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Welcome

It’s been a busy first few months in my new role as Editor of the magazine. One of my first engagements was a visit to the David Parr House in Cambridge for a private tour with the curator Shelley Lockwood. It has just reopened after a period of extensive refurbishment and I was lucky enough to spend a morning there having a one to one with Shelley, who kindly took me through the history of the house. The interior is as stunning as you would expect with the Morris connection. Parr spent his life working at F R Leach, the company trusted and respected by Morris to carry out his work, and in his spare time transformed this humble terraced house into his very own palace of delights. Nothing can quite prepare you for the Arts & Crafts smorgasbord that awaits when you step over the threshold. The house is unchanged since Parr lived there and every room reveals both a visual treat and many points of interest. But my clear favourite was the front room with its elaborately decorated walls and ceiling. Turn to page 4 for a taster of what to expect when you book a tour (davidparrhouse.org).

There was barely time to draw breath before it was on to West Sussex and the curator’s tour of the new Morris & Co Inspired by Nature exhibition at Standen, which runs until 11 November. Have I mentioned yet how much I love my new job? On a beautiful summer’s day Standen looked glorious, an Arts & Crafts monument to the combined genius of Philip Webb and William Morris, and the perfect place to spend a morning finding out more about the significance of nature in the work of Morris and his collaborators. I particularly enjoyed the poetry trail in the garden based on Morris’s poem ‘Tapestry Trees’.

Life doesn’t get much better than having the opportunity to wander among the fabrics, wallpapers, tapestries and embroideries in the specially recreated showroom of the original Morris & Co that is the highlight of the exhibition, seeing first-hand how they used nature’s inspiration in their artwork and beautifully crafted products. There was also a fascinating introductory talk by Standen curator Dr Alice Strickland. In my previous job as Lifestyle Editor at Country Homes & Interiors magazine the arrival of the Morris & Co ‘look books’ each season was an occasion of much excitement and this was a great opportunity to see it come to life. To find out more about Morris & Co’s continuing legacy, see my interview with their archivist Keren Protheroe on page 12 (stylelibrary.com/morris&co).

This summer sees several important events for the Society. We are launching our Library Development Appeal with the aim of taking the search catalogue online to improve accessibility for the Society’s impressive reference library. To find out how you can help, turn to page 17. Our new book William Morris & John Ruskin: A new road on which the world should travel also hits the shops, a wide-ranging collection of essays exploring the various interconnections between the life, work and achievements of the two men. Ruskin scholar Sara Atwood, who contributed to the new book, talks about the combined vision of Ruskin and Morris to create a better world on page 8. And finally, be sure to pay a visit to our new exhibition ‘The dear warp and weft at Hammersmith: A history of Kelmscott House, which runs until 26 October. Featuring original designs, textiles and wallpapers, as well as beautiful photographic prints, it’s unmissable.

Please do drop me a line at sarahwilsoneditorwmsmagazine@gmail.com if you have anything you’d like to share. Until the next issue...

Sarah Wilson, Editor
There is something immensely touching about seeing the layers of more than a century of family life in a beautifully decorated but very humble space. A rare and remarkable example of Victorian art workmanship, the David Parr House in Cambridge is made even more extraordinary by its survival as an ordinary family home. Parr was a decorative artist who lived at 186 Gwydir Street from 1887 until his death 40 years later in 1927. His granddaughter Elsie, who was 12 at the time, then moved in as a companion for her widowed grandmother. Elsie was to live in the house for 85 years until shortly before her death in 2013. Since 2014, the house has been owned and managed by the David Parr House charity and this summer it opens its doors to the public again following an extensive programme of conservation, cataloguing and research, funded partly by a National Heritage Lottery grant.

Parr's design inspiration
So, what lies behind its freshly-painted front door? Photographs do not do justice to the experience of stepping over the threshold into this modest terraced house and walking into the front room. As your eyes adjust, a sense of wonder takes over as you become aware that you are entirely surrounded by lavish, multi-layered wall painting and decoration of the very highest quality. Gorgeous repeat-patterned interlaced foliage and flowers, traversed by ribboned lettering exhorting you to ‘see and learn, be timely wise,’ know to live and learn to die,’ framed by intricate and elaborate cornicing, mouldings and rails in gilded chevron and stencilled flower patterns and topped by a painted ceiling, all in soft autumnal hues. It’s a feast for the eyes, a unique testament to the skill of its creator and a miracle that it has survived. And that’s just the first room. The hallway, dining room, kitchen, staircase, landing and main bedroom all retain the original hand-painted decoration and wood-graining applied so skilfully between 1895 and 1920 by Parr himself.

The patterns and colours throughout the house feel comfortably familiar to anyone whose visual dictionary includes the Arts & Crafts textile and wallpaper designs of William Morris and John Henry Dearle, and the Gothic Revival designs of George Frederick Bodley, George Gilbert Scott Jr and Charles Eamer Kempe. Yet these are the free-hand work of a hitherto unknown decorative artist working in his spare time by oil lamp and candlelight in his own humble home. The stunning decorative schemes in the house are a moving testament to the skill of the artisan decorators and craftsmen and women who drew, painted, gilded, chiselled, carved, moulded, glazed, stitched, wrought and brought into being the designs of Morris et al. Parr chose to decorate his home using the skills acquired and honed during his apprenticeship and working life at F R Leach in Cambridge and, although we may never be sure why he did it, it is hard to avoid seeing his work as a tangible expression of John Ruskin’s ‘joy in labour’, creating a place of beauty in which to live, inspired by principles by which to live – truth to nature, love of beauty, humility before God and a constant drive for self-improvement.

After an impoverished and difficult early life – his mother died when he was six years old and a few months later his father was in court facing charges of drunkenness and severe neglect of his five children – Parr was apprenticed, aged 17, to Frederick Leach for four years ‘to learn the art of painting and decorating’ and he stayed at the Leach firm for the remainder of his working life. Leach, son of artist and inn-sign painter Richard Hopkins Leach, had established his firm of ‘art workmen’ in Cambridge in 1862, just one year after the founding of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Leach’s firm was a workshop-style business aimed at providing everything required to decorate churches and other grand interiors.

David Parr House: at home with beauty
such as large civic spaces and college rooms. From purpose-built workshops in City Road, an office on King’s Parade and, later, a shop in St Mary’s Passage, Leach offered stone and wood-carving, metalwork, stained glass, furniture, textiles, ceramic tiles and all the skills of artistic painters and decorators, including pounced work, lettering, gilding, graining and stained glass. From the 1860s, the Leach firm worked in Cambridge and all over the country on newly-built and restored churches in Liverpool, Scarborough, Carlisle, Dundee and London, very often carrying out the designs of Morris, Bodley and Kempe. They also worked in grand private ‘artistic’ houses such as 1 Palace Green in Kensington, painting the designs of Morris and Philip Webb for George and Rosalind Howard, and at Old Swan House in Chelsea. Perhaps their most prestigious commission was the painting of rooms in St James’s Palace for Morris in 1881.

Trusted by Morris
Correspondence surviving in the archives at Jesus College, Cambridge, between the Dean and Bodley in 1868, reveals the trust and respect Morris had for Leach and his workers. In response to the Dean’s protest that ‘some astonishment is felt at the employment of a Cambridge workman in the execution of a work which was intrusted to Mr Morris’, Bodley writes: ‘Morris finds Leach a very capable and able executant. The design and the exact shades of the colours are all done according to the directions given to him… He is doing it quite as well as Morris’ men would.’ Further letters in the archives at the William Morris Gallery confirm the mutual respect between Morris, Bodley and Leach. His local reputation as a man of taste is confirmed 20 years later in a letter from Maud Darwin in 1885 in which she is fretting about how to decorate and furnish her new house by the river (The Grange, now part of Darwin College, Cambridge): ‘The men are waiting for the papers and paint to be chosen… I was in despair, when a happy thought struck me, why not have Mr Leach? Mr Leach is a man who has a great deal of taste and people send all over England for him to do their houses. So now he is a person in whom I shall have confidence and who is experienced. He lives in Cambridge.’ In a satisfying postscript to this story for the readers of this magazine, in the event, Maud’s cousin Ella du Puy took her on a shopping expedition to London and together they spend Maud’s entire decorating budget on Wilton carpets and a Morris rug.

A photograph of the Leach firm on their annual works outing up the river in Cambridge in 1882 shows us Frederick Leach sat cross-legged on the ground, his hat in his lap, flanked by his young apprentices. This scene embodies the meaning of Morris’ statement that ‘no man is good enough to be another’s master’. It also shows Parr sporting a deerstalker hat, possibly a testament to the amount of time he spent travelling around the country. Standing tall at the back, his hand is on the shoulder of a fellow workman in a remarkably relaxed fashion. Was it perhaps at this point in his life – seven years after the end of his apprenticeship, three years after first setting eyes on his future wife and fresh from spending his days painting in St James’s Palace for Morris – that Parr first thought of creating his own ‘palace of art’ in Cambridge?

