alternative to the slums their owners have been able to leave behind.

Inspired by Bruce Chatwin’s description of the archaeologist Maria Reiche using a step-ladder in order to discern the many and various figures of the Nazca Lines in Peru that were indistinguishable when merely standing on the floor of the plain, Aravena’s Biennale exhibition is entitled Reporting from the Front. It ‘will be about sharing with a broader audience the work of people that are scrutinising the horizon looking for new fields of action, facing issues like segregation, inequalities, peripheries, access to sanitation, natural disasters, housing shortage, migration, informality, crime, traffic, waste, pollution and participation of communities. And simultaneously will be about presenting examples where different dimensions are synthesised, integrating the pragmatic with the existential, pertinence and boldness, creativity and common sense.’

The 24 participants include Assemble, the UK collective of architects, designers and artists who won the 2015 Turner Prize for a number of projects including its collaboration with local residents on the Granby Four Streets, a regeneration project in south Liverpool. ‘The city can be very dis-empowering; Assemble is interested in addressing the typical disconnection between people and the way buildings and infrastructure are made. Given that the built environment is man-made and
In Liverpool, has the oldest black community in Britain and has been one of the most deprived communities in the country for decades. Comprising 200 houses, 150 of which were derelict since the 1990s, Granby Four Streets lies near the Grade II* listed Princes Park designed by Joseph Paxton and James Pennethorne, and consists of wide streets of Victorian terraces, with houses ranging in size from two-up-two-downs to substantial double-fronted houses. Just behind Princes Road, a grand avenue of merchants' houses, architecturally it is not the kind of area that one would immediately associate with urban blight. Many of the houses in the four streets have original details such as machine-carved timber door canopies supported on ornate cast iron brackets or fascias formed of corbels in contrasting brick.

An increase in the dereliction that began post-war with declining population and was spurred on by economic depression in the 1970s, the 1981 riots and resulting negative perception of the area, eventually led to the establishment of the Granby Residents Association in 1993, which lobbied the council and amid many disappointments saved the neighbourhood that has become the Four Streets. After years of campaigning, the GRA disbanded in 2010 – and it seemed that the rest of the area would be cleared under the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme. Around this time, a group of residents began planting the streets, started a monthly community market and painted the tinned-up windows of the empty houses with murals, both in order to make it a better place to live, but also to remind people that they were still there.

The Cameron government brought the HMR programme to an end, withdrawing funding that had been allocated to many northern cities, but with the positive effect of stopping further demolition in Liverpool. In 2011 Granby residents formed the CLT, with the aim of finding a way to renovate the houses and improve the area, eventually becoming the catalyst for housing associations to come back on board. Commencing in December 2014, by September 2015 work on five of the ten CLT houses on Cairns Street to become available for rent or shared ownership was complete. Already subject to alterations in the 140 years since they were built, every house now has a different interior layout. They have been opened up by Assemble in a manner used by other practices...
when renovating terrace housing, such as removing loft spaces to create soaring rooms with pitched ceilings, but have additional handmade features, designed to replace elements that had been stripped out of the houses as they were boarded up by the council. Fire surrounds cast in a terrazzo-like material using brick and rubble construction waste, ceramic door handles smoke-fired in sawdust-filled barbeques and tiles decorated with hand cut decals were installed in the CLT houses.

Assemble are the only ones who have ever sat and listened to the residents, and then translated their vision into drawings and models, and now into reality. They realised their ideas for the houses in a way which is practical, which can be done on the streets, which can be done by the community, can be done in a small space, and which can produce something beautiful. ‘Erika Rushton, Chair of Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust.

Following its nomination for the Turner Prize, Assemble set up Granby Workshop as a means of continuing to support and encourage the kind of hands-on activity that has brought about change in the area. Its designs for artefacts within the CLT houses formed the basis of the first edition of products, alongside new objects developed by the Workshop team and in collaboration with invited designers. According to its Workshop Rules, Granby Workshop products should: ‘be evidently handmade; invite chance, accident and improvisation in the way they are made, so that every product is different; use experimental processes but be simple in their form; be enjoyable to make; be resourceful, giving you a different way of seeing everyday materials; and be made, and sold, to support creativity in this community.’

Assemble’s first collective endeavour, before the collective even had a name, was the Cineroleum on Clerkenwell Road in central London, an experiment in the potential for re-use of the UK’s 4000 empty petrol stations: a temporary cinema, created in 2010 without a client, and which the group also ran for the duration of its existence. They built every element apart from the structure for the seating rake, which was put up by a scaffolding company. Working in their spare time or annual leave, often around full-time employment and education, Assemble built the Cineroleum from borrowed, recycled and industrial materials, with help from around 200 friends, volunteers and passers-by. At that point they didn’t envisage that this way of working might form an alternative form of practice.

Assemble still numbers around 15 members and has retained a non-hierarchical structure and interdisciplinary ethos. Its portfolio includes a series of temporary performance venues, workshops, affordable workspaces, furniture and public realm projects. One of the performance venues, Folly for a Flyover, was designed as a giant construction kit to allow volunteers of any skill level to participate, and its clay and wood brick, bead-curtain walls were subsequently unstrung and the bricks reused to make new play and planting facilities for a local primary school.

Blackhorse Workshop in Walthamstow builds on the area’s rich heritage of craft to create a new type of institution to cultivate and disseminate a culture of making and mending, and Assemble is working with other open access workshops with the aim of building a network of such facilities.

A new collaboration between the Granby 4 Streets CLT and Assemble, the Winter Garden & Common House Project, was awarded £249,619 by Arts Council England earlier this year. Two derelict terrace properties will become a community-owned shared resource, a set of spaces that will house an indoor garden, a gathering place and an artists’ residency programme, developed in partnership with the Bluecoat in Liverpool to offer a temporary place for artists who aim to affect a space or place. It is intended that the Winter Garden and Common House will be used for socially-engaged arts activities, to continue the creative action and engagement which has been a key driver for change in the area.

Elemental is a for-profit company with social interest; Assemble is a not-for-profit collective. Both have their precedents, their peers, and their critics who declare that their small-scale, low-rise projects do little to confront the problem of a vastly expanding migratory population. Both value, however, the input, aspirations and creativity of all humanity at the base of their approach.

Susan Warlow is a director of Architecture Today plc and editor of The William Morris Society Magazine

2 Alejandro Aravena, Introduction to Reporting from the Front. www.labienalle.org
A PILGRIMAGES TO KELMSCOTT

WILLIAM MORRIS,
SENIOR, DEAN, CROWNED,
May 28th, 1892. A.M.

