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Nick Cox Architects - creative solutions
Welcome

This month’s cover image is a drawing of Morris made by his friend George Howard, who also commissioned designs from Morris & Co for his houses in London, the Border Country and North Yorkshire. I first saw it in reproduction when I revisited Castle Howard a couple of years ago and found it a remarkable portrait that captures both Morris’s restless animation and his contemplative mind. From my enquiry a few months later concerning permission to publish the drawing in the Magazine, Castle Howard’s Curator Christopher Ridgway offered to write about the Morrises’ relationship with the Howards. This fascinating article starts on page 6.

The Reflections exhibition at the National Gallery, concerned with the impact of its acquisition of Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait on the work of Pre-Raphaelite painters, continues until 2 April. Nic Peeters writes not only about the exhibition’s remit but the wider influence of early Flemish painting on Millais, Rossetti, Hunt and Morris, who strove to see first-hand other paintings by van Eyck and by Hans Memling, Dirk Bouts, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes and Gerard David. Nic presents a strong argument for a further exhibition on the subject on the following pages.

We have two appeals in this issue; one is the Society’s own, for funding to match a generous offer from an individual. The offer is dependent on the Society’s members raising an equal amount, and the total will be used to conserve and reframe May Morris’s Honeysuckle wallpaper design; stabilising it to be used within our education programmes, or for exhibition loans. This is particularly appropriate given the recent increased interest in May Morris and acknowledgement of her significance as a designer, embroiderer, champion of women’s rights and co-founder of the Women’s Guild of Arts, as well as a businesswoman, socialist, author and lecturer. On page 12 David Mabb reviews the recent May Morris: Art & Life exhibition.

Furthermore 2018 is the centenary of the Representation of the People Act, a key step towards female emancipation in awarding some forty percent of women the right to vote for the first time. The National Trust is organising Women in Power, a programme of events and exhibitions exploring those who fought for the vote, those women who influenced change throughout history, and how the lives of women from all backgrounds helped shape the modern world. The programme includes an exhibition at Wightwick Manor, Beyond Ophelia – a Celebration of Lizzie Siddal, Artist and Poet, which I shall include an article on in the Summer 2018 issue. See page 24 for details of the exhibition.

The second appeal comes from the Society of Antiquaries London, who wish to employ the buildings and surroundings of the Kelmscott Manor estate as a broader canvas on which to paint Morris’s philosophy. Peter Cormack explains their intentions and ambitions commencing on page 20.

For those members who were unable to attend the 2017 Kelmscott Lecture, Robert Hunter reviews Sheila Rowbotham’s lecture Rebel Crossings: William Morris and Socialism in Bristol and Manchester on page seventeen, exploring the quest for freedom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. We also have Fiona Rose’s captivating and charming article, Five things you may not know about Morris, Helen Elletson on Trellis wallpaper from the Society’s Collection and an article on volunteering for the Society; volunteers are needed for stewarding at both Kelmscott House and Emery Walker’s house, and for the continuing cataloguing of both collections.

Besides the article about Lizzie Siddal, the Summer 2018 magazine will contain Stephen Williams’ interview with the Society’s new president, who is revealed on page 22; Celia Davies on Jenny Morris’s time in Malvern; and Fiona Rose on the Society’s historic relationship with the book retailer and publisher Blackwell’s.

Susan Warlow, Editor
They do it with mirrors

Nic Peeters considers the remit of the National Gallery’s exhibition Reflections: van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites

As a compatriot of the Flemish painter Jan van Eyck (before 1395 to 1441) as well as a lifelong admirer of the Pre-Raphaelites, I found visiting this exhibition to be an extraordinary experience. According to the press release, the curators had endeavoured to demonstrate the considerable impact of van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait of 1434 on the Pre-Raphaelites and particularly their ‘empirical observation, their ideas about draughtsmanship, colour and technique, and the ways in which objects in a picture could carry symbolic meaning’. Van Eyck’s quintessential Northern Renaissance painting was acquired by the National Gallery in 1842 and it first went on display in 1843, just five years before the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB).

The small oak panel – measuring 82.2 by 60 centimetres – depicting the Italian merchant Arnolfini and his wife, fascinated the young Brethren not least because of the fresh colours it boasted despite its great age. Thanks to the presence in the exhibition of firm Pre-Raphaelite favourites such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s The Girlhood of Mary Virgin, John Everett Millais’ Mariana, William Holman Hunt’s The Awakening Conscience and William Morris’s La Belle Iseult, the viewer can assess how the PRB and their circle strove to emulate van Eyck’s jewel-like colours; even developing a painting technique, involving the juxtaposition of unmixed tints, similar to the one he had used.

These pictures equally indicate how the Pre-Raphaelites adopted the Flemish painter’s minute realism, his natural light effects, his closely-cropped compositions to bring the characters closer to the viewers and, most importantly, his tendency to dot interiors with items of symbolic relevance, which imbued his realism with a subtle otherworldliness. A similar transcendental quality remained in Flemish/Belgian art from Pieter Bruegel’s Mad Meg, via Jean Delville’s The Death of Orpheus, to René Magritte’s The Treachery of Images. It strongly determines the atmosphere in early and later Pre-Raphaelite paintings not included here, such as Holman Hunt’s The Light of the World, Millais’ Autumn Leaves, and Rossetti’s Astarte Syriaca. The last is the most obvious example because it is both a portrait of Jane Morris and an icon of an ancient goddess painted as disproportionately tall as van Eyck’s Madonna in the Church. Cleverly, the curators gave this peculiar minuteness of detail an extra dimension by displaying a few daguerreotypes, indicating that the Pre-Raphaelites’ van Eyck-inspired, ‘photographic’ realism tied in nicely with the arrival of photography itself. Little attention was paid, however, to any of these aspects of van Eyck’s influence in comparison with the centre-stage position allotted one small detail of the Arnolfini Portrait.

At the back of the room depicted in this image van Eyck painted a round convex mirror; a fact that any visitor to the exhibition is unlikely to forget. After a subdued start, visitors were suddenly exposed to a plethora of paintings each featuring one or more mirrors; preferably circular convex specimens, but other shapes seemed welcome. Furthermore, the Sunley Room had been decorated with several strategically positioned real mirrors, although these added a pleasant frisson to the visit because they created an unusual dialogue between the pictures. I also enjoyed the inclusion of exquisite works by such artists as Edward Burne-Jones and...
but no further reference was made to it. This altarpiece had a profound influence on the Pre-Raphaelites. Hunt, in *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, remembers visiting Ghent with Rossetti in 1849 and how they ‘studied attentively the works of John and Hubert van Eyck; the exquisite delicacy of the workmanship and the unpretending character of the invention made us feel we could not overestimate the perfection of the painting…’

Marysa Demoor, a professor at Ghent University, in her essay *Art-Catholic Revisited: Dante Rossetti’s Early Paintings and Northern Renaissance Art*, explains how the altarpiece had a great impact on Rossetti’s art, proposing for instance that his painting *Ecce Ancilla Domini* was modelled on the Annunciation depicted across four of the outer panels. She sees similarities in the position of the figures, the colour schemes, the textures and the overall sobriety.

In her essay *Als Ich Kan: Flanders and the Work of William Morris*, Demoor makes a case for Morris being the most enamoured of all the Pre-Raphaelites with Flanders. Bearing in mind his romantic fascination with anything medieval, this should come as no surprise. Morris visited Flanders at least five times, starting with a trip to investigate van Eyck and Hans Memling in 1854. In 1856 he adopted van Eyck’s motto ‘als ich kan’; the correct, but rarely used, translation is ‘as well as I can’. Demoor provides written evidence of Morris’s interest in the Ghent Altarpiece, in the form of a letter home stating that he had admired *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. He studied Flemish illuminated manuscripts closely and they left a mark on much of his work in poetry and book design. There are also clear correspondences between them and Morris’ only completed oil, *La Belle Iseult*; indeed, such a book is depicted in the painting. Now or work of art had more right to be part of *Reflections* than this one because it cunningly translates many iconographic elements of the *Arnolfini Portrait*, a tribute to matrimonial fidelity, into an image of the adulterous sexual relationship between Isult and Tristan when she betrayed King Mark. Like van Eyck, Morris employs a confining room, a bed and its curtains, a mirror, a woman’s belt (here unbuckled) and oranges (referring to physical love). There’s even a small dog (a
symbol of loyalty), but it’s curled up on sheets recently warmed by Sir Tristan.

Jan and Hubert van Eyck were not the only Flemish painters who inspired the Pre-Raphaelites. One painting by Hans Memling and one by Dirk Bouts were included in Reflections, but could not by themselves make the extent of the Flemish impact as evident as it should have been. Besides DEmoor, there are several authors who have established the wide and deep influence of Flemish artists such as Memling, Bouts, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes and Gerard David on the Pre-Raphaelite School. Art historians George P Landow, Sarah P Smith, Jane Langley, Gail S Weinberg and Julian Treuherz present irrefutable evidence of Pre-Raphaelites admiring Flemish works in situ and communicating about them with their colleagues in Britain. There is a list of their most important publications on the subject at the end of this review.

Hunt, Rossetti and Morris were not the only Pre-Raphaelite artists with a thorough, first-hand knowledge of Flemish art. Ford Madox Brown studied in Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp. Frederick Sandys toured Belgium and Holland. Even Aubrey Beardsley, sometimes termed ‘the last Pre-Raphaelite’, visited the northern part of Belgium. Others, such as the young Millais, studied Flemish manuscripts at the British Museum. Art-historical affirmations of these Pre-Raphaelite links to the Northern Renaissance in Flanders are not difficult to find: a casual dip into the catalogue for the Dante Gabriel Rossetti exhibition (Liverpool/Amsterdam, 2003-04) presents a perfect example. Entry 169 is a jewel case decorated with medieval scenes by Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddal. The authors affirm that the case’s peculiar shape recalls Memling’s St. Ursula Reliquary, seen by Rossetti in Bruges. On the reliquary’s roof are depicted angels playing medieval musical instruments, such as appear in Rossetti’s paintings.