On the property ladder at last
It was to be another five years, during which time he worked all over the country, before Parr moved into his new home in Gwydir Street in
1887, together with his wife Mary Jane, their daughter Mary Emma and son David Douglas. A third child, Sarah Helen, was born two years later. Parr purchased the three-bedroomed terraced house for £287 at auction, with the help of a building society mortgage. He was 33 years old and had been training and working as a highly-skilled artworker for over 15 years. On moving in, he immediately set about re-modelling the house and making it ready for the ornate ornamentation we see today. We can state with authority when and how the work was done thanks to another valuable survival in the shape of a small, tan, leather notebook. Filled with Parr’s neat handwriting, it tells of all the different aspects of home improvement and painted decoration carried out in the house during his lifetime. From this little book we learn that he spent several years improving the house – moving the copper from the kitchen to a newly-built scullery and bringing the WC indoors, installing a hot air system, adding iron railings and a palm to the small front garden, remodelling the rooms upstairs to create an extra bedroom, a bedroom lobby and an ingenious ‘manhole cupboard’ for access to a boarded loft. He also put in panelled ceilings, cornices and picture, dado and chair rails in almost every room.

Not only did he assiduously record what he did to the house and when in his notebook, room by room, but through its pages we also learn of the different techniques and materials he used and the people who helped him to create his home. Hence, we discover whether a door was wheel-grained or combed, where he pounced and painted onto lining paper and where onto canvas, who gave him the pieces of Anaglypta and Lincrusta proudly displayed in the hall, when the various pieces of mosaic, carpet and encaustic tile-patterned linoleum were laid, and who helped him build and install the bedroom washstand and wardrobe. All the skills of a decorative artist of the highest calibre are on display in this tiny terraced house: exquisite pin-prick stencil work to create glorious fictive textiles (complete with ‘fringing’ in some cases), immaculate lettering, ornate gilding and plasterwork, beautiful graining (not only on wood but also on paper), hand-painted stained glass and the clever use of modern materials to create an ideal of a beautiful living space, thoughtfully constructed.

Morris railed against a world in which ‘there is no sympathy between the designer and the man who carries out the design’, calling instead for opportunities to work in ways in which ‘the hand should rest the mind as well as the mind the hand’. Morris was also troubled by the fact that his design was all too often only available for the rich. Parr’s home and the notebook and sketchbooks in which he recorded his work show a mind at work as well as a hand – a designer and an able executant, an art workman who created his own palace of art. Where he couldn’t afford to be true to materials, he used all the means at his disposal, especially the skills of his own hands, to make that most longed-for thing – ‘a beautiful house’.

Dr Shelley Lockwood is a public historian currently working on the Life and Art in a Worker’s House project at the David Parr House in Cambridge. Discover more at davidparrhouse.org.
There is some use in reiterating a truth, lest it be forgotten

This month sees the publication of the Society’s new book of essays on the life, work and achievements of William Morris and John Ruskin. Sara Atwood talks about their combined vision to create a better world, Ruskin’s legacy in this his bicentenary year and her own contribution to the new book

John Ruskin and William Morris were among the most influential public figures of their time. Their lives and work span much of the nineteenth century and express the period’s intellectual, social and spiritual ferment. Believing that Britain had sacrificed human community dedicated to cultivating art education, craft, self-sufficiency and the rural economy. Insisting ‘There is something to be done’, not merely discussed, he aimed to make some small piece of English ground, beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful. Morris, too, envisioned a peaceful, communal society that would value beauty, practice useful and stimulating work, and achieve equality of condition. Although Morris’s Socialist principles differed from Ruskin’s more idiosyncratic, personal methods, both men believed in the possibility of creating ‘a new road on which the world should travel’.

Bicentenary book
This year is important for Ruskin studies as it marks the bicentenary of his birth. There have already been a number of exhibitions, lectures and new publications, with more to follow in the coming months. The celebration is international too. There are events taking place in the US, France, Italy and Japan, in addition to the UK. Press coverage has been generous, including articles and reviews in the Guardian, Telegraph, Financial Times, New York Times, Boston Globe, among others, and radio discussions on such programmes as the BBC’s Free Thinking, Start the Week, and Front Row Late. The year will conclude, fittingly, with a two-day international conference in December at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, ‘John Ruskin: Nineteenth-Century Visionary, Twenty-First Century Inspiration’. All in all, it is proving to be a red-letter year for Ruskin and those of us whose work has been aimed at introducing Ruskin to modern audiences are delighted. It is exhilarating to see Ruskin’s life and work given such attention and visibility, and we hope to see this interest continue to grow.

Morris believed that Ruskin had ‘done serious and solid work toward [the] new-birth of society’. Morris’s own efforts, both artistic and political, were directed towards the same end. So it is fitting that The William Morris Society should mark Ruskin’s bicentenary with a publication devoted to both men. William Morris & John Ruskin: A New Road On Which The World Should Travel explores the correspondence between these two influential figures and considers the ways in which they anticipated many of our current debates about education, the environment, economics, politics and labour. The new volume, edited by John Blewitt and published by University of Exeter Press, includes both previously published and newly commissioned essays addressing various aspects of Ruskin’s and Morris’s ideas and achievements.

Personal involvement
Ruskin’s bicentenary marks a personal anniversary of sorts for me as well: twenty years of Ruskin scholarship. Although I had encountered Ruskin’s work as an undergraduate, I wrote my MA thesis on Anthony Trollope (who describes Ruskin’s Sesame and Lilies as ‘rodomontade’!), working with the Trollope scholar, biographer and editor N John Hall. Yet I had begun to read Ruskin in earnest during my Master’s programme, and by the time I began my Doctoral studies in 1999 my focus - and fascination - had intensified. I’ve been reading and writing about him ever since. I am struck by his intensity, intelligence and masterful use of language, and stimulated by his curiosity, confidence and frequent combative ness. And because his mind ranged so widely, there is much Ruskin to read. The Library Edition of his Collected Works (1903-1912), compiled and edited by E T Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, is a meticulous and formidable achievement, comprising 39 substantial volumes and more than nine million words. Ruskin wrote about art and architecture, political economy, social reform, geology, botany, natural history, mythology, etymology, education and history. In the face of often harsh criticism, he rejected the dominant ideologies of his time – utilitarianism, laissez faire political economy, capitalism, democracy and industrialism. Ruskin’s work
reflects ‘the interwoven temper’ of his mind and expresses his insight, his vision, his sensitivity to nature, his great love and knowledge of art and culture, his perception of connections between things, people and ideas, and his indignation with the aesthetic and social failures of an increasingly industrial age. Those of you familiar with Ruskin will recognise what I’ve described, and those who haven’t yet read him have much to look forward to. Reading Ruskin I experienced innumerable moments of insight and recognition. Yet far from simply confirming or expanding thoughts I’d already had or had begun to formulate, Ruskin instead challenged me to consider both my ideas and the world from another perspective. My dissertation was a study of Ruskin and education, a subject I returned to in my book *Ruskin’s Educational Ideals* (Ashgate 2011). I have learned – and continue to learn – more from Ruskin than I could ever have. The past twenty years have been personally as well as intellectually rewarding, for I have made many lasting ‘friends in Ruskin’, and have had the privilege of working with a generous and remarkable community of people.

**As relevant today**

Ruskin anticipated many of our current debates about education, the environment, economics, politics and labour. After the 2008 economic collapse, *Financial Times* editor Andrew Hill wondered, ‘Where’s John Ruskin when we need him?’ Today, as civility, social justice and ecological integrity erode under pressure from divisive and short-sighted politics, the ideas of both Ruskin and Morris are more pertinent than ever. They may help us to construct an alternative narrative to the troubling story that is taking shape – to tell a new story that describes a better way forward.