MORRIS GARLAND

A PILGRIMAGES TO KELMSCOTT

THE PILOT'S VOICE

E. "The Pilgrim's Progress".

A PILGRIMAGES TO KELMSCOTT

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THE PILOT'S VOICE

E. "The Pilgrim's Progress".
‘A Pilgrimage to Kelmscott’
by William and Will Mellor

Barry Clark and Stephen Williams on two Manchester figures who paired craftsmanship with active socialism

Bookbinder William Mellor visited Kelmscott Manor with his son Will in August 1905, some 20 years after he had first heard William Morris speak in Manchester. Two years later he wrote up his description of the visit as ‘A Pilgrimage to Kelmscott’, illustrated by Will Mellor, in The Bookbinding Trades Journal, a publication whose establishment he had fought for. That Mellor should describe it as a pilgrimage reveals much about his admiration for Morris, whose creative interlocking of the values of craftsmanship and socialism Mellor too practised throughout his life.

Born in Manchester in 1861, Mellor attended the Cathedral School but left age ten to find work. Intelligent and eager to learn, he became a regular at the Bennett Street Sunday School where he acquired a life-long passion for English literature. Bennett Street had links with Charles Rowley, who in 1878 founded the Ancoats Brotherhood to bring art and literature to the working classes. Rowley staged lectures and other recreational activities which Mellor attended, later writing how the experience had ‘quicked [him] in many ways... interest in economics, in history, in science, and in literature that has been an abiding interest and usefulness in our after lives.’

Rowley already knew Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown when he contacted William Morris in October 1883 with the request that he speak at one of the Ancoats lectures. Morris’s reply that he had only one subject to lecture on, the relation of Art to Labour: also I am an open and declared socialist, didn’t deter Rowley, and Morris was invited back repeatedly. Mellor was almost certainly in the audience to listen to Morris’s first lecture in January 1884 and may have been among the small group chosen by Rowley to ‘gather at his sanctum’ after the lecture. Charles Rowley had a high opinion of Mellor, encouraged his personal development and backed his successful application for a University scholarship to support study at Oxford during the summer of 1892. Rowley later wrote that Mellor ‘would make a good Labour MP; for he is one of the sanest, clearest speakers, besides being a hard worker.’

Mellor completed his seven-year apprenticeship as a bookbinder in 1881. In 1884 he married a trimmer and stitcher in the trade, Mary Jane Jones, who gave birth to their son Will in 1885. By the early 1890s he was both established as a bookbinder and active in his trade union, the Bookbinders’ and Machine Rulers’ Consolidated Union. He espoused ideas of socialism and independent labour representation at union meetings, which won him support and his nomination in 1893 to represent the Bookbinders at the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, where there was also a growing socialist influence. Years later Mellor recalled the ‘stirring scenes’ at the Trades Council as he and fellow socialists overturned the Liberal majority who had dominated proceedings since the 1860s.

Mellor also helped to establish the Manchester and Salford Independent Labour Party (ILP) which under the early presidency of Robert Blatchford, editor of the Clarion newspaper,
proselytised a vision of socialism akin to that of Morris’. The ILP would play a central role in the development of Labour’s electoral politics in Manchester as efforts coalesced around the Labour Representation Committee formed in 1901, where Mellor was a leading figure. In 1916 he joined the growing number of Labour councillors on the City Council when elected for the Blackley and Moston ward, a seat he held until his death.

The decision of the Bookbinders’ Consolidated Union to launch The Bookbinding Trades Journal in 1904 owed much to the respect that Mellor, then treasurer, commanded within the union and to his powers of persuasion, puzzled that ‘an ancient and beautiful craft like that of bookbinding should be without a literary journal devoted to the promotion of its interests’. He was asked to edit the new publication.

Mainly dependent on members of our own craft for contributions to our columns, the Journal featured union news, articles on developments in the trade, book reviews and extended pieces on craft aspects of bookbinding. Mellor believed the Journal would be particularly instructive to young members because ‘we know how… almost impossible it is for many of our younger men to find an opportunity cultivating the higher branches of our handicraft: the rush and stress of competition makes rapidity of workmanship a much more valuable commodity to the average employer than skilled craftsmanship.‘ Early contributors included leading arts and crafts movement bookbinders Thomas Cobden-Sanderson and Douglas Cockerell (brother to Sydney). Mellor wrote regular pieces, among them a scholarly reflection on modern novelists in which he recommended to readers the work of Arnold Bennett commenting, ‘He is the one contemporary we cannot away with.’ Lavishly produced with exquisite headings, borders and illustrations by his son Will, the Bookbinding Trades Journal was well received and sustained a presence under Mellor’s editorship until 1914 when it closed.

At the outbreak of war Mellor was working part-time as Secretary of the Trades Council, an office he had taken up in 1909; part-time as a foreman in the trade; and as an occasional lecturer in bookbinding at the Manchester School of Technology. Whilst identified with the political left in the trade union movement Mellor was regarded as a ‘safe pair of hands’ who could be trusted with much of the preparation for the Trades Union Congress of 1913 held in Manchester, convening meetings of trades councils in the north-west and leading TUC General Council campaigns in Manchester and Salford. His intellectual qualities led to requests to comment on policy issues, as in 1918 when he spoke for the trade unions at a conference convened by Ruskin College on the relationship between the state and producers after the war. The war years were difficult for the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, as affiliated unions dealt with exigencies of the emergency and a squeeze of living standards. Nevertheless, decisions were taken to establish a central office, which Mellor hoped would become a focus of trade union research and activity, and to make the secretary’s post full-time in 1917. The Trades Council was also quick to expose profiteering, especially by unscrupulous landlords who increased rents without justification. Mellor spearheaded these efforts, canvassing opinion among tenants and in 1915 setting-up the Tenants’ Defence Association, to which he was elected secretary.

Always alive to new ideas, Mellor expressed hope in the Russian Revolution and as the Trades Council’s representative worked tirelessly in opposing British military intervention there. His remarks to the Trades Council following the general strike of May 1926, that there should be no recriminations, could not disguise his disappointment at the TUC deserting the miners and the opportunity lost in harnessing the remarkable working class solidarity displayed during the strike. Sadly, his retirement from the Trades Council secretariat in 1929 occurred during a period of retreat for trade unions facing mass unemployment and hostile legislation. As a City Councillor, Mellor was known for campaigns in favour of slum clearance, expansion of council house building and improvements in public health. At his death in 1934 it was recognised that on public health matters, particularly baths and wash houses, ‘much of Manchester’s progress… was due to his influence.’

Mellor was described by a fellow Trades Council member as ‘quiet, unostentatious, almost reserved; and by another as having a ‘kind disposition, human feeling and a strong sense of justice.’ This expressed itself in trade union and political activity to make immediate improvements in the lives of working people, but Mellor never lost sight of Morris’s ultimate desire to see ‘an England where Art, in the sense of the power to appropriate and produce beautiful things, might be again, as he believed it once was, the heritage of the common people.’

Mellor’s son Will had studied bookbinding at both the Printing Crafts Department in the School of Technology, and at the Manchester Municipal School of Art. Walter Crane’s period as Director of Design at the latter had ended by Will’s time, but the School was always key in Manchester’s Arts and Crafts scene. He would have benefited from the School’s Museum which ‘was one of the most complete displays of art and craft workmanship in the country,’ brought into existence by Crane and Rowley, influential Chair of the School of Art Committee. Here Will would have seen Cobden-Sanderson’s binding for his Dove’s Press Excce Mundus: Industrial Ideas and the Book Beautiful; a vellum binding by Emery Walker’s favourite binder, the Cotswold-based Katherine Adams; and work from the Kelmscott Press.