Reflections is an inventively designed and pleasant concept. In our post-modern world exhibitions are often built around one specific idea and certain art-historical themes are difficult to translate into an agreeable display. By strongly focussing on the mirror however the curators omitted to put across the very valid point – as stated in their press release and catalogue – that Jan van Eyck and the other artists of the Northern Renaissance left many and deep traces on the Pre-Raphaelite School, initially maybe even more than the early Italians did. It is a point that deserves to be communicated to the public in a future show.

In his autobiography Hunt writes that Rossetti loved Memling’s paintings ‘by reason of the mystery of the subjects’, which draws attention to what is, in my view, the most important, enduring and typically Flemish influence on the character of Pre-Raphaelite art: a symbolism that carefully blends realistically rendered scenes with a meaning that lies far beyond reality. In both the Flemish School and the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, who wanted to imbue British art with a fresh, profound meaning, images – even landscapes and portraits – regularly suggest there is more than meets the eye of their beholder. To me that largely explains why both Flemish and Pre-Raphaelite pictures continue to radiate a strange attraction in our increasingly materialistic age.

Reflections: van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites continues at the National Gallery, London, until 2 April.

FURTHER READING


Sarah P. Smith, From Allegory to Symbol: Rossetti’s Renaissance Roots and His Influence on Continental Symbolism in the Pre-Raphaelite Art, in the Northern Renaissance and the Pre-Raphaelites, ed. by Susan Casteras and Alicia F. Foxon (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press 1995) pp50-65

Dr Nic Peeters is an independent art historian, lecturer and writer specialising in nineteenth-century art, whose doctoral thesis was on the work of Evelyn De Morgan. Nic lives in Antwerp but travels regularly to the UK to study its art treasures.

Opposite far left: The Virgin and Child with an Angel, Saint George and a Donor by Hans Memling, about 1480, oil on oak, 54.2 x 37.4 cm. National Gallery, London © The National Gallery, London.
Opposite left: Take your Son, Sir! by Ford Madox Brown, 1851-92, oil on canvas, 70.5 x 38.1 cm. © Tate, London.
Opposite bottom left: Convex mirror owned by Gabriel Dante Rossetti, Kelmscott Manor. © Society of Antiquaries of London (Kelmscott Manor), Photograph by Andy Stammers.
Above left: The Lady of Shalott by Elizabeth Siddal, 1853, drawing, 24.8 x 17.8 cm. Mass Gallery © Photo courtesy the owner.
Above right: Manon by John Everett Millais, 1851, oil on mahogany, 59.7 x 49.5 cm. © Tate, London.
Left: Le Bele built by William Morris, 1858, oil on canvas, 71.8 x 50.3 cm. © Tate, London.
It has long been recognised that among the many friends and acquaintances of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, George and Rosalind Howard were particularly close confidantes of both men, their wives and, in the case of Morris, their children. These friendships began in the 1860s as the newly-married young couple moved with ease among artistic and literary circles in London.

The Howards first visited the premises of Morris & Co in 1866, a year after being introduced to Burne-Jones; it is not entirely clear when exactly they first met Morris himself, but among the eighty or so letters from him surviving in the Castle Howard archives, the first is dated July 1867, and in August of that year Georgie Burne-Jones wrote to Rosalind to say, ‘I am sure you would like Morris so much if you came to know him well – he is altogether the most remarkable man I ever saw’. The letters from William and Janey Morris complement those from Edward and Georgie Burne-Jones (in excess of four hundred), along with correspondence from a host of other contemporaries, including Frederic Leighton, Edward Poynter, Philip Webb, Walter Crane, Sidney Colvin, Giovanni Costa, Sydney Cockerell, Thomas Cobden-Sanderson, and Wilfred Blunt.

Morris’s correspondence with the Howards ranges from design suggestions for embroidery, carpets and curtains, to wallpaper patterns, colour schemes, and stained glass proposals. These were in relation to commissioned or projected work at Palace Green, the couple’s London home designed by Webb, Naworth Castle in Cumbria and St Martin’s church in Brampton, and nearby Lanercost Priory. In a series of letters between 1879 and 1881 both Morris and Burne-Jones patiently explained to Rosalind how various colour schemes would or would not work in combination in the drawing room at Palace Green, advising against the dazzling impact of gold sunflower paper, and recommending a light blue-green for the woodwork in her boudoir; they reported on the progress of the Cupid and Psyche frieze in the dining room, and the difficulty of inscribing lettering on the panelling below. Morris also recommended red silk for curtains, although if Rosalind preferred he could provide ‘the most ravishing yellow’ or a ‘dullish pink shot with amber’; he also conceded that the gold Sunflower paper, which Rosalind seems to have set her heart on, could be dulled down with a coat of varnish. In the same letter of 1881 he also reported how his stock of wallpaper blocks had nearly been lost in a fire at Jeffrey & Co’s premises in Islington. In fact some of the blocks for work on St James’s Palace were destroyed, and he lamented how ‘I always did hate fireworks, especially since I saw Cotton’s Wharf ablaze some eighteen years ago’.

These letters also contain grumbles about life in London, his own health, and the wellbeing of his family, as well as letters of thanks such as when the Howards sent a box of grouse one August. In May 1878 whilst returning from Oneglia on the Ligurian coast, where the whole family had been staying with the Howards, Morris gave an enthusiastic account of Padua and Verona, confessing ‘I don’t know when I have been so moved by any place’. Morris also corresponded with George Howard over politics, especially the Eastern Question Association, voicing his distaste for Disraeli’s administration and the Tory party. At one moment, just before Christmas in 1877, Morris even telegraphed Howard asking if he could hurry back to England in the face of war fever; however a few days later he wrote to apologise for causing alarm, and gave a more measured account of the national feeling over possible war with Russia over Turkey. He announced himself desperate for ‘the country to commit itself to peace’, but ended on an optimistic note with the belief ‘we shall not go to war’.

Earlier that year he had described Disraeli’s elevation to the House of Lords as Lord Beaconsfield, as ‘that piece of dirt disappearing’; and he went on to supply a mock gloss for the
Top: Portrait Sketches of William Morris by George Howard, pencil on paper, Castle Howard Collection
Above left: Portrait Sketch of Edward Burne-Jones by George Howard, pencil on paper, Castle Howard Collection
Above right: Portrait Sketch of Edward Burne-Jones by George Howard, pencil on paper, Castle Howard Collection
Right: George and Rosalind Howard, c1870, Castle Howard Collection
phrase: ‘dirt – matter in the wrong place, description somewhere’. More than once he unleashed his feelings as a ‘down trodden radical’ when surveying national politics, and in 1881 he sent his congratulations to Howard on his Liberal party election victory in Cumbria. At one point he even sought Howard’s help over the proposed parliamentary bill that would have diverted the water supply of the River Wandle, so essential for the tapestry workshop at Merton Abbey.

Morris was especially grateful to the Howards for the kindness they showed to Janey and his daughters, who were invited to stay in Cumbria and also, in 1878, at Oneglia. In June 1870 he wrote to Rosalind pleased to receive ‘such a good account of my little girls’, and he went on to say ‘they are very good little things generally but sometimes they become unruly’. It was after their visit in 1870 that May composed her ‘Journal of my visit to Naworth Castle’; eight years later, following their visit to Italy, May designed the Keepsake for Rosalind, weaving flowers and stems around lines from Tennyson’s poem Idylls of the King.

When not discussing designs, political matters, or expressing his thanks, Morris’s letters contain few revelations about himself. Perhaps the most illuminating moment comes in a letter to Rosalind in 1874, shortly after he had been staying at Naworth; after thanking her he hoped he would be invited again, ‘and that then you will think me less arrogant’; he also apologised for his outburst towards ‘Wesleyan tradesmen unsympathetic with art subjects’. He went on to say that to ‘shut one’s eyes to ugliness and vulgarity’ was wrong and then came a startling admission: ‘when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal I always feel quite apart from my aesthetical perceptions, a sort of shame as if I myself had some hand in it’. This moment of empathy is followed by a further observation on the times, ‘I do not judge the triumph that the modern mind finds in having made the world (or a small corner of it) quieter and less violent, but I think that their blindness to beauty will draw down a kind of revenge one day’, and he predicted that ‘the Gods are preparing troubles and terrors’ in order to teach the world once more to embrace the ‘beautiful and dramatic’.

This letter, coming four years after Morris first visited Naworth, marks how far his friendship with Rosalind had developed, and articulates some of his core beliefs about the value of art in society. Initially he and Rosalind had confessed some trepidation at the prospect of meeting one another, and Rosalind was grateful how at their first encounter he had not snubbed her; she felt confident that ‘if he puts up with me we shall jog along all right’. Their candid exchange of views will have engendered a mutual sympathy and respect, both were interested in politics, and in improving the lot of the poor, and Rosalind, who viewed herself as a progressive Liberal, would have welcomed the opportunity for debate and argument with someone who, in his own words, could vent ‘the spleen of a radical cobbler’. However, whilst admiring his ability to talk clearly, Rosalind felt Morris lacked ‘sympathy and humanity’; yet his force of character and generosity of spirit more than excused this deficiency in the eyes of many of his friends.

A further testimony to the close relations between the families can be found in the intimate pencil sketches George Howard made of Morris, Burne-Jones, and members of their families. He drew Morris and Burne-Jones each about half a dozen times; and also produced sketches of Jenny Morris and Georgie Burne-Jones. These date from the 1870s, in two cases during visits to Naworth in 1874 and again in 1877, and capture both men informally, reading, drawing, smoking, or in the case of Jenny playing the piano.