Ruskin declared in *Unto This Last* (1860), his controversial study of political economy, that ‘there is no wealth but life’. He argued for compassion, social responsibility and a ‘human economy’ against competition and self-interest – an economy that would be governed not by the sterile principle of exchange, but by ‘such affection as one man owes to another’. In doing so, he drew upon the true meaning of the Greek *oikonomia*, ‘house-law’, and all the spiritual and social ties it implies. ‘The real science of political economy’, he insists, ‘which has yet to be distinguished from the bastard science, as medicine from witchcraft, and astronomy from astrology, is that which teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life’. For Ruskin these things included art and architecture, nature, education and meaningful work. Ruskin declared that ‘All great art is praise’, whether of the natural world or a fellow human being. Yet before they can become fit subjects of art, both the world and its inhabitants must be made praiseworthy through care, fellowship and sympathy. In his social criticism, Ruskin warned that a nation that tolerated crushing poverty, countenanced dangerous and degrading labour conditions, and fouled its own soil, air and water was morally bankrupt. A teacher above all,
education was central to Ruskin’s unconventional vision. He held that true education meant ‘leading human souls to what is best and making what is best out of them.’ For Ruskin, education was not a commodity or a means of social and economic advancement, but a life-enhancing process that ultimately enriches not only the individual, but the community. It should be radical in the original sense of that word, creating a deeply-rooted transformation that ramifies throughout society. The aim of true education should be to produce ‘souls of a good quality,’ he declared, whereas ‘Modern “Education” for the most part signifies giving not only the individual, but the community. It word, creating a deeply-rooted transformation that ramifies throughout society. The aim of true education should be to produce ‘souls of a good quality,’ he declared, whereas ‘Modern “Education” for the most part signifies giving

Although Ruskin’s ideas were often derided, both during his lifetime and afterwards, they nonetheless gained purchase. Unto This Last, became an important text for the Labour Party, founded in 1900. Ruskin’s proposals influenced the development of trade unions and the establishment of a fixed rate of wages. His reach was international as well. Tolstoy described him as ‘one of the most remarkable men not only of England and of our generation, but of all countries and times’; Proust translated his work into French; Gandhi recalled in his autobiography that after reading Ruskin’s Unto This Last, ‘I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life’; Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Unto This Last through his reading of Gandhi. Ruskin challenges us, as he challenged them, to consider alternatives to the way we live now, striving always to look closely and see clearly.

My own contribution to the new book explores the connection between Ruskin’s educational ideals and his love of nature, and the ways in which his perspective influenced Morris. Both Ruskin and Morris recognise a direct link between education and a healthy engagement with nature; as they see it, no true education is possible for people or nations whose relation with the earth is disordered. Book learning, for them, is always secondary to the sort of essential knowledge that binds humans to the natural world, without which neither great art nor social well-being are possible. Urging the study of nature in ‘The Lesser Arts,’ Morris asks how people can care about art unless they also care ‘about carrying on their business without making the world hideous’. Ruskin declares that ‘most of the lessons we need are written [in nature], all kinds of precious grace and teaching being united in this link between the Earth and Man.’ For both men, education begins in the natural world: in attentiveness to its forms, respect for its vitality, and reverence for its mystery. Moreover, looking closely at nature is the first step in learning to see the world clearly. Ruskin insists that it is only after seeing nature rightly that one is able ‘to see a man rightly . . . to understand and love what [is] good in a man,’ and thus become capable of desiring and creating social change. The success of Morris’s utopia in News From Nowhere derives in part from the restoration and stewardship of nature. In exploring Ruskin’s understanding of the role of nature in education, my essay aims to demonstrate that many of Morris’s arguments against contemporary education, and his imagined alternatives, reflect Ruskin’s principles and proposals.

Echoing Ruskin’s argument about art and labour in ‘The Lesser Arts,’ Morris observed that ‘there is some use in reiterating a truth, lest it be forgotten.’ The same may be said about returning to and reassessing the work of Ruskin and Morris, who expressed important and enduring truths worth remembering. Both Ruskin and Morris rejected materialism, competition, unjust and demeaning labour, the degradation of both the natural world and human lives, and the fragmentation of communities and values. Their deep concern for true civilisation, the well-being of the earth and humanity, and a life restored to its basis in real wealth, offers us both profound insight and hope for a more wholesome and happy future.
Sarah Wilson: By way of introduction, can you tell us a little bit about your background?

Keren Protheroe I started as a painter with a degree in Fine Art at University in Bristol then did a PhD in Art and Design History as part of the Modern Interiors Research Centre at Kingston University. I’ve been lucky enough to work with various design museums and archive collections, some celebratory of the every day, others containing work of the most celebrated nineteenth century artists and designers. The power of idealism has always been a key interest. My PhD research examined the working lives of Minnie McLeish and Winifred Mold, who fought against the odds to be successful, professional textile designers in the 1920s.

SW How did your interest in Morris begin?

KP I think Morris is placed like a talisman in every UK art student’s pocket practically from their first week of study. All twentieth century art and design that claimed a social agenda was historically important bound volumes of nineteenth century wallpaper such as those by Augustus Pugin and Owen Jones, beautiful hand woven eighteenth century brocaded silks, richly dyed Indian cottons and embroideries, and of course the Morris & Co ledgers, stand books (early pattern books) and textile samples. These are national treasures, which guide the work of our design studio. The surfaces of Morris’s indigo-dyed cottons reveal the complexity of their production. A perk of working in the archive is being able to look at the reverse of things and to understand the intricacy of sequential processes and see the marks created as part of a textile’s making.

SW How does the service of recreating originals from the archive for special commissions work?

KP First we assess whether the original production materials, for example printing blocks, are stable enough to be used for the recreation and, if necessary, carry out research to find an original sample that we can use for colour matching. If the blocks are too fragile to use – many of our printing blocks are more than 100 years old – then we can offer to recreate a wallpaper using a modern printing method. For example, surflex printing has print mark indistinguishable from nineteenth century block printing, and digital printing is also useful for recreating wallpapers with a very large-scale repeat. Time-scale and budget are also significant factors because a block printer will only print a single colour each day to avoid smudging or other imperfections. Compton produced by Morris & Co in 1895 requires 28 blocks to create the full repeat, so you can imagine it would take many hours of expensive work to create an authentically block-printed reproduction.

SW Your role as archivist must be fascinating.

KP Managing an archive requires a combination of people skills, historical knowledge, collection care and an appreciation of systems. Our archive is used like a reference library so enquiries from the design teams, the marketing department, academic researchers and institutions looking to borrow items for exhibitions arrive on a daily basis. Caring for the collection involves ensuring the physical stability of a wide range of artefacts and making sure we know where everything is and who’s working with it at all times. I inherited a wonderfully detailed card index catalogue system from my predecessors that I’m slowly integrating into our new digital collections management system. I love research and it’s a thrill when I find myself in a position to mediate between a curious researcher and the items on our shelves that have been patiently awaiting their chronicler.

SW Morris & Co is sponsoring the Society’s current exhibition ‘The dear warp and weft at Hammersmith’. What does Kelmscott House mean to you?

KP A place where quiet but fundamental creativity happened. It’s impossible to stand in the coach house and not feel that spaces resonate with the things they’ve witnessed. I associate Kelmscott House with an image of William Morris at once teaching himself weaving (an intricate and interior process) but also frantically and loudly proselytising the virtues of Socialism. It’s a good image to carry in my mind.

How does Morris & Co uphold Morris’s aesthetic?

As custodians of William Morris’s original company, the team at Morris & Co are very aware of the responsibility that comes with this legacy, and strive to uphold his aesthetic in everything we do. For today’s collections we take inspiration from the archive and also from all aspects of Morris’s work to create new designs that sit alongside the classics, making them relevant for today whilst maintaining all the charm of the originals. All collections are created with great care in our dedicated design studio, ensuring craftsmanship is maintained throughout. Fabrics and wallcoverings are manufactured within sister factories in the UK.

The heritage of Morris & Co dates back to 1861 and the founding of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Editor Sarah Wilson talks to brand archivist Dr Keren Protheroe about her passion for all things Morris
A selection of the outcomes of the Arts & Crafts Hammersmith project.
Left, below, and below right: creations from the Painting on Glass and Love is Enough children’s workshops in 2018.
Right: Learning resources material produced by Arts & Crafts Hammersmith.
Next page: Hammersmith Riverside Arts & Crafts walk leaflet.
This spring Arts & Crafts Hammersmith, our joint initiative with the Emery Walker Trust, came to an end. Michael Hall, who has been involved in the project since its inception in 2012, looks back on its history and offers a personal reflection on the benefits it has brought to the Society.

An ambitious joint project that shows the way forward

In 2018, 4,300 people visited the Society's premises in Kelmscott House. This is an impressive figure for a small museum that is open just two afternoons a week, but it is only a tiny fraction of the international audience interested in the life and legacy of William Morris. Two major digital developments have transformed our outreach. The first, launched last year, is a virtual tour hosted by our website that uses 360-degree photography to navigate through the house and the collections on display. A Morris enthusiast in Atlanta, Australia or Azerbaijan can now scrutinise in detail the Albion Press in the Emberton Print Room or enjoy the tiles designed by Philip Webb in the fireplace of the lower library. In May this year the tour was supplemented by another major advance: a searchable online catalogue of the Society's collections. Type in a term – glass, the Socialist League, wallpaper, or May Morris, for example – and every item in the collection connected with your interest will appear.