Will had an illustrious student career at the School of Art from 1903 to 1909. He won many School awards, as well as prizes and scholarships for his illuminated manuscripts, his pen and ink work including bookplates, and his bindings, in the annual National Competitions organised by the Board of Education. His work was noted and

Although Barrie and Wendy Armstrong comment that ‘we have found little about Will Mellor who appears frequently in the Northern Art Workers Guild Exhibition of 1911 as a book binder and illustrator,’ Will’s work brought him attention as early as 1904. Then, in 1911, he exhibited in the Art Workers Guild Exhibition of 1911 as a book binder and illustrator, and Ends and Crafts Magazine featured the Autographs of Visitors to the Northern Art Workers’ Guild, a book of vellum leaves with a decorated white vellum cover with laces and an illuminated title page. In December 1909 he married Eliza Sandiford. 

During this period Will was also Honorary Secretary of the Manchester-based Northern Art Workers Guild (NAWG) which had been established in 1896. Walter Crane was present at the inaugural meeting, Charles Rowley was in the chair, and its first Master was the architect Edgar Wood. It met regularly and had a lecture programme of monthly speakers: the visitors who signed the Autograph book designed and made by Will. During Will’s period as Secretary, from 1905 onwards, the visiting speakers included E H New, a fellow pilgrim to Kelmscott Manor and book illustrator, and Douglas Cockerell. The NAWG held three exhibitions of members’ work, the first two in 1898 and 1903, before Will’s time as Secretary although he later bound for himself these two catalogues as one in full leather. The third, held at Manchester Art Gallery in 1911, featured six of Will’s bindings and seven illuminated drawings by him on vellum or parchment. He also designed the cover of the catalogue. The Guild appears to have folded very soon after the 1911 exhibition. 

By 1911 he described himself as a ‘Designer for Book Decoration’ working on his own account. He continued to illustrate The Bookbinding Trades Journal until its demise in 1914 and he provided illustrations for the Manchester-based Journal of Decorative Art. 

Will Mellor survived the first world war where he was a topographical draughtsman in France, returning to his wife Eliza in Manchester in January 1919. He resumed his relationship with the Journal of Decorative Art contributing two articles in 1920 ‘Simple Lettering’ and ‘Decorators’ Show Cards’ together with some illustrative work, and he also contributed extensively to Sutherland’s The Modern Signwriter. He presumably did much commercial work, as in 1923 he was described as ‘probably one of the ablest designers of advertising matter practising in the North of England.’ He was an assistant/specialist teacher at Manchester Municipal School of Art from 1920-21 through to 1924-25. It was the thriving world of ‘artistic’ painting and decorating, however, that provided Will with full-time paid employment. 

From the 1880s Manchester was an important centre of the painting and decorating trade. The monthly Journal of Decorative Art was established in 1881 by W G Sutherland who ran a substantial painting and decorating business and was President of the Manchester and Salford Association of Master Plasterers and Painters. The Journal was targeted at decorative practitioners, with practical articles and extensive international coverage. There were features on historical and contemporary decorative artists and designers; it embraced wallpaper, including an article on Voysey designs; and it had a strong arts and crafts presence. Sutherland was also influential in the formation of the National Association, later Federation, of Master Painters of England and Wales and The Institute of British House Painters and Decorators. The latter adopted the journal and Sutherland continued as its editor and was Secretary to the National Association of Master Painters; he was succeeded in both posts by his son in 1915. The Associations and Journal were all based at Albert Square in Manchester. 

Artistic painting and decorating was also promoted by Walter J Pearce, who had a painting and decorating business but is now more well known for his arts and crafts stained glass work. Pearce wrote a book on Painting and Decorating (London: C Griffin & Co, 1888, but running into many editions), and until 1917 was Head of the Painting and Decorating Department at Manchester Municipal School of Art. He was a founder member and later a Master of the Northern Art Workers Guild, and contributed an essay ‘Concerning Painters’ Processes’ to the Guild’s 1898 Exhibition Catalogue. The Cantrills were another important family in Manchester’s
painting and decorative arts industry, WH Cantrill succeeding Pearce at the School of Art. This Manchester network of the School of Art, the Northern Art Workers Guild, the Journal of Decorative Art and the Master Painters had nurtured Will Mellor’s artistic development and now gave him a job. He became the Manchester Area Secretary of the Master Painters in 1919 or 1920, and around that time was also appointed National Secretary to the Joint Education Committee of the Master Painters and the Painting Operatives Trade Union. In 1924 he succeeded WG Sutherland Jr as the General Secretary to the Master Painters and continued in the role until his retirement in 1944.

Like his father, Will Mellor was a committed and hardworking man who shunned the limelight. He appears in various photographs of the group, often looking down or away from the camera. In 1925 WG Sutherland commented that ‘Will Mellor is a big man, a ‘decorative artist’. He died in Torquay in 1966.

Barry Clark is an arts and crafts enthusiast, and founder of the Museum of Applied Arts and Design. He has written extensively on the history of decorative arts and crafts, and has been a key figure in the development of the field in the UK. His work has been featured in a number of books and journals, and he has been involved in the establishment of the Museum of Applied Arts and Design. He is a leading expert in the field and has made significant contributions to the study of decorative arts and crafts.
Sam Peacock at Wells Cathedral Stonemasons workshop. 
Below right: SPAB Scholars and Fellows 2012 on a roof at Hampton Court Palace. 
Left to right: Emily Hale (Fellow, bricklayer), Henry Sanders (Scholar, architect), Sam Peacock (Fellow, stonemason), Justin McAteer (Scholar, engineer) Callum Plews (Fellow, stonemason) and Charlie De Bono (Scholar, architect).
The William Morris Craft Fellowship

A look at this unique training course for artisans involved in the repair of historic buildings, and an account of her experience as a Fellow by Sam Peacock

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Britain's oldest building conservation body, was set up by William Morris to oppose the destructive restorations of the Victorian era and promote the alternative of 'conservative repair'. By law it must be notified of applications to demolish listed buildings in England and Wales and comments on hundreds each year. Today its broad remit is to advise, educate and campaign.

The SPAB introduced the first postgraduate specialist training in building conservation 85 years ago. The founding members of the Society, who advocated a policy of sensitive, conservative repair, realised both that they needed to demonstrate how this could be put into practice, and that it would be necessary to pass on the knowledge. A number of young architects trained under the guidance of Philip Webb, discussing major repair problems with him, working on his sites alongside the artisans and taking responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the work.

In 1930, with financial support from the Royal Institute of British Architects, the SPAB decided to award £60 for a Scholarship to a young architect to study the methods of repair now become traditional among the architect and builder members of the Society. It was named the Lethaby Scholarship in memory of the Arts and Crafts architect, designer and co-founder of the Art Workers' Guild. Now up to four Scholarships each year are open to architects, building surveyors or engineers.