One image of Morris, reproduced on the front cover of this magazine, is especially powerful, and manages to capture the sense of an energetic character - the ‘human dynamo’ as he was called by Burne-Jones – albeit depicted at a moment of rest. There is the characteristic mass of unruly hair and the beard, but the face is in a reflective mood, with the eyes lowered – Morris might be reading or contemplating. It is a quiet moment at the end of an active day, and the likeness hints at inner complexities, vulnerabilities, anxieties even, especially in terms of his family. The image confirms Sidney Colvin’s observation that Morris’s so-called ‘brutality’ was all surface, and that beneath it there lay a sensitive and generous soul.

Other pencil portraits depict Burne-Jones seated and sketching, as well as a more formal full-length portrait of him at his easel, but these do not give the same insight into character as the single Morris portrait; other studies Howard made of Morris show him reading, and a succession of three sketches concludes with one of him leafing through folios on his lap,
Top left: Stained glass window by Edward Burne-Jones depicting the Annunciation for the Castle Howard Chapel, Castle Howard Collection

Top right: The North Front of Castle Howard, Castle Howard Collection

Above right: William Morris embroidered screen depicting figures from Chaucer’s Legend of Good Women, Castle Howard Collection

Right: The Chapel, Castle Howard, Castle Howard Collection

Above: Keepsake by May Morris, pen and ink on paper, 1880, Castle Howard Collection

Opposite page: Hammersmith rug, one of a set purchased in the 1880s, Castle Howard Collection
doubtless from the important collection of early printed volumes in the library at Naworth. These friendships existed on a number of levels: Burne-Jones tutored Howard; both men advised the couple on decorative commissions; and all three families were close, with Rosalind genuinely fond of Morris’ daughters. The Howards might technically have been patrons, commissioning paintings and decorative schemes from the firm, but there is no sense of any formal hierarchy in their relations.

The Howard commissions continued into the 1880s and beyond. After the death of the 7th Earl of Carlisle in 1864, the estate was administered by trustees on account of the incapacity of the 8th Earl, and Castle Howard was occupied by Edward Howard and his wife. He died in 1880, but the estates were still managed by trustees until the death of the 8th Earl in 1889, whereupon George Howard and his wife Rosalind became 9th Earl and Countess. While they had an increasing say in estate matters during these decades they did not assume full control until 1889, and before they inherited much of their expenditure on decorations, furniture and textiles (for all three family homes) was run through their personal finances – as recorded in Rosalind’s private account books. These are the best evidence for their continuing patronage of Morris & Co.

Although George and Rosalind Howard were to redecorate Castle Howard and Naworth Castle with the help of Morris & Co during the 1880s and 1890s, the company’s first commission at Castle Howard predates the period when they assumed control of the Yorkshire property. It was Edward Howard who commissioned the refurbishment of the chapel in the west wing of the house in the 1870s. The structural work involved in converting this space was enormous. The attic storey was removed from the north end of the wing, and inside the floor was lowered by two-and-a-half feet. The walls were decorated with frescoes depicting the Annunciation and figures from the Old Testament (Moses, David, Isaiah, Micah, Malachi and Zechariah) painted by Charles Eamer Kempe and Wyndham Hope Hughes. The pillars and ceiling, copied from Holbein’s designs for the Royal Chapel in St James’s Palace, were kept but redecorated by the plasterer Francis Rawlings. The refurbishment of the chapel completed in 1875 cost a total of £9500.

Four of the five windows were fitted with stained glass designed by Burne-Jones. Costing just under £800, they depicted the Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, and Flight into Egypt, with the upper panels depicting the four evangelists. A fifth window was to be filled with the Resurrection but this was never completed and instead was filled with simple decorative motifs. The window frames, designed by Philip Webb, were hinged so that they could open inwards. There is no doubt that Edward Howard was influenced in his choice of decoration by the recommendations of his young nephew George Howard, who, with his wife, was by 1870 a loud and enthusiastic advocate of Burne-Jones and the designs and furnishings of Morris & Co.

The couple’s passion for Morris & Co showed no bounds. In 1880 Rosalind bought Rose, Pomegranate, Daisy and Blue Mallow papers for Naworth, along with De Morgan tiles for fire grates. Two years later she ordered three-dozen Sussex chairs from the firm, as well as a carpet, six Hammersmith rugs, and rolls of red and gold sunflower for Castle Howard. The following year more chintzes, wallpapers and tapestries were purchased for a further round of decorating at Naworth. Payments continued throughout the 1880s for textiles, wallpapers, the completion of the Cupid and Psyche frieze, and purchases of paintings by Burne-Jones, for Palace Green in London. Among the most spectacular changes at Castle Howard was the redecoration of the Long Gallery in 1885 using 170 rolls of red Sunflower paper; and hung by local decorator Carass Topham at a cost of £89. This was a scheme that lasted until the 1950s.

Elsewhere in the building the Orleans Room, stripped of its Old Master paintings and filled with contemporary pictures, was lined with Acorn paper in 1894. The schoolroom, adapted for the couple’s growing family (they had eleven children between 1866 and 1884), was lined with Daisy paper; this is the last room in the house today with its original Morris wallpaper. Such was Rosalind’s love of wallpaper that in the 1890s she purchased numerous sample rolls of later Morris patterns, and these survive unused in the archives and include: Tom Tit, Golden Lily, Compton, Bachelor’s Button, and Blackthorn. Thus over a twenty year period Castle Howard was filled with a dozen examples of Morris wallpaper, as well as textiles and furniture. And in 1887 Rosalind purchased three of the embroidered panels from the set of eight inspired by Chaucer’s medieval poem The Legend of Good Women that hung originally in Morris’s home, Red House. These she had made into an oak-framed screen.

But curiously few pictures by Burne-Jones and his contemporaries seem to have hung at Castle Howard during these years. The house boasted a vast and important collection of Italian Old Master paintings and British portraits; beyond updating the decoration and furnishings the Howards showed little desire to reinvent Castle Howard in an entirely contemporary fashion. The only instance of removing, or defacing, the past occurred when Rosalind chose to cover the eighteenth-century murals painted by Antonio Pellegrini in the High Saloon with panels of red Bird and Anemone wallpaper.

There remains something of an irony about the presence of Morris & Co at Castle Howard, for it is not all certain whether Burne-Jones, Morris or any of their circle ever visited the house. The Howards’ artist and writer friends usually stayed at Naworth. However the archives are filled with letters, bills, diaries, and accounts relating to the firm’s work and the friendship between the families; George Howard’s sketches of his friends, more than a dozen in total, are also among the hidden treasures of works of art on paper; some textiles, pieces of furniture, and De Morgan tiles remain in the house; and a handful of Burne-Jones pictures are still in the collection. Castle Howard remains primarily a splendid eighteenth-century Baroque house, filled with Grand Tour treasures, but the encounter between the Howards and their Pre-Raphaelite friends denotes an important nineteenth-century chapter in the history of the house and the family, and of course the great work on the chapel, commissioned between 1870 and 1875 is still beautifully intact today with its stained glass, painted decoration, and woodwork.

Dr Christopher Ridgway is Curator at Castle Howard
www.castlehoward.co.uk
May Morris: Art & Life

David Mabb relishes the recent William Morris Gallery exhibition

On entering May Morris: Art & Life in the William Morris Gallery, one is struck by two embroideries, Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, dating from 1895 to 1900. They are almost identical, but for two different roundels in each panel that run along the tops and together represent the four seasons. Each panel has a pair of parakeets stitched in coloured silks and metal threads onto silk damask, whose size and beauty far surpass anything William Morris ever produced (he couldn’t draw birds anyhow, so it’s not really a fair comparison). This double whammy sets the pace for the rest of the downstairs exhibition space. This includes Lotus, a subtly designed panel or curtain credited for both design and embroidery to May Morris, whose stitches, on peach coloured silk, pick out the design through reflected light as much as through the contrast of colours. Similarly, Maids of Honour, which presents a central rose bush with two flowers surrounded by a ring of violets with a flying bird in each corner, is stitched onto a fine silk net, the embroidery seeming to float in space. Only on close viewing does the grid of the net which supports the embroidery become apparent.

The exhibition is split over two floors. The main gallery, which is dominated by embroideries, also introduces May Morris’s early life – we are shown a young May Morris painted by Rossetti in 1871 – and professional life at Morris & Co. A brief mention of her commitment to Socialism is evidenced by the well-known photo of the Hammersmith Socialist Society in which she appears in the centre of the front row.

May edited and introduced William’s collected works, represented here by a shelf containing all 24 volumes, published between 1910 and 1915. A massive project, for which May Morris wrote significant introductions, they count as one of both William and May’s enduring legacies. They are presented in a final room which tells the narrative of the later part of May Morris’s life which she shared with her companion Mary Lobb at Kelmscott Manor. There’s a touching photo of Mary Lobb and May Morris on holiday in Wales. This relationship seems to project May Morris into the present by suggesting the possibilities of a different sort of life, although the relationship isn’t explored in any depth in the exhibition.

Alongside the exhibition there are two publications. The larger one, the hardback May Morris: Arts & Crafts Designer, is published by Thames and Hudson, the V&A and the William Morris Gallery, and is not a catalogue but a book in its own right that acts as an extension of the exhibition. A second publication, May Morris: Art & Life – New Perspectives, published by the Friends of the William Morris Gallery, is based on the 2016 conference related to the exhibition. The exhibition and both publications seek to establish May Morris’s place as one of the ‘most important designer craftswomen’, continuing the work of feminist art history, begun in the 1970s, of historical recovery of women excluded from the history of art, craft and design, and extending what was, and still is, a male-dominated history. Although our knowledge of May Morris cannot avoid reference to her father, she made her own contribution to embroidery, taking William Morris’s design tradition and developing it into something distinctly her own, and the exhibition spectacularly proves this.
A highly significant item in the Society’s collection is in need of urgent conservation work in order for it to be preserved for the future and displayed safely. Your gift will help us raise the money to carry out this work.