Both these developments have been funded by the Arts & Crafts Hammersmith project (A&CH), which came to an end this spring. Many members will have been made aware of it by the project's own website, which hosts the online catalogue, and visitors to Kelmscott House will have noticed the many recent improvements to the premises that are also a result of the project. These are, however, just the most visible outcomes of a programme of works and activities that has been a major undertaking for the Society's staff and volunteers for more than six years. It has helped raise the quality of our activities and – as the digital projects make plain – it has enhanced our ability to share what we do with a vastly greater audience.

Working together
As the name 'Arts & Crafts Hammersmith' suggests, the project has not been purely focused on Kelmscott House. It has been a partnership venture with the Emery Walker Trust (EWT), which was set up in 1999 to preserve and show to the public the astonishingly well-preserved Arts & Crafts interiors of Walker's house at 7 Hammersmith Terrace, just ten minutes' walk from The William Morris Society along Upper Mall. The links between the two organisations are obvious: Emery Walker and William Morris were great friends with shared values and political beliefs, and without Walker’s expertise in printing and typography the Kelmscott Press would probably never have come into being. Informal talks between the (then) chairs of the two organisations about a possible partnership began in 2009, encouraged by the fact that the Society’s curator, Helen Elletson, also works for EWT on the one day a week that she is not employed by us.

The practical advantages of shared working stem in part from the complementary nature of the two organisation's premises. Emery Walker’s House authentically exemplifies the aesthetic ideals and way of life of Morris’s circle in a way that allows visitors to grasp what the long-dispersed interiors of his home at Kelmscott House must have been like. On the other hand, 7 Hammersmith Terrace has no room for the sort of educational and other public activities so well catered for in the Coach House and other interiors at Kelmscott House. The two societies’ needs were also a good match: EWT had urgent conservation and repair priorities, and the Society was planning improvements to its facilities for visitors and volunteers; both wanted to develop their educational offerings and increase access – both physical and virtual – to their collections.

How the funding worked
From the outset it was hoped that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) might be able to help. The Society had not long before received an HLF grant for the refurbishment of the Emberton Room and in 2008 EWT had been awarded a planning project grant by HLF to allow it to draw up a conservation management plan and an access, audience and education plan. Since Helen Elletson had overseen the Emberton Room project and also managed the Society’s education programme – which was to form the core of what became A&CH’s activity plan – it was decided that she would manage the application to the HLF and oversee the project should the application be successful, backed up by a Joint Steering Committee formed of the chairs of the two organisations and a group of trustees drawn from both.

We heard that our application to the HLF had been successful in March 2013. As usual for such projects, it was to be funded in two parts. Stage one, for which we received £91,800, was essentially to prepare for the works intended to be carried out in stage two by drawing up a detailed programme and a budget. It was calculated that we needed £980,000 to pay for capital works at Kelmscott House and 7 Hammersmith Terrace, an educational, outreach and marketing programme and an ambitious plan to digitise the catalogues of the two organisations’ collections and put them online. The stage two application was a gratifying success: in December 2014 we were told that the HLF would provide funding of £631,100, leaving the two organisations to raise £250,000 in cash, with the balance in volunteer time. This match funding was to be underwritten by the two organisations on the basis of 63% by EWT and 37% by the Society, reflecting the division of expenditure on the two organisations – EWT received more, primarily because the largest single financial element of A&CH was a new roof for 7 Hammersmith Terrace. The project was to last four years, from January 2015 to March 2019.

The emphasis on time donated to the project by volunteers – including trustees – reflects not only the nature of the two organisations, which are largely run by volunteers, but also the HLF’s stress on using the projects it funds to develop interests and skills among as wide a cross-section of the community as possible. The time donated by volunteers to the project, which was costed according to rules specified by the HLF, eventually amounted to £108,600.

The plan for the project involved not only developing the existing groups of volunteers at the Society and EWT and encouraging them to pool their resources but also recruiting and training new volunteers for the tasks that were part of the project, in particular cataloguing and photographing the collections and digitising the resulting records. The historic archives of both
organisations were also catalogued and digitised, which proved to be a much more complex task than was originally anticipated. In the course of the project it was decided that the archive at 7 Hammersmith Terrace, which has no facilities for researchers to consult it, would be donated to the Archive of Art & Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The project required paid professional staff and we were very lucky with the calibre of the team we recruited. The project manager for both stages was Simon Daykin, who had recently been responsible for an HLF-funded capital project at the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds, and before that had been project consultant developing a stage one HLF bid at the Story Museum, Oxford. As well as the day to day management of the capital works he also took lead responsibility for fund raising. A professional archivist, Michèle Losse, who had previously worked for the Royal Opera House and the Black Dance Archive, was recruited in 2016, together with a Learning and Volunteer Development Officer, Jessica Loukaides, who had earlier worked across both organisations as a trainee under the HLF initiative ‘Skills for the Future’. A fourth key member of the team was its Marketing Officer, Lucinda MacPherson, who as well as taking responsibility for marketing the project and the two properties also oversaw the complete redesign of EWT’s website and the setting up of a dedicated website for A&C H, which was eventually to host the collections catalogues for the two organisations.

The digital initiatives were rooted in a lot of very physical labour, not only in getting the collections catalogued and photographed but also in taking them off site while the capital works were being done, labour that was overseen by Alice Woodhouse, who was employed by A&C H to help with the packing and return of the collections. In the case of 7 Hammersmith Terrace this was a major undertaking, as the house had to be completely emptied, but much of the reserve collection at Kelmscott House also had to be moved out temporarily. Many volunteers will have vivid memories of the long hours working with Helen and Alice, wrapping items ranging from Morris & Co furniture and glassware designed by Webb to everyday twentieth-century cutlery and lamp shades. All of this had to be carefully packed into boxes for transport to temporary storage – an impressive (if somewhat chilly) modern facility in Stockwell, where the cataloguing work was continued while the capital works were under way.

**Practical considerations**

Work at Kelmscott House was mostly confined to our diamond jubilee year of 2016. Whereas 7 Hammersmith Terrace was completely handed over to the builders who worked across both houses – the conservation specialists Fullers, founded in 1875 and based in Walthamstow – we were closed for only one month while the part of the house occupied by the Society was repaired, refurbished and redecorated. We now have two good modern kitchens – however did we manage before without a dishwasher? – and at last have a lavatory with disabled access. Equally important work happened behind the scenes. Museum-standard storage equipment has been installed for our collections, with a specialist racking and picture-hanging system, and the vaulted cellar space, where Morris once kept his wine, is now a much-needed fit-for-purpose storage area for non-collection items, such as shop merchandise. A final element was the conservation of the Morris & Co ‘Trellis’ wallpaper in the lobby by Allyson McDermott, whose team also cleaned and conserved the historic Morris wallpapers at 7 Hammersmith Terrace.

This work was finished by the beginning of 2017, which saw the transition from the capital to the activity phase of the project, following a series of launch events at the two properties that played an important part in an impressive rise in the number of visitors to Kelmscott House. From then on the focus was on learning, outreach and engagement, including joint tours of the two houses, lectures, the development of specialist collection talks and tours – joint tours looking at the historic textiles in the two collections have been especially popular – the expansion of school curriculum resources, the creation of a portfolio of family workshops and the launch of the online catalogue. A particular focus has been establishing partnerships with local community groups such as the Indo-American Refugee and Migrant Organisation and the Macbeth Centre. We established a very productive link with the Iranian Association, based in Hammersmith, which culminated in an exhibition at Kelmscott House on Morris and Persian carpets, with an accompanying film. New primary and secondary learning resources have been developed, as well as a self-guided Hammersmith riverside Arts & Crafts walk in the form of a leaflet as beautifully designed and printed as Morris would have expected.

Now that a project that has often tested our resources to the limit has come to an end we can begin to reflect on what it has taught us. Everyone involved in A&C H will draw different conclusions from it, but one point on which we can all agree is that it has encouraged the Society to be more ambitious. A crucial element of the project was fundraising, and initially the thought that a small Society would have to raise £92,500 as match funding was intimidating but in fact the target was achieved more easily than we anticipated. This was a tribute partly to funders’ enthusiasm for what was widely perceived to be a well-thought-out project but also to the enormous world-wide enthusiasm for Morris and interest in the Arts & Crafts movement. The project has also made us reflect that we can’t achieve such results unaided.

The partnership with the Emery Walker Trust, which will continue more informally with the establishment of a new joint committee of the two organisations, is a model that we will seek to develop. We must also build on what we learned not only from working with the professionals who were employed for the project but also from the collaboration with the HLF, and in particular with our mentor, Nell Hoare, who provided advice and feedback at every stage. The project also emphasised the great depth of expertise and experience among the Society’s staff, volunteers and trustees who so generously contributed their time, labour and advice to the project in subjects ranging from archive cataloguing and conservation to architectural and financial management. A&C H has raised the bar for our activities, particularly but not exclusively in our digital output and education programme. The project may formally have come to an end but the initiatives it has set in motion will continue long into the future.
The William Morris Society’s reference library has grown over the years into an impressive collection of over 3,000 books. As well as the complete works of Morris himself, there are many volumes by his contemporaries with themes covering literature and literary criticism, politics and biographies, as well as Arts & Crafts design including textiles and stained glass. Together with these important historical texts there is also a wide range of relevant contemporary publications in the collection. This burgeoning and valuable asset has been made possible over the years largely thanks to the support and generous donations from Society members.