In order to foster a new generation of outstanding artisans with the knowledge and expertise needed to conserve historic buildings, The William Morris Craft Fellowship was founded in 1987. Since 2003 The William Morris Craft Fellowship has been one of its sponsors. The Fellowship is an advanced training programme, devised to nurture artisans who are employed in any trade relating to the repair of historic buildings, at the beginning of their careers. It is increasingly relevant given the lack of skilled people needed to care for Britain's historic buildings and structures. Three or four Fellowships are awarded annually depending on available funding.

Six months of practical training is divided into three blocks of two months, permitting the Fellows to return to their employment between each block. Scholars and Fellows travel together for some activities, learning from leading experts on historic building conservation and vernacular crafts. The SPAB has an excellent network of artisans across the country, including past Scholars and Fellows, who are very willing to talk about their work and to explain their craft to a younger generation. A wonderful part of these programmes is how generous these hosts are. Often the hosts spend a day or two with the Fellows, for example repairing a cob house and explaining the processes involved with earth building, and then they will put them up in their own home. The discussion, on traditional techniques, philosophy of repair, architecture etc, relating to the project, continues over a meal provided by the host.

During the first two blocks the Fellows travel as a group, making daily site visits, studying repair projects, and meeting professionals, contractors and artisans, both to develop the different aspects of their chosen field and to appreciate craft skills other than their own. The final block is devoted to the individual needs and interests of each Fellow in consultation with their employers.

One of three William Morris Craft Fellows in 2012, conservation mason Sam Peacock previously studied for NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in Stonemasonry at Moulton College and City of Bath College, completing her apprenticeship in 2010. Sam was Country Living/Balvenie Artisan Apprentice of the Year in 2009 and in 2010 was awarded Stonemason Trainee of the Year by the Stone Federation of Great Britain. She writes about her Fellowship experience:

'I currently work as a conservation..."
stonemason in the south-west. Prior to the Fellowship I had worked and trained as a banker mason (mostly workshop-based, banker masons specialise in working the stones required by a building’s design, from simple chamfers to detailed mouldings and classical masonry). After I had completed an art foundation course I decided to become a stonemason because I wanted to work on old buildings and increasingly I found the philosophies surrounding the conservation of historic buildings more challenging and appealing than the new-build industry. I was encouraged to apply for the Fellowship by my then employer, Simon Armstrong of Wells Cathedral Stonemasons.

The Fellowship was fantastic. As a group of six, three Fellows and three Scholars, we travelled the country, learning about the many building materials involved in conservation – from dry stone walling in the Lake District to wood carving in Stirling. We went to forges, threw bricks, split roofing slates, cut mortise and tenon joints at a timber framers and thatched a cottage, and visited many historic buildings where we could discuss their conservation and repair with the architect or engineer. Whilst on the fellowship we were prepared to camp in all weathers, however, we were shown a great deal of hospitality from all of our hosts and I don’t think my tent got removed from its packet.

My favourite part of the Fellowship was spending a summer evening in the Welsh countryside burning limestone to make lime with the architect Stafford Holmes (author of the book Building with Lime: A Practical Introduction). Not only was it great fun, it was a great help to me as I use lime mortars, both hydraulic and putty lime, in my work. Doing a lime burn enabled us to comprehend the process of making lime from start to finish, and to understand the material more deeply; what type of lime stone is used, the curing time needed for the mortar and its strength, for example NHL 2, 3.5 or 5.

Right from the first block we were encouraged to keep a drawn and written record in the form of a notebook. For any places that we visited and found particularly interesting during the first and second blocks, the SPAB would try to arrange an individual placement there during the third and final block – sometimes for a week, sometimes for a couple of days. It was during my third block that I visited York Minster and spent a few days there. After the Fellowship I was offered the opportunity to work at the Minster with the National Heritage Training Group, experiencing the issues of historic building conservation first hand. I was part of the team of masons repairing the Great East Window and conserving the fourteenth century statue of Saint Peter.

Conservation is not just the physical act of repairing the historical fabric of a building, it’s also about preserving our built heritage for future generations. The issues of conservation can also be found in a form of intangible heritage, such as in the arguments of authenticity and significance, and how these are interwoven into the tradition, continuation and re-enactment of traditional craft skills. These skills can only be passed on if opportunities are created for craftspeople to practice their trade. Balancing both these concerns often creates a conflict of interest between the replacement and retention of the fabric of a building. Wanting to explore these arguments further I undertook a master’s degree in the Archaeology of Buildings at the University of York.

Now self-employed, I have worked with a small conservation company, Minerva Stone, on a number of churches, combining both conservation and replacement of stonework. Over the summer of 2015 I was back working with Wells Cathedral Stonemasons on the eighteenth century Coade stone panels of the Radcliffe Observatory in Oxford. The work I do is often varied, from banker work, letter cutting and conservation to setting out and carving pinnacles, but it will be difficult to beat working at York Minster.

I have recently got back from working in Norway on the cathedral of Trondheim, where I spent a short spell over the winter. Since my return I have started training in the conservation of stained glass at Holy Well Glass in Wells. I’ve spent quite a few years repairing or working stone for various windows, including ecclesiastical tracery, and in time I would like to be able to conserve both stone and glass.

The Fellowship has shaped my career immeasurably. Through doing it I gained a greater understanding of the different philosophies surrounding the repair and maintenance of historical buildings and how complex issues, such as significance and authenticity, affect the extent of work that is undertaken. It directly influenced the direction that my career has taken and given me the confidence to be assertive and confident in my craft.’

Sam is also the subject of a short video, one of a series produced by the SPAB to celebrate women in conservation for International Women’s Day 2016: https://vimeo.com/157720917
Our William Morris catalogue (books and ephemera from a notable private collection) featuring Kelmscott editions, private press, letters and bibliography will soon be available.

If you would like to receive a catalogue, our contact details are below.

Sir Basil Blackwell, one-time President of the Morris Society,
with his cherished Kelmscott Cliché.

Tel: +44 (0)1865 333553
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Web: http://rarebooks.blackwell.co.uk/rarebooks/
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Wimpole Gothic Tower, after conservation of all masonry and replacement of crenellations and arrow slits.
Bulletin

MORRIS MEMORIAL HALL APPEAL
Everyone who knows Kelmscott knows that the Morris Memorial Hall is a building of both character and significance. Designed before 1919 by Ernest Gimson, it stands as testimony to May Morris’s determination to memorialise her father in the village he loved, and to do so by providing an amenity that would benefit its inhabitants. In fundraising for the hall, May enlisted the support of many friends, scholars and writers including Rudyard Kipling, Sydney Cockerell and Emery Walker. By 1934, when the hall was actually built, Gimson had died and May was nearing the end of her life. In a sense it serves as testament to these exceptional talents.