This original design for wallpaper, measuring 69.1 by 100 centimetres, required eight blocks to print and is the only design for wallpaper by May Morris in the Society’s collection. Inscribed on the front in pencil are notes on the printing blocks and on the verso ‘Honeysuckle Wallpaper’ and ‘Mr Morris Esq’. There had been some uncertainty whether May or William Morris designed *Honeysuckle* as it differs to May’s other designs for wallpapers, *Horn Poppy* and *Arcadia*. However, the heavily worked pencil outlines and technique is characteristic of her designs and it was attributed to May Morris for the first time in c1910. *Honeysuckle* was available in four colourways for wallpaper, and the Society is fortunate to have all of these examples in its collection.

*Honeysuckle* is now in need of attention by a conservator. Over the years, strain on the frame has resulted in the mount slipping, recently causing the design to come into partial contact with the glazing. A full condition assessment report by an accredited paper conservator will be conducted, previous paper hinges removed and new hinges created; and light humidification carried out on areas of undulation. It is also vital that this unique design is remounted and re-framed in order for it to be safely displayed. All mounting materials will be acid-free and the conservation glazing with ultra violet filtering glass will protect this beautiful watercolour for the future.

The Society has generously been offered a donation of £750 towards this work, conditional on this amount being matched by members and other supporters. If we are successful in raising the money we would like to display the reframed design besides related items from our collection such as examples of wallpapers printed from May’s designs. This could form the basis of a wonderful learning resource for our schools and family workshops.

Your gift will help us raise the money needed to carry out this work. Any amount, large or small, will help us reach our target and protect a key item in our collection for the future.

The simplest way to donate is online at [www.williammorrissociety.org/support-us/honeysuckle-appeal](http://www.williammorrissociety.org/support-us/honeysuckle-appeal)

If you would prefer to donate by cheque, please send your cheque, made payable to ‘The William Morris Society’ to

The William Morris Society

26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith

London W6 9TA

and mark your envelope ‘Honeysuckle Appeal’.

*Please make any donations by 30 April 2018.*

Thank you for your generosity and for supporting our work in spreading knowledge of William Morris and his circle to a wider audience.

‘All virgin lamps of scent and dew’

An appeal by the Society to conserve *Design for Honeysuckle Wallpaper* by May Morris, pencil and watercolour on paper, c1883
Volunteers: a priceless asset

Operating a Georgian printing press, cataloguing wallpapers and running family workshops are some of the gifts that volunteers can give

Since 1955 The William Morris Society has aimed to perpetuate the memory of a remarkable polymath and one of the greatest men of the Victorian age. In order to do so it employs a tiny number of paid staff and relies heavily on an enthusiastic number of volunteers to support all aspects of its work. Its volunteers include the charity’s trustees, the editors of its Magazine and Journal, its librarian and those who provide administrative support, carry out front-of-house duties and deliver the Society’s education programme.

In recent years the number of volunteers needed rose steeply during the Arts & Crafts Hammersmith project. This partnership between The Emery Walker Trust and The William Morris Society, celebrating the Arts & Crafts Movement in west London, was set up to secure the future of Emery Walker’s house at 7 Hammersmith Terrace and The William Morris Society’s premises in the basement and Coach House of Kelmscott House, together with their collections.

Jessica Loukaides is the Learning and Volunteer Development Officer at Arts & Crafts Hammersmith and her role has been both to recruit volunteers and to create the necessary framework to establish a clear system for the continuing recruitment, training and support of volunteers, including a volunteering policy, a volunteering practice document and a volunteer charter.

Arts & Crafts Hammersmith (A&CH) is due to complete in early 2019. The original activity plan was created in 2013 and in 2015 the partnership secured £631,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to support a programme of capital refurbishment, cataloguing and digitising, and learning and participation. In the autumn of that year the work of decanting the collections from Emery Walker’s House to a storage facility in Stockwell began. More than four thousand items including ceramics, paintings, furniture, textiles and carpets together with fifty-five boxes of paper archives had to be packed, listed, categorised and shipped. The same process, not on quite so large a scale, was carried out the following year for the Morris society.

Other than word-of-mouth, recruitment has been online or through volunteer fairs. The local Hammersmith & Fulham Volunteer Centre holds these events several times a year, where prospective volunteers are able to meet a variety of local organisations and find out about opportunities. Recruitment online has been through London-wide, generic volunteering websites and more specific museum-based ones, which bring in students and younger people, such as the University of Leicester Museum Studies Jobs Desk. Having practical experience has long been essential to obtaining museum work, which has been beneficial to A&CH, because one its aims was to get a more varied demographic of volunteers.

At the height of the project there were almost one hundred volunteers on the mailing of whom about thirty people who came weekly and were crucial to its success. Now the main bulk of the cataloguing is complete but there remain boxes and boxes of stuff at Emery Walker’s House and hundreds of unorganised and uncatalogued sheet examples of Morris & Co wallpaper at
Kelscott House. At 7 Hammersmith Terrace
the cataloguing should be finished within the
next few months. There may be small bits that
need doing in the future, because catalogues
need updating from time to time, and checking,
but there are sufficient volunteers who are
trained and experienced enough to do that. A
small core of cataloguing volunteers is still
needed, however, for the beautiful wallpaper
samples; now that the storeroom has been fitted
out at the Kelscott House they are physically
accessible, but there is no one to work on them at
present. Ideally A&CH needs people who can
commit themselves to a weekly slot to carry out
the work.

On the whole, however, the nature of the
volunteer roles has changed somewhat from
cataloguing to learning and outreach work in
order to share everything that the two properties
have and represent with a wider audience.
Stewards are needed at both places, along with
gardeners and people with computer skills, and
more people are to be trained in operating the
Albion printing press at Kelscott House.

People who are interested should contact
Jessica who will either meet up with them or put
them directly in touch with the right people
depending on what area they are specifically
interested in. This will be either Gina Murphy,
who manages the day-to-day running of Emery
Walker’s House, or Cathy d’Freitas at The
William Morris Society. Travel expenses within a
reasonable distance can be reimbursed, and
hot and cold drinks and biscuits are provided.

John Kendall is one of our longest-serving
volunteers, having helped the Society for the past
fourteen years. Already a member of the Society,
and a retired teacher, he responded to a request
in the Newsletter – precursor to the Magazine – for volunteers to teach school groups. John had spent twenty years teaching Rural Science based on experiential learning and has a continuing fascination with designs by Morris and Burne-Jones, seeking out churches with Morris & Co stained glass and collecting a few artifacts himself. He has run school workshops on literature and drama, for example on Sigurd and the Dragon; on social differences based around the Ford Madox Brown painting Work; and on repeat pattern design and stained glass. Of volunteering he says ‘it brings me up from the country to work with your exciting volunteers and primary staff.’ Other volunteers have come by different routes, including their local job centre, the Do-it volunteering website, reading about the reopening of Emery Walker’s House in an article on the ChiswickW4 website or through discovering the existence of the Society online and contacting us directly.

Hugh Hobbs has been a volunteer for a couple of years. He was born in Hammersmith and lives not far from Kelmscott House. Hugh studied News from Nowhere in a course on Utopian Studies during his Politics degree and became a volunteer through Arts & Crafts Hammersmith. His involvement varies between a few hours and a couple of days a week: stewarding, gardening, writing and helping to host events, as well as volunteering at both A&CH and 7 Hammersmith Terrace. Hugh is inspired by Morris’s radical thought on the relationship between art and labour, and his libertarian communist philosophy in News from Nowhere. He likes Morris’s ability to link the best aspects of the past with the best aspects of the future, and his refusal to accept industrial utilitarian society. Hugh feels that volunteering for the Society ‘has enabled me to feel a greater sense of place and connection to my locality, learning so much about the history and characters of Hammersmith over the last two hundred years’.

Carol Petersen, another retired teacher, became a volunteer last year and helps in the school holidays with workshops for children, which involves a four-hour stint, including setting-up and clearing-up time. She is most interested in the beautiful pieces that Morris made, and enjoys watching children creating lovely things using Morris’s designs for inspiration. Carol likes painting and is making a tapestry based on a Morris design, ‘very slowly’. She says that ‘All the volunteers I have met are kind and enthusiastic people. It is always a pleasure to work with them.’

Nikole G Bamford, who refers to Morris as ‘a human dynamo’ has been volunteering for six years. Until her personal circumstances changed three years ago, she came in every Saturday, greeting visitors and demonstrating the Albion printing press, her favourite item in the Society’s possession. Nikolke finds that ‘the people I’ve met and friends I’ve made have been a real boon to my life. In addition, being able to be around fantastic, beautiful pieces that are part of our culture and heritage has been a privilege and increased my passion for helping.’

Maggie Roche, who has also been volunteering for six years, assists with school visits during term time and family craft activities during the school holidays. School visits can take about four hours’ work, while holiday activities require advance preparation, including advertising. In common with both Carol and John, she has been a teacher and like Carol appreciates seeing children create beautiful work inspired by William and May Morris. She is interested in any aspect of Morris’s life that can be related to the children, including his social concerns. Maggie also has an MA in History, based on nineteenth century social and economic history, which has contributed to what she is able to offer the Society. In return she finds that ‘it has been really helpful to work as part of a team and to learn so much from the rest of the Kelmscott House team.’

Lara French contributes six hours a week to the Society, preparing its premises for opening, stewarding, and assisting in the shop and with its display and the annual stocktake. From her studies at Heatherley’s (The Heatherley School of Fine Art), Lara arrived at Kelmscott House with a knowledge of block printing and printed textiles and has been encouraged to explore and interpret the Morris designs that she feels an affinity with. This resulted in a display, commencing last summer, of her prints, sketchbooks and ceramics in the Emberton Print Room. Lara says that she has most enjoyed acquiring ‘a wealth of knowledge regarding his (Morris’s) intricate and appealing textiles’, together with ‘the availability of resources’ and her ‘ability to find confidence in assisting within the gift shop!’.