Our new Library Development Fund is hoping to improve accessibility and user friendliness in the library. This will enable us to take significant steps in reaching new and broader audiences, create a wonderful learning resource and strengthen our relationship with the academic world.

Thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers the vast holdings of the library have now been catalogued. Our first step in making the library more accessible will be to make the catalogue available to search online as you would in a professional library, including by author/editor, title, edition, place of publication, publisher, date, pagination, subject terms, ISBN, shelfmark and notes.

The search catalogue will be available online making it much easier to see the books and publications held by the Society. Funds raised will also enable the Society to develop a team of volunteers dedicated to enhancing the library service, pay for conservation of library materials and enable us to promote the library to a much wider audience.

What we need to do

Our target is to raise £8,000 and we are confident we will be able to do this with your support – any amount, large or small, will help us to achieve this. Your gift will help us to raise the money to carry out this vital work. This will enable us to place the library’s search catalogue online and undertake associated work to ensure the library’s development and sustainability. Having this online presence will raise the profile of the Society and enhance the services we can offer users, as well as strengthening the support and training available to volunteers.

How you can help

It is very easy to donate. The simplest way is online: justgiving.com/campaign/williammorrislibrary

Or if you would prefer, send a cheque made payable to ‘The William Morris Society’ at the following address: Library Development Fund Appeal, The William Morris Society, 26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London W6 9TA.

If you are planning a trip to Kelmscott House, you will be able to make a cash donation and visit the library.

Please also note that if you are a UK tax payer, you can increase the value of your gift by 25% at no extra cost to you through the Gift Aid scheme. Please let us know whether you will require a Gift Aid form.

SARAH WOODS
Sarah was commissioned by BBC Radio 4 to dramatise William Morris’ News From Nowhere and gave The Kelmscott Lecture in October 2018. In addition her work has been produced by the RSC, Hampstead Theatre and Soho Theatre.

“A couple of years ago, when I was asked by the BBC to dramatise News From Nowhere, my first port of call for research was The William Morris Society. In order to know what was available, I made a visit to Kelmscott House in person. Knowing what was available in advance would have been hugely useful. I returned a couple of times and was lucky enough to find cause to come back again last year, in preparation for delivery of The Kelmscott Lecture. There are a number of things that make The William Morris Society library so special. The setting is, of course, inspirational for anyone seeking a greater understanding of Morris’ work and life. The knowledge of the staff is second to none. They always make time to share their wisdom and are so encouraging. Finally the range of Morris texts, including many first editions, as well as the collection of additional titles is incredible. The William Morris Society library has played a very important part in my work and research over the last few years and improved access to it will, I believe, be a very worthwhile project.”

JOHN MINTO
John is a PhD candidate at the University of Dundee, and his thesis, which draws upon the work of William Morris, is an existential critique of cultural well-being. He is also a member of the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities.

“Last summer I undertook a research trip to London to study all things Morris. I was fortunate enough to work with The William Morris Society to begin to catalogue such artefacts as the Kelmscott Press publications. During this time, I was able to catch a glimpse of the unique and vast library collection. Yet with further support this important resource can become equally available to all. The value of such items, for Morris, was fundamental to human well-being: ‘To enjoy good houses and good books in self-respect and decent comfort; seems to me to be the pleasantest and to which all societies of human beings ought now to struggle.’ In this spirit of health and happiness, I encourage those who can to contribute to the production of this online catalogue, which would not only afford comprehensive access to original artefacts and research materials, but, of course, the pleasure and beauty of the imagination.”

Follow the progress of the appeal on:
Instagram: williammorrissocietyuk
Facebook: @TheWilliamMorrisSociety
In April the Guild of St George held a day of talks in London entitled Searching for Ruskin’s Utopia: a Guild of St George for the 21st Century. The speakers explored the continuing relevance of John Ruskin’s ideas and opportunities for their contemporary application. Associate editor of the Financial Times Andrew Hill spoke on Ruskin and economic justice, independent environmental activist Chris Baines on Ruskin and the environment, and Sarah Woods, who delivered the Kelmscott Lecture in 2018, on Ruskin and the arts.

Ruskin’s idea of utopia
The day was introduced by Clive Wilmer, Master of the Guild of St George and author of the introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of Morris’s News from Nowhere. Wilmer described how Ruskin announced the setting up of the Guild of St George in 1871 in open letters to workmen. A utopian project with the idea of creating an alternative type of society, Wilmer pointed out that in Ruskin’s terms Utopia was not a perfect society but a process of living better. Based in Sheffield, the Guild today live according to the principles of making the world better by not making a stir but making an effect. Ruskin’s economic philosophy is expounded in his Unto This Last and The Nature of Gothic, and Wilmer mentioned some of the key characteristics of Ruskin’s thought. He had a deep awareness of the destruction of human happiness and the environment by nineteenth century industrialism. He felt the country with the most ‘noble and happy human beings’ was the richest, where ‘noble’ meant spiritual refinement. ‘No wealth but life’ was how Ruskin described the building up of national wealth.

Ruskin anticipated Morris in understanding people should be happy in their work, feeling that perfection in manufacture brought misery to the worker and rejecting the idea that a craftsman’s work should be perfect. Ruskin also had a deep connection to nature and although an enthusiast for science had an anxiety about it as it makes us neutral in the face of nature. Ruskin felt it important that we feel nature and Wilmer mentioned that a crucial idea to Ruskin was that no two things are the same. Relating back to the theme of utopia Wilmer noted that Ruskin once said that giving up hope is fatal and that one should be wary of whoever says perfection is impossible — if it is possible then try.

Craft revival
The author of the recently published Ruskinland: How John Ruskin Shapes Our World, Andrew Hill spoke on Ruskin and economic justice. He concentrated on Ruskin’s thoughts on happiness at work, and mentioned that in contemporary business and management books happiness doesn’t really feature. Hill described how Ruskin taught art to workmen to make them happy, not to make them artists. ‘Illth’ was a word Ruskin coined to describe capitalists’ ill-gained wealth and Hill felt it could be brought into use today. Hill believes the Guild can help in the twenty-first century by enabling work that is worthwhile with workers genuinely engaged. The machines that Ruskin abhorred could now free up time for workers to problem solve and be more creative. Hill elaborated on the three things Ruskin felt in 1851 would make workmen happy at work: that they were fit for it, that they had not too much of it, and that they felt success in it. Today education and training, regulation of hours and the use of creative powers at work can be harnessed to achieve these objectives. Hill described the current growth of small scale workshops in urban areas but emphasised the need to ensure co-existence in future between humans and machines. Hill felt the most important aspect of economic justice was the sense of success at work.

In the question and answer session after Hill’s talk, Wilmer suggested that capitalism as a system is not capable of truly realising Ruskin’s ideas in practice. Wilmer mentioned that Morris realised this, hence Morris’s revolutionary socialism. I suggested that Ruskin’s ideas on work were about freedom to be creative at work as opposed to ideas on being productive or profit-seeking. Hill said that the conclusion of a

Society stalwart Hugh Hobbs reflects on the recent day of lectures at Two Temple Place in London

Ruskin: searching for Utopia

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conference on financial crisis was that capitalism is the ‘best possible system’ or ‘worst system other than the others’ but Hill felt we need to make changes to the existing system as the only solution. Wilmer said the economic system has been in crisis for 11 years and there is no sign of an alternative. It was agreed that as the debate still lives then perhaps we can effect change. The need to revive craft skills and ideas of ‘make do and mend’ were areas where it was suggested the Guild could help build networks to prepare for such change.

The lost landscape and environmental challenges today
Ruskin believed that workers deserved access to nature and beauty. Chris Baines talked about Ruskin’s environmental legacy. Ruskin was attracted to Sheffield because of its history of radical thinking going back to Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Laws poet, and Ruskin decided to base his museum there. Baines described the process of nature coming back to the Rivelin Valley outside Sheffield after the First World War as industrial mills closed down. Survivors of the war painted there as a form of therapy. Sheffield was heavily involved in the mass trespass of 1922 demanding access to nature, which led to the National Park Network. Baines suggested that Ruskin would have been involved in current debates around HS2, battery farming and plastics. He described how the landscape of Ruskin has been lost: nature is on the margins of the rural landscape due to the legacy of the Second World War in mechanisation and chemical agriculture. However, the Guild’s involvement at Ruskin Land at Wyre Forest, a managed forest with artist involvement, is an example of an alternative as it demonstrates Ruskin’s desire for landscape to be fruitful and beautiful. Also streams are being restored to natural conditions in urban areas. Baines commented on the regenerative potential of nature describing the return of migratory sea bass to the Thames. Although the Thames was biologically dead in the 1950s there are now porpoises outside the House of Commons. Baines believes that although people might not realise it the legacy of environmentalism goes back to Ruskin. He feels we need to build partnerships across society to address the environmental challenges of today.