The Grade II listed building is a Grade II listed building is a registered charity (number: 304323) managed by Kelmscott residents on a voluntary basis. It now needs extensive conservation to the roof at an estimated cost of over £100,000. This is the current focus of our fundraising appeal. The enclosed Raise the Roof leaflet, with its list of supporters, so that your name and support will be acknowledged and remembered.

You will find details of how to donate in the enclosed leaflet. More information is available on our website www.morrismemorialhall.org.uk.

Please give generously and help us preserve this important Arts & Crafts building for future generations. Thank you.
Laura Roberts, Treasurer, Morris Memorial Hall
treasurer@morrismemorialhall.org.uk
t: 01367 253103

ARTS AND CRAFTS HAMMERSMITH
Hoardings, Helpers And Headlines

We are about to enter into the most intense and exciting phase of the Arts and Crafts Hammersmith project, as the hoardings go up and the builders move into Kelmscott House in July.

Three years in the planning, the programme of refurbishment work, supported by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and charitable funders as diverse as Garfield Weston Foundation, Charles Hayward Foundation and private donations, will run until the end of September. Ably led by conservation and historic house specialists Fullers Builders, who are based, interestingly, within striking distance of Morris’s birthplace in Walthamstow, work will start with the front section of the house and the cellar; moving into the office, kitchen and rear parts of the premises as the 12 week programme progresses.

During this time, the impact on the visitor programme will be kept to a minimum, although we will need to put revised access arrangements in place for health and safety reasons. Morris’s Albion printing press will be under wraps for the duration, and we shall have to take some areas out of commission for short periods of time to allow decoration works. The collections will be shipped temporarily into our storage facility in Stockwell to protect them and allow cataloguing and digitising work.

A quarter of a mile away, at the Emery Walker Trust’s premises at 7 Passage, Oxford, the task is more extensive, and began in May. Major works to the roof and elevations take place over the early summer; As with Kelmscott House, completion is expected at the end of September; then the collections will be reinstated, a major job, before the refreshed house is unveiled in spring 2017.

Whilst all this happens, the hive of industry that is the digitising and cataloguing of archives and collections at our temporary storage facility in Stockwell shifts up a gear. A cohort of around a dozen new volunteers has just been trained and inducted and we welcome them all to the Morris and Walker family with open arms.
MORRIS IN OXFORD: POLITICS AND DESIGN

This day-long walking tour which took place at the end of April was led by Martin Stoell, a resident of Oxford, a former city councillor and Chair of The William Morris Society. A report by Society member Richard Carr will appear in the Autumn issue of the Society Magazine.

TED HOLLAMY ON TELEVISION

In the magazine of the Twentieth Century Society, C20, Issue 1 2016, and online at the URL listed below, Henrietta Billings (since mid-March the Director of SAVE Britain’s Heritage) writes of receiving an invitation from the BBC to take part in filming at Morris’s Red House as part of a series on twentieth-century council housing presented by Dan Cruickshank. The programme focuses on Edward Hollamy and his wife Ursula, who lived at Red House for nearly 50 years. Hollamy (1921-99), usually referred to as Ted, studied at the Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts and became an admirer and follower of Morris - for him, we are told, architecture was a ‘social art’.

He became a senior architect at the LCC, and Director of Architecture, Planning and Design 1969 to 1981. As such he was responsible for some of the most progressive London architecture of the time – some of it now sadly under threat of redevelopment, resisted by many residents of Cressingham Gardens and Central Hill, and by the Twentieth Century Society.

Ted and his fellow-communist Dick-Toms bought Red House in a dilapidated state in 1952 and lived in it with their wives and children, continuing their careers while restoring and refurbishing the house with exemplary care. Although Billings does not mention it, as a keen member of The William Morris Society Ted would on occasion open the house and grounds to members, who could share his and his wife’s enthusiasm for the house. The TV series is to be screened later this year. I am already looking forward to it.

Peter Faulkner

c20society.org.uk/casework/the-social-art-of-architecture

savecentralhill.org.uk

THE UNSUNG MUSE

An exhibition of paintings, drawings and film by Kirsty Buchanan and Clara Drummond, inspired by female muses and their forgotten role as authors or artists. Kirsty Buchanan and Clara Drummond collaborated with The William Morris Society to create an exhibition of original work inspired by the Society’s collection and archive. Their work was shown at Kelmscott House throughout May.

Both artists have a mutual interest in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the pursuit of sincerity and truth in their art, and particularly the role that women played in the Brotherhood both as muses and as artists in their own right. Together they have explored the interchanging nature of the artist and the muse as both maker and subject, with a particular focus on the work and lives of Jane Morris and Lizzie Siddal, and the complexities of their female relationships and collaborations.

Buchanan and Drummond make material from conversations born out of hours of sitting for portraits, and webs of discussions that weave between the archive at the William Morris Society, museum objects, books, stories and films together with an ongoing exchange of letters.

Alongside their drawings, paintings and films they exhibited drawings, embroideries and letters from Jane Morris, her daughter May Morris and the Women’s Guild of Arts, as a way of connecting the conversation between themselves and the Pre-Raphaelite women of the past.
Calendar

MORRIS EVENTS
All forthcoming William Morris Society events are detailed in our enclosed events leaflet but a few highlights are listed below.

LISTING IN THE C 21
9 July, 2 15 pm
Kelmscot House, London
Simon Hawkins, an Assistant Designation Adviser with Historic England and a trustee at The William Morris Society with specific responsibility for the House and Gardens, will speak on how Historic England decides what building, monuments, parks and gardens to assess today and how it makes the decisions.

KELMSCOTT LECTURE
13 September, 7pm
Art Workers’ Guild, London
I do not want art for a few’": Crafting Democracy by Edmund de Waal Our annual Kelmscott Lecture will be given by artist Edmund de Waal, whose porcelain is exhibited in museums and galleries around the world and whose bestselling memoir The Hare with Amber Eyes won the RSL Ondaatje Prize and the Costa Biography Award. In this talk he will reflect on democracy at the heart of the Arts and Crafts movement, on how craft crosses disciplines and how William Morris and other pioneers of the craft world continue to influence making, writing and talking about craft today.

OPEN HOUSE LONDON
17 September, 11am to 5pm
Kelmscott House, London
Volunteers are welcomed to assist with greeting visitors to the coach house and basement at Kelmscott House and with serving refreshments. Please contact the Curator, Helen Ellerton.

TOTALLY THAMES FESTIVAL: RIVERSIDE WALKING TOUR
24 September, 11am to 12 noon, £5
Kelmscott House, London
Join the Society’s Curator, Helen Ellerton, for a guided walking tour of the Hammersmith riverside to learn stories of the river and those who lived beside it, from JMW Turner to Morris and Emery Walker.