If you would like to help the work of the Society or The Emery Walker Trust by giving some of your own time and skills, please contact Jessica Loukaides at Arts & Crafts Hammersmith: jessicaloukaides@artsandcraftshammersmith.org.uk
Rebel Crossings
Robert Hunter reports on the 2017 Kelmscott Lecture, given by Sheila Rowbotham

On Saturday 28 October a packed Coach House at Kelmscott House heard Professor Sheila Rowbotham deliver the 2017 Kelmscott Lecture, Rebel Crossings: William Morris and Socialism in Bristol and Manchester.

Drawing on the lives chronicled in her latest book Rebel Crossings, Rowbotham outlined how her rebels crossed boundaries of geography – Britain and America – and the borders of social class, culture, and political affiliation. Perhaps the most central crossings for her protagonists – and it emerged strongly in her lecture – were the boundaries of gender and sexual identity and the search for new forms of living that combined socialist principles with spiritual renewal.

The political activism of Miriam Daniell and Robert Nichol in Bristol crossed with that of Helena Born in the same city, and was played out in Boston and San Francisco, crossing with the fortunes of Bostonian Helen Tufts and Belfast-born Mancunian, William Bailie. Personal relations criss-crossed too: the Fabian-influenced writer and Bristolian Gertrude Dix eventually married Robert Nichol in San Francisco. The world of William Morris, Commonwealth, Edward Carpenter, the SDF and the Socialist League became enmeshed across the Atlantic with that of the Walt Whitman Fellowship and Benjamin Tucker’s anarchist paper Liberty – and one could add to the mix the ideas and influence of Patrick Geddes, Peter Kropotkin, Annie Besant, Havelock Ellis, Eleanor Marx.

Professor Rowbotham sketched briefly the influence of William Morris on her rebels Miriam Daniell and her lover Robert Nichol whom she met while he was studying medicine in Edinburgh. Nichol had been mentored by Patrick Geddes there and was familiar with Morris’s writings and agitation through the pages of Commonwealth and the Edinburgh branch of the Socialist League. Nichol moved to Bristol and joined Daniell and Helena Born, all three active in the Bristol Socialist Society that Morris had spoken at. Moreover, they took major organising roles in industrial disputes, helping to form the Gas Workers & General Labourer’s Union and involved in strikes by dockers, cotton workers, and those at Fry’s chocolate factory.

Morris was influential too in the political formation of William Bailie, a basket maker who served out his apprenticeship in Belfast, Glasgow and Edinburgh before settling in Manchester, joining the SDF and later the Socialist League. In Manchester, Morris spoke regularly at the Ancoats Brotherhood that Bailie, an enthusiastic autodidact, attended along with J Hunter Watts, an associate of Morris.

But the greater influence was perhaps that of Edward Carpenter and his ground-breaking Towards Democracy. Sheila Rowbotham is Carpenter’s biographer and her account of his influence is authoritative. Carpenter’s growing work on sexual and spiritual fulfilment found an echo in Nichol, who was in correspondence with him. That and the already established connections with Whitmanites and anarchists around Liberty might have encouraged Daniell, Nichol and Born to move to America. Also, Daniell was estranged from her husband and pregnant with Nichol’s child.

The bulk of Sheila Rowbotham’s talk followed the fortunes of her subjects in America where the emphasis in their lives shifted to personal renewal and experiments in communal living, attempting to ground their political energies in the habits of transformed day-to-day living. The lives of her rebels bore witness to the wider struggle for the social and sexual emancipation of women. Compared with the relative cohesion of their political organisation in Bristol and Manchester the new set of relations with, inter alia, the Walt Whitman Fellowship tended towards the fissiparous, although manifested in discussion groups, correspondence, publications and creative writing: the poetry of Miriam Daniell, the novels of Gertrude Dix.

Several of the questions afterwards were intrigued by the centrality of vegetarianism, pure food, and what we might now call sustainable agriculture among the activities of some of her subjects. And as a reminder of the two-way street of political influence, Ruth Levitas remarked that the American feminist and socialist pioneer Charlotte Perkins Gilman had lectured too at the Coach House, and was a friend of May Morris.

Right at the end David Mabb raised some pertinent questions: to what extent were Rowbotham’s subjects typical of the social formations of their time, how numerous were they, and how might we evaluate their importance for us today? There is a wealth of detail in Rebel Crossings that indicates how varied and extensive was the milieu in which her subjects moved. In that world of fin-de-siècle personal and political transformation one would find a powerful precursor of today’s discourses about identity politics and a ‘liquid modernity’ of social relations with a supposedly greater fluidity from earlier, more solid, formations. If, then as now, much social and political movement tended towards the development and fulfilment of the individual, it was true that the contrary move took place. The hunger, typical in William Bailie, for personal education and development to aid the social emancipation of a whole class was also a feature of the age. If we can recognise its familiarity in these lives past then we can perhaps recognise its relevance to us today.


Robert Hunter is an ex film and television props master, and an occasional scholar in utopian studies.
Five facts about Morris

Fiona Rose considers some of the more obscure aspects of the great man’s life

This light-hearted article is not aimed at scholars of Morris but rather at those new to the man. Or perhaps intended for those like me, who after 30 years of reading about him take delight in still being surprised by a hitherto little-known fact that leaves me saying ‘I didn’t know that!’.

**MORRIS JOINED THE ARMY**

I can scarcely think of a less likely army recruit, but Morris was indeed a soldier of sorts in his mid-twenties. In 1859 he enlisted into the recently formed Corps of Artist Volunteers, a unit formed at a time when there were fears of a French invasion following Napoleon III’s annexation of Nice and Savoy. Morris’s unlikely compatriots in the troop were among his closest friends: Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and GF Watts. The Honorary Secretary of the Corps, William Richmond, remembered the military efforts of the artistic friends as ‘supremely comical’. Unsurprisingly, soldiering did not come naturally to Morris and in drills he tended to turn right when ordered to turn left and then apologised to the man he found facing him. Nevertheless, unlike Rossetti, Morris faithfully attended drills and camps, including being under canvas on Wimbledon Common. It is unclear when Morris stepped down from his military role. The force later became known as the Artists Rifles which served with distinction in the Boer War and World War I.

**HE WAS AN ENTHUSIASTIC COOK**

It is well known that Morris was a generous host: Bruce Glasier recalled a picnic in 1889 hosted by Morris on the banks of the Thames where he ‘took upon himself the duties of Master of Ceremonies. He insisted on doing everything himself – opening the packages, laying out the plates, knives and forks, and glassess, and uncorking the wine bottles. What a feast was spread before us… And all the time Morris kept our fancy on the wing with stories and curious lore, and droll comments on the comestibles he laid before us’. It is also acknowledged that Morris loved good food and fine claret. His biographer Mackail suggested Morris had gourmet tastes: ‘in the matter of food, as also of wine (in which he had fine judgment), his taste was more French than modern English’. Morris also enjoyed conversation centred around food, a friend who stayed with him for a few days recalled ‘he could not remember that they had talked of anything but eating’.

Mackail goes further, stating ‘for Morris cookery had an important place among the arts of human life, and he knew a great deal about it in theory, and something also in practice’. Morris’s busy schedule and employment of a cook in the household meant he didn’t have much opportunity or need to partake of the culinary arts. However, he was appointed camp cook on his trekking adventure to Iceland in the summer of 1871, a position he took up with great gusto. He prepared for the role by making a stew over a barbecue in the garden of the Burne-Jones family in Fulham. Morris’s attempts as chef met with some success in Iceland; he recalled a campfire stew dinner he cooked at Lithend. ‘I was patient, I was bold, and the results were surprising even to me who suspected my own hidden talents in the matter… the pot was scraped, and I tasted the sweets of enthusiastic praise’.

**MORRIS WAS CONSIDERED FOR POET LAUREATE**

Lord Alfred Tennyson was Poet Laureate for most of Morris’s adult life, from 1850 to 1892. At Oxford, Morris’s set was composed of Tennysonians. Unlike some of his friends, Morris was not entranced by the Bar; but he did admire Tennyson to a certain extent. Fiona MacCarthy notes that Morris perceived limitations in the poet,
detecting a certain male rowdiness that he disliked. When Tennyson died in October 1892, Morris was considered as a possible successor. Morris, however, turned down the suggestion that he be in the running, and it was unlikely anyhow, with Gladstone as Prime Minister; that someone of Morris’s political persuasion be appointed to the role. The laureateship was bestowed upon Alfred Austin and Morris was not regretful. Sydney Cockerell recalls Morris saying he was an unlikely candidate for the role in that he couldn’t see himself, ‘sitting down in crimson plush breeches and white stockings to write birthday odes in honour’ of the nobility.3

HE ADVISED THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM ON ACQUIRING PURCHASES

For forty years, until his death in 1896, Morris maintained a mutually beneficial relationship with the South Kensington Museum, as it was then known before its name change in 1899 to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Founded as a Museum of Manufactures in 1852, its mission was to improve the standards of British industry by educating designers, manufacturers and consumers in art and science. Acquiring and displaying the best examples of art and design contributed to this mission, but the ‘schoolroom’ itself was also intended to demonstrate exemplary design and decoration.4 Indeed, Morris himself used the museum as a ‘schoolroom’ and in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction in 1882, he stated that perhaps he had used the museum as much as any man living.5

In 1865 the museum’s director, Sir Henry Cole, engaged the fledgling firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co to decorate what would become known as the Green Dining Room, which is still enjoyed by visitors today. This prestigious commission enhanced the standing of the firm and helped lead to other commissions. Sir Henry’s confidence in the firm would be repaid by Morris, most notably through the Committee of Art Referees of which he was a member from 1884 to 1896. The Committee was ‘selected from the most competent authorities’ to advise on purchases for the museum. Morris’s personal advice was pursued on many occasions, particularly regarding the purchase of carpets and tapestries. The finest carpet bought on his advice was the magnificent Ardabil Carpet, woven in 1539-40 and acquired by the museum in 1893 for £2000. Morris implored ‘I think it would be a real misfortune if such a treasure of decorative art were not acquired for the public’.6