The power of art to transform
The final talk of the day was delivered by the writer and activist Sarah Woods. She suggested the Guild should consider how the arts may make people happy. Ruskin defined three elements to the arts. First, invention: one should never encourage manufacture of things that don’t include invention as creativity brings out the whole mind. Second, art should involve a systemic connection to others or nature or the world. Third, art should never copy or imitate. Art must not say things again or be commercial or mass produced. Ruskin believed art can perfect the moral state of human beings. Woods mentioned how art is made of interconnected elements with a purpose and helps us see things clearly and make connections. Art connects us to other humans and shifts us to the viewpoints of others, and moves us to the wider world and nature. Woods spoke of utopia as a useful and necessary thing, as a method not a goal. Ruskin, and also Morris, saw the production of the artisan as preferable to the industrial type. Woods made reference to an Oxford University study that suggested 10.4 million jobs in the UK are at risk of automation. Artists and those engaged in artisanal production are least at risk of having their work automated. Therefore Woods argued that the skills developed through an arts education are becoming more useful and enjoyable to perform. Woods suggested imagining the future of art as a work in itself and she felt this work fulfils the three elements Ruskin used to define art. She said art involves utopianism in its education of our desires and opens a way to a new and happier world.

Concluding thoughts
It was suggested that the theme of the day had been the need for people to be more holistic in their thinking and take into account the broader issues. Woods suggested that young people are innately connected to Ruskin’s ideas without realising it. Hill suggested they could be used to broaden the school curriculum. It was suggested they were a response to the unsetlement created by developing capitalism and there is an opportunity to apply these ideas in current times of crisis. Baines suggested we need to find small spaces for community and not look for grand solutions. Hill felt big business organisations were coming round to some of Ruskin’s ideas, even if it was for self-serving reasons. Baines felt this was an opportunity to redefine resources and highlight community of interest to help achieve related objectives between different types of organisations, some with and some without resources.

As the day concluded, I left Two Temple Place feeling encouraged to decouple myself from industrialism and to seek small scale solutions to my needs such as buying more organic food. Unto This Last, Ruskin’s writings on political economy, were a key influence on the first Labour MPs elected to the House of Commons in 1906. However, as the history of twentieth century Britain demonstrates, the ideas of Ruskin were not central to national economic or social development. This year’s events marking the 200th anniversary of his birth will hopefully mark the beginning of the increasing centrality of Ruskin’s ideas on the economy, environment and the arts in the twenty-first century.

Hugh Hobbs is currently working on a text on the continuing necessity and relevance of the political economy of the Arts & Crafts movement.
KELMSCOTT MANOR: AT HOME WITH THE SPARTALI FAMILY
Exploring the Jane Morris connection
Join Susan Weeks at the Morris Memorial Hall on Friday 23 August for a fascinating presentation on the history of her Isle of Wight home Sandford House. Research led her into a forgotten past that had been locked away for over a century. Susan reveals the untold story of the house, which was formerly the country seat of the Spartali family. Her presentation describes their lives and widespread connections, focusing particularly on Marie Spartali, daughter of the house, whose own pioneering career made her arguably the greatest of all the female artists painting in the Pre-Raphaelite style. Being labelled ‘a stunner’ Marie became the popular choice as both model and muse for many famous names including Julia Margaret Cameron. Marie became close to Jane Morris and she visited Kelmscott Manor often, painting a number of images of the house including Feeding the Doves, on display in Jane’s room.

Lectures are free for Friends of Kelmscott Manor or £10 unless otherwise stated. Doors open at 6.30pm with the lecture starting at 7pm. Booking is essential. To reserve a seat, contact membership-groups@kelmscottmanor.org.uk.

WILLIAM MORRIS AND WOOD ENGRAVING
Hugh Hobbs reports on a lecture by Peter Lawrence, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter Printmakers and former Chairman of the Society of Wood Engravers
Morris’s view of technology is illustrated through the theory and practice of wood engraving and Lawrence described Morris’s two engagements with wood engraving, first in the 1860s, then in the 1890s. Ruskin placed importance on engraving or as he called it the ‘art of scratch’. He valued the thorough and dedicated craftsmanship involved and particularly liked the work of Thomas Bewick. Lawrence described how Bewick invented wood engraving techniques and set the standard. Wood engraving blocks are typically made of boxwood or other hardwoods, and the block of wood is carved with an engraving tool known as a burin. The artist drew directly on the block in reverse to help the engraver who then cut. The master engraver worked on faces and details, while apprentices did the background. Bits of boxwood were joined to form bigger pictures. However, the process led to the separation of the artist and the engraver.

A critic of the utilitarian turn in book design, Morris was aware that the early nineteenth century type and illustration in books were no longer designed to be complementary. Lawrence mentioned that Morris didn’t like the reduction of importance of the engraver and wanted the engraver to be skilled. By the end of the nineteenth century wood engraving was disappearing, being replaced by photography. However, the rise of the small presses, including Kelmscott Press, ensured the tradition continued. In Kelmscott Press books the illustrations were a part of the whole and decorated the type, in the same way as in the medieval books that so interested Morris. The standard practice in publishing at the time of the Kelmscott Press had been to use intaglio printing by engraved copper plate for the illustrations in books. However, Morris printed illustrations using wood engraved blocks with relief lead type all locked in one chase (the frame that holds materials ready for printing). Lawrence said that what Morris did was new and hadn’t been done before.

Morris first attempted wood engraving in 1855 and in the 1860s had a plan for a book of The Earthly Paradise with Burne-Jones’s wood engravings for illustrations. Burne-Jones did pencil drawings on tracing that were drawn on wood blocks
by Wardle. Morris then learnt wood engraving. In the end Morris engraved around 35 blocks for The Earthly Paradise, interpreting Burne-Jones’s work. Of the 300 pictures proposed for the project, 47 were eventually engraved. The failure to find a trade engraver for The Earthly Paradise made its final production problematic.

By the time Morris returned to wood engraving in the 1890s commercial printing had changed. In Emery Walker’s 1888 lecture to the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, Walker’s enlargements on lantern slides of medieval type motivated Morris to design his own. Lawrence described how there was a tug of conscience for Morris between medieval and modern techniques in the production of books for the Kelmscott Press. William Harcourt Hooper was employed to complete the wood engraving for the Kelmscott Chaucer’s illustrations. Walker challenged Morris to tell the difference between wood engravings and electrotypes metal copies and Morris couldn’t.

Walker convinced Morris that electrotypes of wood engravings created the same effect. Eventually electrotypes were used for the borders and initials of the Kelmscott Chaucer. Lawrence said the electrotypes that were used in the production of the Kelmscott Chaucer were destroyed. Fortunately the original border and initial wood engravings and the wood engravings used for the illustrations are now in the British Museum, although sadly not on display to the public.

John Blewitt will talk about how Ruskin’s writings on architecture and painting were ‘a revelation’ for Morris. Late in life he wrote that Ruskin’s chapter ‘Nature of the Gothic’ from The Stones of Venice was one of the few ‘necessary’ pieces of literature of the whole of the nineteenth century. In homage he reprinted it in a beautiful special Kelmscott Press edition in 1892 because it had helped shape his own understanding of the need for creative labour, architectural and environmental conservation and for a new society devoid of factory production and ‘profit-grinding’. Ruskin’s political and social criticism, he said, gave form to his own discontent and throughout his life he recommended others, including readers of the Pall Mall Gazette, to read the great man. However, Ruskin’s ideas were set within a profoundly conservative and paternalist philosophical framework. He valued obedience, reverence and wise mastership, arguing that only the foolish or the wicked delighted in a world with no masters. Morris, however, came to believe that art and humanity could only be saved if there were ‘neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master’s man’. For more information, visit ashmolean.org.

**JOHN BLEWITT BOOK TOUR**
A series of talks to tie in with the publication of William Morris & John Ruskin: A New Road On Which The World Should Travel:

Reappraising John Ruskin’s Influence on William Morris 31 July, 1:00-1:45pm, Millennium Gallery, Sheffield 25 November, 6pm, The Lit & Phil, Newcast
e

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**MEET A TRUSTEE**
Michael Hall became a trustee of The William Morris Society in 2013 and in addition is a member of the Education and Publications Committee. He was also one of the founder trustees of the Emery Walker Trust in 1999 and has been chair since 2014. He will be retiring from the Trust at the end of this year.