EXHIBITIONS

PHOEBE ANNE TRAQUAIR: WORKS IN MINIATURE
Watts Gallery, Compton, Guildford
to 23 October
Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852-1936) was a key figure in the Arts & Crafts Movement, producing embroidery, illuminated manuscripts and enamels. wattsgallery.org.uk

WANTED: YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS
The Society is broadening its communications more and more through its website, twitter account and regular e-bullets. The e-bullets are sent out between issues of the Magazines with up to date news of the Society and other Morrisian developments as they happen.
In the last issue of the Magazine it was announced that printed copies of the US Society’s Newsletter would no longer be sent to UK and Overseas members due to the ever increasing postage costs. A pdf of the Newsletter is available, however.
To add your name to the list for the e-bulletin or for the pdf of the US Society’s Newsletter please email Penny McMahon, Membership Secretary: membership@williammorrissociety.org.uk.

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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

PAINTING WITH LIGHT: ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE PRE-RAPHAELITES TO THE MODERN AGE
Tate Britain, London
to 25 September
Spanning 75 years, it includes works by Millais, Rossetti and Wistler alongside photographs by Margaret Cameron and others whose work they inspired and who inspired them tate.org.uk

REHANG OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART GALLERIES
Ashmolean, Oxford
Newly furnished and redisplayed galleries. The Pre-Raphaelite
Since 1952, paintings now hang in the largest gallery, with space to accommodate William Burges’ Great Bookcase, currently being restored, which has been absent from the museum, until 20 November.

Includes works by Paul Nash, CRW Nevinson, David Bomberg and Henry Lamb, whose visions imply the mythical character of ancient landscapes, whitworth.manchester.ac.uk.

### CLARE TWOPEY: TIME 
#### PRESENT AND TIME PAST
William Morris Gallery, London
to 18 September

In a response to Morris’s ideas about making, Twomey is creating a vast tile panel, with a new volunteer apprentice each day working alongside a skilled painter on Morris’s Chrysanthemum design. wmgallery.org.uk

### ALISON BRITTON: CONTENT AND FORM
V&A, London
to 4 September

From the 1970s Britton’s ceramics have taken function and ornamentation as subjects to explore rather than necessarily to exhibit, an approach to making that shifted the agenda for craft practice. vam.ac.uk

### PRECIOUS LITTLE GEMS
Millennium Galleries, Sheffield
to 11 September

New work from young silversmiths.

Nina Rathalia and Fenella Watson
museums-sheffield.org.uk

### DISCOVERING BRILLIANCE: WINIFRED KNIGHTS
Dulwich Picture Gallery, London
to 26 September

Inspired by the masterpieces of Italian Early Renaissance artists, Winifred Knights (1899-1947) was one of the most pioneering British artists of the first half of the twentieth century. dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

### CERAMICS IN THE CITY
The Geoffrye Museum, London
23 to 26 September

A three day selling fair featuring the work of around 50 selected potters, where visitors can browse, meet the makers and watch demonstrations. geoffrye-museum.org.uk

### BEAUTIFUL BODIES
The Higgins Bedford
to 2 October

Including many of the twentieth century’s most influential British artists, this exhibition celebrates their different approaches to drawing the human figure. thehigginsbedford.org.uk

### FRANK BRANGWEN (1867-1956): ‘A MISSION TO DECORATE LIFE’
Court Barn, Chipping Campden
to 13 March

Exploring the links between Brangwen and the Arts and Crafts Movement, with works drawn from private collections and the William Morris Gallery. courtbarn.org.uk

### THE ETHICS OF DUST
Westminster Hall, London
29 June to 1 September

Created by artist, architect and conservationist Jorge Otero-Pailos, the work is a 50 metre long translucent latex cast of the hall’s internal east wall, containing hundreds of years of surface pollution and dust. It takes its name from Ruskin’s 1866 publication, The Ethics of the Dust. artangel.org.uk/ethics-of-dust

### BAWDEN BY THE SEA
The Higgins Bedford
to 29 January 2017

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

### BRITAIN IN THE FIFTIES: DESIGN AND ASPIRATION
Compton Verney, Warwickshire
9 July to 2 October

Explores the crucial role played by design in post-war Britain and the effect of growing wealth in the period. comptonverney.org.uk

### UNDERGROUND: 100 YEARS OF EDWARD JOHNSTON’S LETTERING FOR LONDON
Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft
to 11 September

How a friendship between Gill and Johnston led to a typeface which is still seen across London to this day. ditchlingmuseum.artcraft.org.uk

### FROM RENAISSANCE TO REGENT STREET: THE DELLA ROBBIA POTTERY
Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead
to 4 September

This exhibition will put Birkenhead’s Della Robbia into a contemporary context, as the truest Arts and Crafts pottery put onto the market. williamsonartgallery.org

### ENDEARING FREAKS! THE MARTIN BROTHERS
Standen, West Sussex
1 August to 13 September

Ceramics by the brothers famous for their eccentric saltglaze stoneware birds, including items from the National Trust and Hull Grundy collections. nationaltrust.org.uk/standen-house-and-garden/whats-on
How I came to Morris

On being asked to write a short account of ‘How I came to Morris’, I was struck by the oddly confessional tone of the proposed title, as if an interest in Morris might be akin to a matter of faith, rather than, say, critical or intellectual examination. The title also faintly echoes that of Morris’s own short article ‘How I Became a Socialist’, written for the Social Democratic Federation’s 1894 and much reprinted since then. Morris’s own predilection for writing about socialism as a kind of religion – with its own distinct ethical and aesthetic codes – brings these two resonances into proximity. I shall try, briefly, to elaborate on the subject at hand, much as I remain bemused by the genre.

It so happens that I became a socialist myself largely as a consequence of reading Morris’s political and utopian writings during my teenage years. In this regard, Morris served primarily as a particularly bright star through which I was introduced to a much vaster constellation. This early interest in Morris’s political identity, unavoidably bound up as it is with his artistic practice, was later filtered through a reading of EP Thompson’s biography, which I first read whilst completing an undergraduate dissertation on Morris’s utopianism. This academic interest continues to abide – but so much for such autobiographical niceties.

My initial inclination to read Morris stemmed in no small part from his standing as one of the most effective propagandists for revolutionary socialism to have written in the English language. By contrast, it has always been the lot of those who have made various kinds of compromise with an unjust status quo to attempt to write off the idea of revolution as somehow untimely, outmoded, unnecessary or unrealistic. In his political lectures and journalism, Morris carefully and patiently dismantled this logic of accommodation in prose that still retains its polemical force, albeit produced under markedly different historical conditions. It was this political aspect of Morris’s multifarious identity and his uncompromising militancy that first drew me into his orbit (although I would nowadays have us think of as a ‘domestic extremist’ – a terminology that had yet to be invented during the 1880s). Morris was what Theresa May would nowadays have us think of as a ‘domestic extremist’ – a terminology that had yet to be invented during the 1880s. I continue to regard Morris as belonging to a global network of revolutionary activists differently committed to the communist tradition. His name might viably be ranged for comparison – although not without some complications – with the likes of Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. Although many might wish to deny or ignore it, this remains a living tradition.