Despite being Theatre-Adverse, Morris Wrote and Acted in a Play

May Morris wrote of her father’s lack of enthusiasm for the theatre. ‘As a form of art my father disliked the modern play, as an amusement it bored him almost (sometimes quite) to swearing-point, and modern acting, with its appeal to the emotions, its elaborate realism and character-study, was intolerable’.7 Thus it seems surprising that Morris not only penned a play but acted in it as well. Nicholas Salmon believes it was Morris’s commitment to the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League that provided the impetus for putting pen to paper and treading the boards – both organisations were short of funds and organised amateur theatricals to boost the coffers. Salmon also suggests it was the poor standards of these productions and Morris’s dalliances with dramatic dialogue in Commonweal, a journal published by the Socialist League and funded by Morris, that drove Morris to write his own play.8

The result was The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened: A Socialist Interlude which had its first night on 15 October 1887 in a hall on the Farringdon Road. Fiona MacCarthy describes the two-act comic play as ‘a topical extravaganza with resonances both to the medieval morality play and the zany political satire that flourished in Britain in the 1960s. It is almost a Victorian Beyond the Fringe or That Was the Week That Was. The plot is based on a socialist trial for sedition and incitement to riot and murder, before Mr Justice Nupkins, a prejudiced and sycophantic judge. The day is saved by the outbreak of the revolution and the judge is himself sentenced to a life of rustic exile’.9 Morris appeared in the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, not troubling with stage make-up. The play was a success: a review in The Pall Mall Gazette commended the play’s subversive formula and the performance was repeated at least ten times during the winter of 1887-88.

1 Fiona MacCarthy, William Morris: A Life for Our Time (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) p170
4 William Morris, editor James Morris, Icelandic Journals (Foreword: Centaur Press, 1969) p48
5 MacCarthy p663-33
6 www.vam.ac.uk/collections/the-va-story
8 Ibid., p153
11 MacCarthy p364
Kelmcott Manor Project

KELMSCOTT AND MORRIS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
Peter Cormack tells Claire Donovan about a project to convey the breadth of Morris’s inspiration and ideas
Since 1962, the Society of Antiquaries of London has owned, curated and conserved Kelmcott Manor and its associated buildings on the upper Thames near Faringdon in Oxfordshire. The Society has recently embarked on a major conservation project and, with the Heritage Lottery Fund offering support for its aims, has chosen to share the vision behind it with members of The William Morris Society.

Claire Donovan Welcome Peter. Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview. First of all, what is the importance of Kelmcott Manor to the Society of Antiquaries?
Peter Cormack It’s important to the Antiquaries in much the same way that it was important to Morris himself as a place of profound inspiration that offers a unique perspective on the past. And Morris, who was elected FSA in the 1890s, is surely one of the best examples of someone whose fascination with the past bore fruit in countless ways that have perennial relevance. It seems to me that Kelmcott in particular had a formative influence on Morris’s thinking about so many things. It especially broadened his historical perspective, not least because it embodied all that Ruskin had written about art and workmanship in ‘On the Nature of Gothic’ – indeed you could say that (along with Philip Webb’s influence) Kelmcott helped transform Morris’s romantic medievalism into a mature philosophy of human creativity that was acutely relevant to his own time and to the future.

The Antiquaries’ approach to Kelmcott in this new project aims to make the place just as revelatory and inspirational for our visitors. After all, we look after not only the Manor with all its collection of Morris-related artefacts but also the farm buildings (mostly dating from the seventeenth century), which were still in active use during William and May Morris’s lifetimes. The whole complex offers a wonderful opportunity for the Antiquaries to examine what antiquarianism in its fullest sense can be, using Morris’s experience of vernacular architecture and its relationship with the landscape, his thoughts about human interaction with the natural environment and his passionate engagement with history.

CD What would William Morris say to visitors who come to Kelmcott these days? What would he hope they would take away from the experience?
PC Well, one must perhaps start by saying that Morris would have been bitterly disappointed (to say the least) at the lack of real socio-political change since his day. However, I like to think he’d have recognised that the project we’ve now embarked on will properly reflect his ideas and values. Since the 1960s we’ve curated Kelmcott Manor much as May Morris would have wished, as a museum focusing primarily on her father’s genius as a designer. By contrast our new approach, which is far more holistic and multi-dimensional, will encourage our visitors to see Kelmcott through Morris’s eyes and imagination. He specifically chose Kelmcott as the setting for the culmination of News from Nowhere – you could say the house is as much a character in the story as the humans – and we want to make more of that whole imaginative dimension that the site has.

If we can encourage our visitors to understand and share something
of Morris’s radical critique of many aspects of contemporary living I’d be very pleased. There’s no doubt Morris would want the place to have a pro-active role, not simply to be a passive ‘shrine’ to his memory.

CD As well as conservation of the house, what more is the project aiming to achieve? What does the Society see as the unique quality of Kelmscott and how can it best share this with visitors?

PC The conservation of the house and the barns is vitally important. It’s fifty years since Donald Insall and Peter Locke carried out the exemplary repairs that saved the buildings from imminent collapse, and with structures of this age they need a regular input of sensitive attention. But we’re not simply carrying out a conservation programme; we want the buildings to tell much more of their history to those who visit. And that will include the stories of those who inhabited Kelmscott Manor before the Morris family, because the present site encompasses some four centuries of history and, of course, there’s a long history preceding what one now sees.

We plan to carry out archaeological investigation into some of these earlier pre-Morris and pre-1600 ‘strata’ and I’m quite sure it’s something Morris would have been fascinated by. He was very aware of the intangible presence of his predecessors and these resonant associations have always been at the heart of the Antiquaries’ preoccupations since our Society was founded in the 1700s. We hope our visitors in future will see Kelmscott in a much bigger context, which will include such things as the prehistoric monuments of the Thames Valley (e.g. the Uffington White Horse, on which Philip Webb’s ashes were scattered) as well as medieval monuments like Great Coxwell Barn.

CD Can you say a bit more about the activities that will become a part of the experience of Kelmscott over the next, say, ten years and more? Will we see Kelmscott as contributing to the legacy of Morris, whether in the support for crafts and craftspeople or the understanding of Morris and his thinking?

PC Our plans include a regular programme of temporary exhibitions at the Manor, drawn from the collections there, the Antiquaries’ collections at Burlington House and from elsewhere. The exhibition themes will reflect Morris’s own interests as well as, for example, current issues in the fields of archaeology, ecology, conservation, etc.

We’ll be continuing and augmenting the artist/craftworker-in-residence scheme we started in recent years and a new studio-workshop space will be created in the one piece of ‘new-build’ in the project, on the site of the former byre in the farm yard. The enhanced space will enable us to develop the educational dimension of the in-residence scheme, so that young people can learn about materials and techniques and participate in designing and making for themselves. We’d also like to see if writers and musicians could be part of this scheme – the Manor and its gardens might be used for appropriate performances.

The barns are remarkable spaces and we plan to use them for learning activities for a variety of age groups, not just telling people about Morris but taking that deeper and wider look at the historic location. And within the Manor itself we’ll have a dedicated space where visitors can study aspects of the collections and the buildings in greater depth. We hope to use the famous attics, too, as an occasional space for on-site conservation work that our visitors can see and ask questions about.

CD What are the timescales for the project? Will the Manor have to close during the work?

PC The repairs and refurbishment works will take place in phases, from autumn 2019 until spring 2021. We aim to keep the Manor open to visitors during our normal April to October season so that people can witness at first hand the repairs to the fabric of the barns and to the house itself. During 2020, when the House will be emptied of our collections, visitors will be able to appreciate the simple rural farm house that first attracted Morris.

CD That’s good news. What can members of the William Morris Society do to support this inspiring image of what Kelmscott Manor can become?

PC Please visit – or revisit – the Manor and experience it for yourself. If you are able, please make a contribution to our fund-raising. But above all, please do tell people about Kelmscott Manor and our new vision for its future.

The Society of Antiquaries of London warmly welcomes you to join its Kelmscott Manor Companions (£500), Its Benefactors (£5000) and Principal Benefactors (£15,000 or more) will be recorded for posterity on a stone plaque at Kelmscott. Contact Dominic Wallis, Head of Development, for more information: dwallis@sal.org.uk 020 7479 7092

Peter Cormack, MBE, FSA is Honorary Curator of Kelmscott Manor and works closely with the Antiquaries’ Kelmscott Project team. Claire Donovan FSA is a member of the Kelmscott Project’s Campaign Group.
OUR NEW PRESIDENT
The Society is pleased to announce the appointment of Lord Sawyer of Darlington, Tom Sawyer, as its new President. Tom, who has been a member of the Society for many years, will take up the post for a five-year term at the AGM in May. He succeeds Jan Marsh, who has served the Society with distinction for the past ten years.

Tom Sawyer has had a distinguished career in the labour movement, including as deputy general secretary of NUPE and later UNISON, before becoming General Secretary of the Labour Party from 1994-98. He recently stepped down as Chancellor of Teeside University after serving a twelve-year term. He has an interest in Morris’s politics and in printing and book design, particularly the Kelmscott Press.

A full interview with him will appear in the next issue of the Magazine.

Martin Stott

WHY I'M A MEMBER...
Helping to perpetuate the life and work of the greatest designer of the nineteenth century, meeting likeminded folk, increasing my knowledge about one of my heroes through the Society’s members only magazine and journal, discounts on Society lectures, events, and purchases in the museum’s shop… just a few reasons why I’m a member. Also, the amazing opportunity to go on a private tour of Kelmscott House through the members-only Garden Party thanks to the generosity of the owners of the main part of the property.

I have attended many fascinating lectures in the Coach House that give a unique perspective on Morris and his circle. A few favourites have included the letters of Jane Morris, the archives of Morris & Co, Morris’s workers at Merton Abbey, the impact of epilepsy on his family and Morris’s travels in Iceland. It feels a privilege to be in Morris’s home and to know that through my membership the Society is not only preserving the house and its extensive collection but ensuring that his legacy remains alive and relevant today. I know when I descend the steps to the basement of Kelmscott House that I’ll find stimulating conversation beyond the door and learn something new. I’ve never left the premises without taking home a pamphlet or publication produced by the Society that extends my knowledge about the great man.