Michael is Editor of the Burlington Magazine and was previously Architectural Editor and Deputy Editor of Country Life and Editor of Apollo. He has published several books on nineteenth-century architecture, including a study of an architect who worked closely with William Morris, George Frederick Bodley and the Later Gothic Revival in Britain and America, published in 2014 by Yale University Press. Next year the Royal Collection will publish his monograph on a building the anti-monarchist Morris would have hated, the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore, where Victoria and Albert are buried.


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Standen House and Garden, West Sussex

Until 10 November

Visit this historic Arts & Crafts house to explore how the natural world inspired Morris. Supported by Morris & Co, the inspiration behind Morris’s patterns of flowers and birds will be explored, focusing on fabrics, wallpapers, tapestries and embroideries. Morris & Co patterns were chosen for furnishings throughout the house in the late 19th century and exemplify the popularity of bringing nature indoors. The exhibition will invite visitors to discover how repeating patterns of flowers and birds in Morris & Co designs were chosen, and the value that Morris placed on the revival of traditional skills and techniques including natural dyeing and tapestry weaving. The exhibition will include a recreation of the company’s original showroom. Wallpaper blocks for *Larkspur*, the original drawing for *Daffodil*, and *Fox and Hare*, two drawings by Standen’s architect Philip Webb, are among the items on display, as well as exquisite embroideries by May Morris.

Inspired by Nature will extend from the house across the garden and wider estate. A trail inspired by Morris’s poem *Tapestry Trees* will lead visitors through the Arts & Crafts garden overlooking the Sussex Weald, showing why each of the trees including oak, ash and yew was important to Morris.

[nationaltrust.org.uk/standen](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/standen)

**PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERS**

National Portrait Gallery, London

17 October-26 January 2020

This major new exhibition focuses on the women of Pre-Raphaelite art and explores the often overlooked contribution of 12 women who were key to the movement including Evelyne de Morgan, Effie Millais, Elizabeth Siddal and Joanna Wells, an artist whose work has been largely ignored to date.

Featuring new discoveries and unseen works from public and private collections, the exhibition reveals the women behind the pictures. Through paintings, photographs, manuscripts and personal items, Pre-Raphaelite Sisters explores the significant roles they played as artists, models and muses who supported and sustained the artistic output of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

[npg.org.uk](http://npg.org.uk)

**JOHN RUSKIN: ART & WONDER**

Museums Sheffield

Until 15 September

Ruskin believed an understanding of the natural world enriches our lives. This new show at the Millennium Gallery explores how Ruskin championed the joy that nature can bring and the sense of awe it can evoke. His passion for nature began in childhood with a fascination for minerals and mountains. Art & Wonder celebrates how artists have captured the incredible spectacle of nature. Discover dazzling highlights from the Guild of St George’s Ruskin Collection, including botanical and ornithological studies and jewel-like mineral specimens, alongside significant national loans and new commissions by contemporary artists Timorous Beasties and Dan Holdsworth.

[museums-sheffield.org.uk](http://museums-sheffield.org.uk)
LAST CHANCE TO SEE
AN EARTHLY PARADISE:
WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE
THAMES
River and Rowing Museum, Henley
on Thames
Until 14 July
Hurry before this finishes. The
influence of the Thames and its
tributaries flowed through Morris’s
life and work. The river provided
the setting for his leisure time spent
angling and boating, inspiration for
his designs and writing, and the
ideal water conditions for the
manufacture of his textiles.
Highlights include his Thames series
of textiles alongside his original
hand-drawn designs, a signed copy
of News from Nowhere, and his
personal fishing tackle and
spectacles.
rrm.co.uk

CONTINUING
ROSETTI, PRE THE
PRE-RAPHAELITES
Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton
Until 24 December
Thanks to a gift accepted in lieu of
inheritance tax, 52 drawings by
Rossetti from his early career have
been acquired by the National Trust
and more than 20 of these are on
display to the public for the first
time. All the drawings date from
between 1844 and 1848 when the
teenage Rossetti was receiving an
art education. Many illustrate the
preoccupations of a young man
such as what he was reading at the
time, the gothic macabre and ladies
of questionable virtue.
nationaltrust.org.uk/wightwick-
manor-and-gardens

RUSKIN, TURNER & THE STORM
CLOUD: WATERCOLOURS
AND DRAWINGS
Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal
12 July to 5 October
This landmark exhibition is one of
the biggest in the UK to celebrate
the 200th anniversary of John
Ruskin’s birth, and moves from York,
Art Gallery to Kendal. There are
more than 100 works spread over
five rooms examining the
relationship between the two men,
their work and the impact Ruskin
had in highlighting climate change.
With substantial loans from both
regional and national collections, the
exhibition will feature watercolours
and drawings with a dozen works
by Turner and more than 40 by
Ruskin. There are also large-scale
drawings by Emma Stibbon, who
retraced the steps of Turner and
Ruskin in 2018 with a trip to the
Alps. Her work shows how the
Alpine landscape so treasured by
Ruskin and Turner has been
impacted by climate change over
the last two centuries.
abbothall.org.uk

CHARLES RENNIE
MACKINTOSH: MAKING THE
GLASGOW STYLE
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
Until 26 August
Rediscover the life and work of
designer and artist Charles Rennie
Mackintosh alongside the work of
his closest friends and
contemporaries. Featuring more
than 250 objects, ranging from
furniture and embroidery to
stained glass, metalwork and
architectural drawings, the
exhibition explores the Art
Nouveau movement that became
known as the Glasgow Style. The
work of Mackintosh and James
Herbert McNair, who worked
together at an architects’ practice, is
included as well as that of the
sisters Frances and Margaret
Macdonald. The exhibition also
showcases panelling, furniture and
light fittings from many of the
artistic tearooms designed by
Mackintosh for Glasgow
businesswoman Miss Catherine
Cranston. This includes a section
from the Chinese Room of the
Ingram Street Tearooms, which has
not previously been displayed
outside Scotland.
liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

PALACES IN THE NIGHT:
THE URBAN LANDSCAPE IN
WHISTLER’S PRINTS
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Until 8 September
Following on from the Whistler &
Nature exhibition earlier this year,
this display of the Fitzwilliam’s
collection of etchings, drypoints and
lithographs by James McNNeill
Whistler is devoted to the
cityscapes for which he is most
celebrated as a printmaker. Exhibits
range from the early French set of
the 1850s to the late etchings of
Brussels and Amsterdam. Whistler’s
move from crisp realism to
atmospheric impressionism is
wonderfully demonstrated by his
etchings of London and the
Thames.
fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk
Lectures, workshops, exhibitions, concerts and visits organised by The William Morris Society

‘THE DEAR WARP AND WEFT AT HAMMERSMITH: A HISTORY OF KELMSCOTT HOUSE’

Until 26 October

When William Morris reported to his wife Jane that he proposed leasing Kelmscott House in Hammersmith in 1878, he said ‘the house might be made very beautiful with a touch of my art’. Certainly this eighteenth century riverside house is one of the most significant of Morris’s homes. While living here he set up the Kelmscott Press and his textile production works at Merton Abbey, established the Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League in the Coach House where speakers included George Bernard Shaw and WB Yeats, began carpet weaving and continued his innovative approach to design, printing and dyeing techniques. This is the first exhibition about the most magical of Morris’s homes and will feature original designs, textiles and wallpapers, complemented by beautiful photographic prints. They faithfully convey the atmosphere of Kelmscott House, bursting with creative activity and providing a welcome to some of the most influential minds of the period. The exhibition also includes details of its history and the people who lived in the house before and after Morris, as well as incorporating interesting quotes and anecdotes from Morris’s contemporaries. Free admission

UTOPIAN DREAMS: RUSKIN’S TORY PATERNALISM

Saturday 6 July, 2.15pm

Lecture by John Blewitt

John Ruskin was a major influence on Morris but many of Ruskin’s political views were decidedly conservative. Morris was a libertarian eco-socialist who imagined a utopian future with no masters and no hierarchies. Ruskin looked at the laissez faire capitalism of his day and yearned to recreate social relationships characterised by a reciprocal bond between wise masters who would look after their godly and honest workers. This lecture will explore their contrasting socio-political visions.

John Blewitt is a Distinguished Fellow of the Schumacher Institute and a member of The William Morris Society.

£10 (WMS members), £12 (non-members), £5 (students)

POEMS OF PROTEST: AN AFTERNOON OF POETRY TO MARK THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PETERLOO MASSACRE

Saturday 7 September, 2pm

Join us for an afternoon of radical poetry marking the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre. Actor Adjoa Andoh, writer Michael Rosen and The William Morris Society’s President Lord Sawyer will read work by William Morris, Percy Byshe Shelley and others.