It must be an uncanny ruse of history, then, that we are currently living through a period in which one of the leading candidates for the Democratic nomination in the US presidential primaries has inspired a mass movement of the young and disaffected with a slogan of political revolution. In certain strands of critical theory, a narrowly political revolution – whereby one fraction of a dominant class simply replaces another fraction – is often counterposed to the idea of social revolution, as propounded by Morris and others, which envisages the abolition of class society in its entirety. By Morrisian standards, then, Bernie Sanders et al appear as mild-mannered reformists at best, but those who have been inspired by Sanders’s call to revolution will not stop looking for answers to the questions that he has posed after the latest electoral cycle reaches its invariably disappointing conclusion. More to the point, the problems diagnosed by a resurgent radical left in the US and parts of Europe reach well beyond the borders of the so-called first world.

Looking backwards to the turbulent period of the 1880s socialist revival in Britain can help a new generation of activists and thinkers orientate themselves in a conjuncture that is both unquestionably new and yet eerily familiar. We might recognise it as a Gramscian interregnum, in which the old is certainly dying, but the new cannot yet be born. In his political guise, Morris was concerned with the three tasks of agitation, education and organisation. As various ghosts of the communist tradition return to haunt the contemporary liberal imagination, I am more and more convinced that Morris still has much to teach, politically speaking.

Owen Holland is the editor of The Journal of William Morris Studies. He recently completed a PhD thesis on Morris’s utopianism. In October he will take up a college lectureship in English literature at Jesus College, Oxford.
Quiz

WILLIAM MORRIS QUIZ, COMPILED BY HELENA NIELSEN

1 Who said of Morris’ death ‘My coat feels thinner… one would think I had lost a buttress’?
   A. Burne-Jones
   B. Philip Webb
   C. Sidney Cockerell

2 On what occasion did William Morris deliberately sit on his top hat?
   A. When Burne-Jones accepted a knighthood
   B. When Morris resigned as a director of Devon Great Consols
   C. When he reached the age of 40

3 Who drew a ‘lew d cartoon’ of Morris, Jane and Rossetti sitting in a row on the three-seater privy at Kelmscott Manor?
   A. Burne-Jones
   B. Aubrey Beardsley
   C. Osbert Lancaster

4 Who said of Morris ‘He could ride well, but never took any pains and the horse was making a poem, too, there was trouble’?
   A. Philip Webb
   B. Eirikr Magnusson
   C. Burne-Jones

5 Which Pre-Raphaelite was fond of quoting the Samoan chief who, when asked if there was a God replied, ‘We know that at night someone goes by among the trees, but we never speak of it’?
   A. Rossetti
   B. Morris
   C. Ruskin

6 Which nineteenth century artist is hidden in this anagram: REVWRTR/LAENAC?

7 Whose family was described as ‘the sort of family that one would perhaps rather read about than belong to’?
   A. The Macdonald sisters
   B. Ruskin
   C. Rossetti

8 Where were Philip Webb’s ashes scattered?
   A. In his garden at Caxton’s
   B. Kelmscott
   C. Uffington

9 Whose dream of a utopian community was one where only wind and water would be used for power as steam was a ‘furious waste of fuel to do what every stream and breeze are ready to do costlessly… gunpowder and steam hammers are today the toys of the insane and paralytic’?
   A. Morris
   B. Karl Marx
   C. John Betjeman

10 What were called ‘expecting Christophers’ in the Pre-Raphaelite circle?
   A. Payment for paintings
   B. Pregnancies
   C. Wine deliveries

11 Who called Kelmscott Manor ‘the doziest dump of grey old bee-hives’?
   A. Rossetti
   B. Swinburne
   C. John Betjeman

12 Who was married on the anniversary of Beatrice’s death?
   A. Rossetti
   B. Burne-Jones
   C. Millais

13 Who initially bought April Love by Arthur Hughes?
   A. Ruskin
   B. Morris
   C. Madox Brown

14 Who proposed marriage in front of April Love?
   A. Morris
   B. Millais
   C. Burne-Jones

15 Who volunteered to fight in the Crimean war but was rejected because of poor health?
   A. Holman Hunt
   B. Millais
   C. Burne-Jones

16 Which Victorian poet wrote of Morris ‘If some angel offered me the choice, I would choose to live his life rather than my own or any other man’s’?
   A. Swinburne
   B. Tennyson
   C. W. B. Yeats

17 Which of the Pre-Raphaelite group is said to have carved one of the capitals in the Oxford University Natural History Museum?
   A. Woolner
   B. Morris
   C. Rossetti

18 Who commented about drawing lions ‘Either you make them look like yourself or Mr Gladstone’?
   A. Walter Crane
   B. Emery Walker
   C. Philip Webb

19 Who said of Morris that he was ‘a great rock with a little moss on it perhaps’?
   A. Sydney Cockerell
   B. Emery Walker
   C. George Bernard Shaw

20 Which friend of Morris’s had to help at the birth of one of his own children?
   A. Burne-Jones
   B. Magnusson
   C. Rossetti

21 Which Holman Hunt painting was saved from fire by a valuable Indian shawl?
   A. The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple
   B. The Light of the World
   C. The Hireling Shepherd

22 For how much did Holman Hunt sell the above painting?
   A. 500 guineas
   B. 2500 guineas
   C. 5500 guineas

23 Who, on first meeting Morris, described him as ‘a slim boy like a wonderful bird just out of his shell’?
   A. Ruskin
   B. George MacDonald
   C. Webb

24 ‘You said he wasn’t clean – he is really underneath – but always pencils and inks and the day’s messes in work stick to him, and like to get on him, and if anything has to be spilled to make up the necessary average of spilling, it spills on him. But he boils himself in tubs daily, and is very clean really. This one is cleaner inside than is at all necessary.’ Who wrote this of Morris?
   A. Sydney Cockerell
   B. Emery Walker
   C. Burne-Jones

25 Who commented that Morris’s funeral was ‘the only burial I have seen which did not shame me at the thought of my own’?
   A. Lethaby
   B. Webb
   C. Burne-Jones

Helena Nielsen is a member of the South Midlands William Morris Group and a guide at Kelmscott Manor.

Answers on page 21.
Books

THE PAINTED BOOK IN RENAISSANCE ITALY 1450-1600 by Jonathan J G Alexander Yale University Press, 400pp, £50 hb yalebooks.co.uk Hand-painted illumination in the Italian Renaissance spanned the momentous shift from manuscript production to print. This major survey describes key illuminated manuscripts and printed books from the period and explores the social and material worlds in which they were produced. Richly illustrated.

HISTORY AND POETICS IN THE EARLY WRITINGS OF WILLIAM MORRIS, 1855-1870 by Florence Boos Ohio State University Press, 322 pp, 17 Plates, 23 Figures, $91.95 Hb, $19.95 Eb, $14.95 Cd ohioostatepress.org Exploring the young man’s successive efforts to find a balancing ethical framework through poetry, Boos (a former president of the William Morris Society in the USA and general editor of the William Morris Archive) traces Morris’s literary evolution through his juvenile poems; the essays, poems, and prose romances of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine; the highly original verses of The Defence of Guenever; and the ten years of experimentation that preceded his two best-known epics, The Life and Death of Jason and The Earthly Paradise.