One member six years ago and a life member ever since, I became a member six years ago and am seriously considering life membership, perhaps an idea for my Christmas or next significant birthday list!

Fiona Rose

PARTRNERSHIP WITH BLACKWELL'S
The Society has formed a partnership with Blackwell’s, the largest academic and specialist bookseller in the UK, which, for the first time, will give the Society a respected online platform through which to sell its publications worldwide. Blackwell’s website receives around 500,000 visits a month. The Society now has its own page on the bookseller’s site and will also have publications available for sale on the third-party sites used by Blackwell’s. The Society’s page can be seen at: www.Blackwells.co.uk/WilliamMorris

It seems appropriate that this partnership be with Blackwell’s as the Society has a long history with the company. Blackwell’s distributed publicity leaflets when the Society was formed in 1955, and Basil Blackwell, son of the company’s founder, was President of The William Morris Society from 1967-78 and a life member.

Fiona Rose

MORRISIAN ELECTED AS ICELANDIC PRIME MINISTER
Iceland elected a new Prime Minister in November 2017. She is Katrin Jakobsdottir, leader of Vinstri Graen (RedGreen). She served as Minister for Education, Science and Culture in the Green Left Government of 2009-13 and has taught at the University of Iceland where she is a specialist in Scandi crime literature. She is also an enthusiastic Morrisian and gave a lecture to the Society tour in 2013.

In that lecture, entitled Good Afternoon Mr Morris, she demonstrated an extraordinary knowledge of Morris’s range of contributions to society, culture and politics, and their continuing impacts in Iceland. She structured her talk after the time travel of News from Nowhere, around the idea of Morris’s reappearance in present day Iceland – ‘our demented age’ – where he joins her and her two brothers in a discussion over dinner.

The themes of their discussion ranged across what she considered likely to be Morris’s chief interests on his return: the survival of the Icelandic way of life, including the way Icelandic embroidery has influenced its modern design; the preservation of historic houses and the pressures of redevelopment; Morris’s views on how to build new businesses based on beauty and production, opposed to the mass-produced; the difficulties faced by...
socialism, particularly the fragmentation that seems to be a constant of the political left wing exactly as he experienced in the late nineteenth century: democracy and the role of the media including social media and the experience of direct democracy in Iceland’s recent history; the chasm between the power of big corporations and the working class; the integration in perspective between ‘domestic beautification’ and the class struggle and equality; sustainability and the intrinsic value of wilderness, and his likely views on Game of Thrones.

A feminist, socialist, peace activist and climate-change campaigner; Katrin leads a coalition of centre-right parties who mainly represent fishing and farming interests and are strongly Eurosceptic.

Martin Stott

MORRIS SHOW IN SPAIN
When I visited in early January, the Fundación Juan March in Madrid was bustling with visitors. The exhibition, William Morris and Company: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Great Britain, was surprisingly busy, given that Morris was an Englishman whose work extends Anglo-Saxon, Nordic and Germanic traditions, who died more than 120 years ago and never visited Spain. It’s the first time that most of the pieces have been exhibited here.

A floor-to-ceiling image of Jeremy Deller’s We Sit Starving Amidst Our Gold commenced the show, a titan Morris tossing Roman Abramovich’s giant yacht into the Venetian lagoon. After this grand start, the exhibition was split into four blocks.

The first examined Morris’s origins and early work, beginning with the context and interests of Morris’s early life. Pre-Raphaelite portraits were hung next to the progress and pains of the industrial revolution in Britain. A second room was devoted to Red House, with a remarkable variety of forms. An architectural draft of the garden well shared wall space with a large, simple floral tapestry. A broad, delicately-painted wooden bench sat by a stand of metalwork candlesticks. The display gave an impression of a gifted young man, and a group of artists of enviable range and output. The record of the second block, There were tiles, enormous and complex tapestries, stained glass, printed illustrated books and of course wallpapers. But most impressive were the objects that demonstrated the process of production. Sketchbooks, colour palettes, tools, a knotted rug half-complete on the loom and woodblocks still stained with ink were given an equal status with finished work. Short videos produced by the V&A showed craftspeople using the processes you might have seen in the workshops of Morris & Co. The richness of this experience made this the strongest part of the exhibition.

In the third block the broader Arts & Crafts movement in Britain was conveyed, including the politics of the movement in the printed posters and pamphlets of socialist organisations. The dream of domestic beauty available to all was also clear. Colour palettes became fresher and lines cleaner. Process aided understanding the shift in styles. Where Morris was layering up to 30 woodblocks of colour and detail, Voysey layered just three or four. Early Liberty fabrics appeared alongside a selection of Mackintosh pieces.

The final section demonstrated the spread of the Arts & Crafts movement to Europe and the USA. The exhibition rather lost its thread with an eclectic mix of ceramics, glass, prints and jewellery. Photographs showed Arts & Crafts domestic interiors, conveying how the objects sat in their intended environment.

The exhibition was hosted in the Salamanca neighbourhood, rumoured to have more wealth than the rest of Spain put together. For all the exhibition’s success in making Morris accessible, the careful explanation of process also revealed his production as laborious, highly skilled and unaffordable to most.

That said, the gift shop offered a charming selection of Morris prints all for under €10, so this reviewer was able to walk away with her own little piece of Morris after all.

The exhibition can now be seen at the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya in Barcelona until 21 May.

Nadine Spencer

Nadine Spencer graduated in Decorative Arts from Nottingham Trent University in 2011. She previously ran a network of creative hubs in north London and now lives and works in Barcelona.
Calendar

MORRIS EVENTS
Please see the Events leaflet enclosed with the Magazine for forthcoming events organised by the Society. We wish particularly, however, to draw members’ attention to the following:

**A BETTER MORE BEAUTIFUL WORLD**
Coach House, Kelmscott House
24 March, 230 pm
De Morgan Collection curator Claire Longworth will discuss the lives and legacies of William and Evelyn De Morgan, in particular focusing on the themes brought to light through the Collection’s most recent partnership exhibitions at Wightwick Manor.

**WILLIAM MORRIS AND RED HOUSE**
Coach House, Kelmscott House
21 April, 230 pm
Red House was the only house commissioned by Morris and the first independent architectural work of his close friend and collaborator, Philip Webb. Tessa Wild’s talk will explore Red House’s role as an ambitious and critical chapter in Morris’s design history and the vital collaboration of Webb, Burne-Jones, Rossetti and their circle in realising Morris’s dream for his house.

**THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY AGM**
Coach House, Kelmscott House
12 May, 230 pm
The AGM will be followed by a free talk (speaker to be confirmed).

Pre-booking for all events is strongly advised. Book online at williammorrissociety.org or email events@williammorrissociety.org.uk.

**EMAIL BENEFITS**
If you supply us with your email address you can receive the Society’s ebulletins, which are sent out between issues of the Magazines with up to date news of the Society and other Morrisian developments as they happen, and a pdf of the US Society’s Newsletter. To add your name to the list for either item please email Penny McMahon, Membership Secretary: membership@williammorrissociety.org.uk

**WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY EVENTS**

**WILLIAM MORRIS BIRTHDAY LECTURE: THE SOCIALIST DIARY**
A fascinating insight into a period of intense political activity. Ahead of a new edition, Professor Florence S Boos reveals the essence of Morris’s Socialist Diary.
22 March, 730 pm
wmgallery.org.uk

**EXHIBITIONS**

**BEYOND OPHELIA – A CELEBRATION OF LIZZIE SIDDAL ARTIST AND POET**
Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton
1 March to 24 December
A professional member of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, Lizzie Siddal has been remembered mainly as the model for the iconic Millais painting, Ophelia, and as wife and muse of the Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Beyond Ophelia examines Siddal’s style, subject matter; depiction of women, influence on other artists, and the prejudice she then faced as a professional female artist.
nationaltrust.org.uk/wightwick-manor

**VOTES FOR WOMEN**

**MUSEUM OF LONDON**
to 6 January 2019
Dedicated to those who campaigned tirelessly for over fifty years to achieve votes for women, the exhibition features iconic objects from the Museum’s vast suffragette collection, including Emmeline Pankhurst’s hunger strike medal. A powerful, newly-commissioned film highlights the personal stories of lesser-known suffragettes and reflects on the contemporary relevance of the militant campaign.
museumoflondon.org.uk

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A WOMAN’S PLACE?
Abby House Museum, Leeds
Looks at the struggles and progress of women in achieving equality and recognition through stories and objects from strong pioneering women such as Leonora Cohen and Nicola Adams, from 1860 to the present day.
leeds.gov.uk

A PRE-RAPHAELITE COLLECTION UNVEILED: THE CECIL FRENCH BEQUEST
Watts Gallery, Compton, Guildford
6 March to 3 June
Works from a ‘forgotten’ collection of later Pre-Raphaelite paintings and drawings, now owned by the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. They include important works by Leighton, Alma-Tadema, Waterhouse, Burne-Jones and Moore.
wattsgallery.org.uk

LUSTROUS SURFACES
V&A, London
to 16 September
Featuring a great many, primarily Asian, lacquered objects located throughout the Museum, including shrines, chests and rare Latin American examples. This display highlights the varied manufacturing techniques, surface treatments, decorative styles and application around the world.
vam.ac.uk

REFLECTIONS: VAN EYCK AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES
National Gallery, London
to 2 April
Acquired by the National Gallery in 1842, the Arnolfini Portrait informed the Pre-Raphaelites’ belief in empirical observation, their ideas about draughtsmanship, colour and technique, and the ways in which objects in a picture could carry symbolic meaning.
nationalgallery.org.uk