THE MYSTERY OF MARQUIS D’OISY by Julian W S Litten, with a foreword by Roy Strong Paul Watkins Publishing, 192pp, 76 illustrations, many in colour, £14.95 pb ISBN 978-1-907730-49-8 A talented Arts and Crafts eccentric, Ambrose Thomas apparently was born in 1881 in Rio de Janeiro, but later preferred to be known as Amand Esdouard Ambroise Marie Louis Etienne Philippe d’Saint André Tournoy, Marquis d’Oisy. His talents enabled him to become a designer of houses and furniture; in the later 1920s he worked for Liberty & Co, Maple & Co and Heal’s. The Countess of Warwick (author of a book on Morris) said of d’Oisy that ‘he came not from any foreign land but from the East End of London’. She became his patron and d’Oisy flourished, staging pageants and producing furnishings and draperies for churches, many of which are illustrated. Peter Faulkner

RUSKIN’S VENICE: THE STONES REVISITED by Sarah Quill Lund Humphries, 256pp, £30 hb lundhumphries.com New edition of photographer Quill’s 2000 publication, featuring 175 new photographs recording the fine architectural details of Venice’s buildings, linked to passages from Ruskin’s The Stones of Venice. Additional illustrations include drawings from his Venetian notebooks and four daguerreotypes of Venice.

A POTTED HISTORY: HENRY WILLET’S CERAMIC CHRONICLE OF BRITAIN by Stella Beddoo ACC Art Books, 352pp, B12 colour illustrations, £45 hb antiquecycle.co.uk Formed by a nineteenth century businessman to illustrate ‘popular British history’, the Willett Collection is arranged here in chapters to illustrate his own cataloguing system, including ‘Crime’ and ‘Conviviality and Teetotalism’. The items comprise hollow ware and flat ware, ornamental busts and figures, dating from the sixteenth to the late nineteenth century.

ART VERSUS INDUSTRY?: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON VISUAL AND INDUSTRIAL CULTURES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN edited by Kate Nichols, Rebecca Wade and Gabriel Williams Manchester University Press, 259 pp, £75 Hb manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk Surprising examples of collaboration are revealed here, between artists, craftspeople, designers, inventors, curators, engineers and educators, in the formation of the cultural and commercial identity of Britain and its colonies. The texts explore such diverse subjects as the mechanical translation of sculpture, the display of stained glass and the use of the kaleidoscope in painting and pattern design.

VILLAGE GREENS by Graham Bathe The Open Spaces Society and Pitkin, 322pp, £5 sb, inc p&p oss.org.uk Village greens have various origins in planned settlements, common pastures, markets and undeveloped land. This compact, illustrated guide examines their diverse history, their use for ‘lawful sports and pastimes’ including archery, promoted under the Plantagenets and the Tudors, and the unusual wildlife found in ancient grasslands.
A ROLL OF WALLPAPER FOR WILLIAM MORRIS

SOPHIE HERXHEIMER

Victorian line: your time, my time –
blue tiles, the 70s, familiar as toast
straight to you old uncle. Revolutionary!
neatly does it: Brixton, dot dot Walthamstow.

I pilgrim here from palettes of my own
victorious ink lines swirl from mine to yours
I’m making paper journeys for the eye
not straight at all, revolutionary old uncle.

Socialism, print: we all must eat -
I pilgrim here from palettes of my own
hand-made and mass-produced alike,
we’re bound on paper journeys for the eye.

I saw a life-size bride cake in a shop
Socialism? Print! We all must eat.
On streets fresh cloth, old slogans spill
hand-made and mass-produced alike.

Shouters sell their incense, prosyletise.
I saw a life-size bride cake in a shop
Good taste is death but good ideas are meat.
On streets old cloth, fresh slogans spill.

Peacocks, ferns, what’s rare, who’s common?
broken glass of Walthamstow and Brixton –
Let’s drink to making everything but sense
familiar toast, the freedom of the line.

Sophie Herxheimer is a London born artist and poet. Recent publications include ‘The Listening Forest’ and ‘The New Concrete Poetry’.
Her poem ‘We saved four hundred thousand ancient manuscripts’ won the inaugural Free Verse Poetry Book Fair Competition in 2015,
sophieherxheimer.com

SONG OF THE WILLIAM MORRIS WALLPAPER

MARIANNE BURTON

black bird black bird black bird
drib kcalb drib kcalb drib kcalb

open beak closed beak
closed beak open beak

f o l
i
a g e

bird berry straw berry bird
black bird black bird black bird

Marianne Burton’s poems have been widely published in top literary journals including ‘Poetry Wales’, ‘Poetry London’ and the ‘Times Literary Supplement’.
‘Song of the William Morris Wallpaper’ is reproduced from her first collection ‘She Inserts the Key’ with the kind permission of the author and Seren Books.
The book is available from serenbooks.com

Top: Branch fabric, taken from Morris’s wallpaper design of 1871.
Fabric available from and image courtesy of Morris & Co. william-morris.co.uk
MARY ANNIE SLOANE, ARE 1867-1961

Items from The William Morris Society’s collection at Kelmscott House, described by its Curator, Helen Elletson

Mary Annie Sloane received an innovative and progressive education for a woman of her time; she studied etching and engraving at Herkomer’s School at Bushey and at the Royal College of Art, becoming an Associate of the Royal Society of Painters, Etchers and Engravers in 1912. William Morris encouraged her work and she was a frequent visitor at Kelmscott House in Hammersmith and Kelmscott Manor in Oxfordshire.

Sloane became an energetic member of the Women’s Guild of Arts (WGA), joining shortly after it was founded by May Morris in 1907, and taking on crucial roles including Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. In response to Sloane’s resignation of the Honorary Secretarieship in 1924, the Committee reacted with this tribute: “…members of the Women’s Guild of Arts know how much they are losing through the resignation and may be glad to join in giving some tangible expression to their appreciation of the wonderful zeal and unsparing self-sacrifice with which she has always sought to further the objects of the Guild. The reason for Sloane’s resignation was a move to her new home, 8 Hammersmith Terrace, taking over the lease from her great friend May Morris.

She exhibited at the Royal Academy and the Paris Salon in her lifetime, and examples of Sloane’s work can now be seen in the Victoria & Albert Museum, the William Morris Gallery and in The William Morris Society’s own collection at Kelmscott House.

The Society’s six works by Sloane featured in our exhibition Mary Annie Sloane of Hammersmith Terrace; Painter and Printmaker. This included one of Sloane’s most iconic images, A Woman Framework Knitter (shown right, etching with drypoint, c1895), one of a series illustrating this industry widespread in Leicestershire, where Sloane came from. We also hold Sloane’s archive of the Women’s Guild of Arts, highlights of which appeared in our recent exhibition, The Unsung Muse. Additionally Mary Anne Sloane ARE: A Portrait of the Artist is on display at New Walk Museum & Art Gallery in Leicester, until 3 July.

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