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN
Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle
23 June to 7 October
The Dustman or The Lovers by Stanley Spencer is brought into the context of major works that explore the garden as a stage for the extraordinary, the magical, the atmospheric and the nostalgic. Artists include Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Beatrix Potter, Morris and Claude Monet.
laingartgallery.org.uk

BARBARA BROWN
The Whitworth, Manchester
to 30 March
Barbara Brown was the golden girl of Heal Fabrics in the 1960s and early 1970s. Talent-spotted as a student, her designs for furnishing fabrics are some of the most striking and unusual ever produced in the twentieth century and won awards from the Council of Industrial Design. This is the first major solo exhibition of her work in the UK.
whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

THE MEYNELLS IN DITCHLING
Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft
to 29 April
The Print Gallery will host a number of works created by and for the Meynell family, including Esther Meynell’s Grave Fairytales, with a customised dustjacket created by Edward Johnston. The bonds between Eric Gill and Alice Meynell were forged through their shared religious beliefs and enthusiasm for typography.
ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk

BEYOND BORDERS
The Whitworth, Manchester
3 June
Explores South Asian textiles, bringing together four artists, based in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and England, working on issues around post-colonial identity, ruptured spaces, authenticity, displacement and belonging, using textiles, fibres, embroidery, film, photography and performance.
whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

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whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

SOUTH ASIAN DESIGN
Manchester Art Gallery
to 27 May
Exploring how traditional crafts from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are inspiring contemporary art, design and fashion, including intricately worked textiles, ceramics, stone and metal.
manchesterartgallery.org

A BETTER, MORE BEAUTIFUL WORLD?
Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton
to 23 April
The first in a series of displays from the De Morgan Foundation in the new Malthouse Gallery; resulting from a new partnership that has made Wightwick the Midlands centre for the De Morgan Collection for the next ten years.
nationaltrust.org.uk/wightwick-manor

SIDNEY REEVE (1875-1943), ARTIST, DESIGNER & SILVERSMITH
Court Barn, Chipping Campden
to 11 March
Sidney Reeve joined the Guild of Handicraft in 1902 to work as a silversmith. He left in 1904 to teach silversmithing at Leicester School of Art, and worked there for the next thirty years, taking on commissions as well as teaching.
courtbarn.org.uk

RUSSELL-COTES CERAMICS: CONNOISSEUR OR CONNED?
Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth
24 March to 26 August
Merton Russell-Cotes, a collector of Victorian art and artefacts, acquired many ceramics and this exhibition features some of the museum’s highlights. But can you tell the fakes from the genuine articles?
russellcotes.com

RADICAL CLAY: TEACHING WITH THE GREATEST POTTERS OF THE 1960s
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery
to 10 June
In the 1960s the Bristol & Avon Schools Loan Service had a significant pottery collection which was lent out to schools to inspire young minds. Fifty items from the collection are on display, including works by Lucie Rie, Bernard and Janet Leach, Hans Coper and Ruth Duckworth.
bristolmuseums.org.uk

THE EDWARDIANS
Manchester Art Gallery
to 29 April
Works from the gallery’s collection illustrate the glamour, rural nostalgia, evocative landscape and the city of the 1900s, the sparkling point between the Victorian and Modern periods. The run of this exhibition has been extended.
manchesterartgallery.org

Far left: The Haunted Wood, by Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Eleanor Siddal, 1854, gouache on paper, Wightwick Manor © National Trust
Left: Mariano in The South by John William Waterhouse, c1897, oil on canvas, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
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Books

A IS FOR ASHBEE – AN ARTS AND CRAFTS ALPHABET
by Peyton Skipwith & Brian Webb
Court Barn, 96pp, £14 hb
courtbarn.org.uk
Peyton Skipwith writes of this playful, pretty and provocative little book ‘Inspired by Ashbee’s 1892 sheet of lettering I decided to create an Arts and Crafts Alphabet, embracing the comfortable and well-known as well as the outrageous and nearly unthinkable’. The alphabet also embraces the Uncomfortable, one of the things that U stands for, represented by a chair designed by Godwin.

THE PRISON DIARY OF ANNIE COBDEN-SANDERSON
by Marianne Tidcombe
Libanus Press, 80pp, £20 plus postage/shipping
stpaulbib@gmail.com
This diary, written in Holloway Prison in 1906, is the earliest known prison diary of a suffragette. Reproduced in facsimile, it has been transcribed with extensive notes on the characters and events mentioned. The diary is accompanied by a full description of Annie’s life, from her childhood in an intensely political household to her late life as a campaigner for equal rights, the welfare of children and peace among nations.

WOMEN IN DESIGN
by Libby Sellers
Frances Lincoln, 176pp, £20 hb
quartoknows.com
From architects and product designers to textile artists and digital innovators, the book profiles 27 of the most influential female designers from the twentieth century to the present day, including Eileen Grey, graphic designer Lora Lamm, and architect Norma Merrick Sklarek.

THE ART OF WALLPAPER-COLLECTOR / DRAW / CREATE
Thames & Hudson V&A, 96pp, £12.95 pb
thamesandhudson.com
Beginning with a brief history of wallpaper manufacture and design, the book showcases wallpapers from the collection of the V&A, from intricate hand-drawn designs to bold woodblock printed. It invites the reader to participate through several stages of activity that culminate in creating your own design.

CHARLESTON
by Quentin Bell & Virginia Nicholson
Frances Lincoln, 176pp, £17.99 pb
quartoknows.com
A new edition of the book on Charleston Farmhouse, the most important remaining example of Bloomsbury Group decoration. It features new photography together with a revised design and format, and the text has been updated by Vanessa Bell’s granddaughter.

THE STRANGE CASE OF MADELEINE SEGuin
by William Rose
Karnac Books, 248 pp, £9.99 pb
karnacbooks.com
A compelling novel written by a WMS member, set in Paris in the 1880s. It concerns a young woman being treated in hospital for hysteria, and her encounters with hypnosis, Symbolism, religion, inherited wealth and power; and the occult.

ARTS AND CRAFTS TILES: MORRIS TO VOSEY
by Rob Higgins & Will Farmer
Amberley Publishing, 96pp, £14.99 pb; currently available at £13.49
amberley-books.com
With its companion volume on the tiles of William De Morgan, the book is claimed to be the first complete introduction to British Arts & Crafts tiles from 1860 to 1920. Tile designs by Morris, Burne-Jones, Webb, Crane and Voysey used for bathrooms, fireplaces and elsewhere, are included.

REBEL CROSSINGS: NEW WOMEN, FREE LOVERS, AND RADICALS IN BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES
by Sheila Rowbotham
Verso, 512pp, £20 hb with free ebversobooks.com
Rebel Crossings relates the intersecting lives of four women and two men as they journey from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, from Britain to America, and from Old World conventions toward New World utopias. Their lives bring fresh slants on political and cultural movements and upon influential individuals including William Morris, Walt Whitman, and Edward Carpenter. See p17 for Robert Hunter’s report on the 2017 Kelmscott Lecture delivered by Sheila Rowbotham.

SECRET HOUSES OF THE COTSWOLDS
by Jeremy Musson and Hugo Rittson Thomas
Frances Lincoln, 144pp, £20 hb
quartoknows.com
Described as a ‘private tour of twenty of the most beguiling castles, estates, palaces and manor houses’ in the region. Most of the houses are privately owned and not usually open to the public, and a number are associated with members of the Arts & Crafts movement, including Daneway House, Owlpen Manor and Hilles House.

FAUNA: THE ART OF JEWELLERY
by Patrick Mauriès and Évelyne Possémé
Thames & Hudson, 128pp, £16.95 hb
thamesandhudson.com
A menagerie of creatures have been captured in gemstones and precious metals and these examples, from the collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris stretch from the Renaissance revival of the nineteenth century via Art Nouveau to playfully naïve modernist designs.
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TRELLIS
Curator Helen Elletson writes on 
Trellis Wallpaper, designed by 
William Morris, 1862
A hand block-printed sample of 
William Morris’s Trellis wallpaper is 
one of the many items on loan 
from The William Morris Society in 
the travelling exhibition, William 
Morris and the Arts and Crafts 
Movement of Great Britain which 
 began at the Fundación Juan March 
in Madrid and transfers to the 
 Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya 
in Barcelona from 22 February to 
20 May.
Trellis was Morris’s first design for 
wallpaper, completed in 1862, 
featuring birds drawn by Philip 
Webb. The original design is held at 
the William Morris Gallery in 
Walthamstow and The William 
Morris Society owns five samples of 
Trellis in various colourways. Flower 
trellises also appear elsewhere in 
the work of Morris and his 
associates, for example in 1862 
stained glass for St. Helen’s, Darley 
Dale, and All Saints, Selsey, and in 
Edward Burne-Jones’ 1863 sketch 
design for an embroidery for John 
Ruskin illustrating Chaucer’s Legend 
of Good Women. AJ Mackail, 
Morris’s biographer, describes the 
‘wattled rose trellises inclosing 
richly-flowered square garden plots’ 
at Red House. This is a typical 
medieval garden plan, illustrated in 
numerous manuscripts, and was the 
inspiration for Morris’s wallpaper 
design.
Initially Morris tried to print the 
company’s wallpapers using oil 
colours and etched zinc plates, but 
these attempts were unsuccessful. 
Production was then handed over 
to Jeffrey & Co, a well-established 
wallpaper firm who printed using 
the traditional hand block printing 
process and distemper colours. The 
design was registered in 1864. 
A blue-ground version of Trellis 
was used in Morris’s bedroom at 
Kelm scott House where he lived 
from 1878 until his death in 1896. 
A fragment of this original 

Members wishing to view any 
aspect of the collection are 
welcome to do so, by contacting 
Helen Elletson at Kelm scott 

Top: A blue-ground version of Trellis was used 
in Morris’s bedroom at Kelm scott House. 
Left: Trellis in the yellow colourway as loaned 
to the current exhibition in Spain 
Above: Another example of a Trellis colourway
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