£10 (WMS members), £12 (non-members), £5 (students)

PRE-RAPHAELITE SISTERS

Saturday 14 September, 2.15pm

Jan Marsh

160 years after the first pictures were exhibited by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1849, a major new exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery will explore the overlooked contribution of twelve women to the Pre-Raphaelite movement, including Jane Morris, Georgiana Burne-Jones, Evelyn de Morgan, Effie Gray Millais, Elizabeth Siddal and Joanna Wells. In this talk the exhibition’s curator Dr Jan Marsh will discuss the significant roles the women played as artists, models, etc.

To book an event listed here please visit: williammorrissociety.org/whats-on

Advance booking is strongly recommended. Unless otherwise stated, ticket prices for lectures are £12/£10 (WMS member)/£5 (student).

Events usually take place in The William Morris Society’s premises in the basement and Coach House of Morris’s London home for the last eighteen years of his life: Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, London, W6 9TA.

For more information call 020 8741 3735 or email events@williammorrissociety.org.uk
muses and helpmeet in the creation of the movement’s art. Jan Marsh is the author of a number of books on women of the Pre-Raphaelite circle and joint editor of the Collected Letters of Jane Morris. She was President of The William Morris Society from 2008-18.

£10 (WMS members), £12 (non-members), £5 (students)

LONDON OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND
Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September, 11am–5pm
We are delighted to take part in the annual celebration of the capital’s built heritage, and will be open for extended hours during the weekend.
Free admission

MORRIS & CO ARCHIVE VISIT
Tuesday 24 September, 2pm
Visit to the archives of Morris & Co at Denham, near Uxbridge, for Society members. Archivist Keren Protheroe will introduce the collection and show original items revealing the story of Morris & Co in the nineteenth century and the connection with Morris & Co in the twentieth century. The visit will last around an hour; please note that due to space restrictions, there is no seating available in the archive, although it may be possible to have a break during the visit.
Places are strictly limited to eight. Please phone 020 8741 3735 or email societymanager@williammorrissociety.co.uk to book your place.
Tickets cost £10

THE 2019 KELMSCOTT LECTURE AT THE V&A: WILLIAM MORRIS: SOUTH KENSINGTON AND SOCIALISM
Tuesday 8 October, 7pm
Dr Tristram Hunt
‘I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few or freedom for a few’ So said Morris, a great champion of the Arts & Crafts movement and a key figure in British socialism at the end of the nineteenth century. Morris’s belief in equality of access to the arts made him a great friend to the South Kensington Museum (later renamed the V&A). Today, he remains one of the most famous names in the V&A collection. Morris had an important influence on some of the museum’s earliest collecting policies, but as an artist he was also inspired by its collections. His legacy can still be found all over the V&A, not only in the extensive collections of Morris’s work, but also in the very fabric of the building that Morris helped to design. In this lecture, V&A Director Dr Tristram Hunt traces the history of Morris’s engagement with the V&A, exploring how the museum helped to shape both his artistic endeavours and his political beliefs.
£12 (WMS members), £15 (non-members), £8 (students)

ARTS & CRAFTS TEXTILE TOURS: THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY AND EMERY WALKER’S HOUSE
August 6, September 3, October 1, November 5 and 26, 10.30-1pm
An opportunity to get up close to items that are rarely on show to the public with a specialist tour of both the Society’s premises and nearby Emery Walker’s House. The tour will explore the Arts & Crafts textiles in both collections, including exquisite examples of May Morris’s work. The tour will start at The William Morris Society, where you will be led by textiles and embroidery expert Sally Roberson. It will begin with an introduction to the Society’s textile collection, followed by tea/coffee and biscuits. A short walk along the river will then take the group to Emery Walker’s House (7 Hammersmith Terrace) where you will be able to view and hear about the textiles in situ at this recently restored Arts & Crafts gem.
Due to space constraints at Emery Walker’s House, places are strictly limited to eight per tour.
Tickets cost £35
Books

WILLIAM MORRIS & JOHN RUSKIN: A NEW ROAD ON WHICH THE WORLD SHOULD TRAVEL

Edited by John Blewitt
University of Exeter Press, 230pp, £75 HB, £30 PB, exeterpress.co.uk
New from the Society, this wide-ranging collection of essays explores the various intersections between the life, work and achievements of Morris and Ruskin. It includes a discussion of the parallels between Ruskin’s support for Laxey Mill and Morris’s Merton Abbey Works, the contrasts between Ruskin’s Tory paternalism and Morris’s revolutionary socialism, and Ruskin and the art and architecture of Red House. When Morris was first introduced to Ruskin’s work at Oxford it had a profound and lasting impact on him, and he commented that Ruskin’s views offered a ‘new road on which the world should travel’. This volume includes articles first published in The Journal of William Morris Studies between 1977 and 2012, as well as some thought-provoking new pieces. Get your copy from The William Morris Society or via our online shop. It’s also available at all good bookshops.

SPECIAL OFFER
There is a discount of 30% for readers of this magazine. For more details, visit exeterpress.co.uk/en-gb/Book/1441/William-Morris-and-John-Ruskin.html. Enter discount code at checkout: WMS30. Offer closes 31 December 2019.

JOHN RUSKIN: AN IDIOSYNCRATIC DICTIONARY ENCOMPASSING HIS PASSIONS, HIS DELUSIONS AND HIS PROPHETICS

Compiled by Michael Glover
Lund Humphries, 160pp, £17.50, HB, lundhumphries.com
This charming dictionary presents the life, times and opinions of John Ruskin – art critic, patron, draughtsman, watercolourist, social thinker and philanthropist. Glover’s A-Z distils the essence of Ruskin, revealing a lighter side to the man known for his 39 volumes of ponderous prose. When off his guard, Ruskin could write pithily and amusingly, but he was also a fascinating amalgam of contradictions. Combining judiciously selected extracts from Ruskin’s writings with the author’s insightful interpretations, this book is essential reading for all those curious to know what Ruskin did with a cyanometer, why he hated iron railings and the Renaissance, and how Proust’s admiration of the man was tinged with distrust.

THE WAY TO THE SEA: THE FORGOTTEN HISTORIES OF THE THAMES ESTUARY
By Caroline Crampton
Essential reading for members interested in our Thames voyage from Hammersmith to Kelscott event in August, the knowledgable Crampton navigates the waters of the estuary seeking out its stories: empty warehouses and arsenals; ship wrecks still inhabited by the ghosts of the drowned; vast Victorian pumping stations that carry away the capital’s sewage; the river banks, layered with archaeological Anglo-Saxon treasures; literature inspired by its landscape; beacons used for centuries to guide boats through the dark and murky waterways of the estuary; and the wildlife and shifting tidal moods. This engaging, well researched and beautifully written book combines the history and literature of the Thames with Crampton’s on-the-scene explorations. She devotes a chapter to the river’s western reaches, gracefully weaving in Morris’s News from Nowhere and his 1880 journey from Hammersmith to Kelscott. Manor aboard a hired vessel he dubbed The Ark. “It would be,” Crampton comments, “his family’s salvation from the flood of modernity.”

ALPHABETARIUM
By Owen Legg
Woodcraft Press, 32pp, £20, HB, woodcraftpress.co.uk
Legg produces limited edition hand-printed letterpress books usually illustrated with lincuts, always using traditional materials and equipment. Alphabetarium is his latest work. Using William Morris quotations, he has formed an alphabet by masking the type with letter forms. Printed on blue paper and half bound with a handmade paper cover; this is a collector’s item to cherish.

THE KING OF THE GOLDEN RIVER
By John Ruskin
Illustrated by Quentin Blake
Thames & Hudson, £14.95, 64pp, HB, thamesandhudson.co.uk
Another book to celebrate Ruskin’s 200th birthday. First published 150 years ago, Ruskin’s children’s story is still relevant today, with its message about life, greed and the environment. Readers of all ages will respond to Gluck’s adventures as he proceeds against the wishes of his two evil brothers Hans and Schwartz. The drama of the mountains and the weather is brought to life for the first time in Quentin Blake’s witty and atmospheric colour illustrations, which explore the unexpected, the emotive and the farcical in Ruskin’s story.

CHROMATOPIA: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF COLOUR
By David Coles
Thames & Hudson, £24.95, 240pp, HB, thamesandhudson.co.uk
Morris was an advocate of the return to traditional craft materials and rejected the new synthetic dyes that became available in the 1850s. He felt strongly about using natural dyes such as cochineal, kermes, rose madder and yellow weld, as used in medieval times, and devised methods for adding these to indigo-patterned cloth to produce a rich palette of colours. From crushing insects to charring peach stones, this new book reveals the intriguing stories behind over fifty of history’s most vivid colour pigments. Coles, founder and head paintmaker at Langridge Artists Colours, has spent his life working with colour.

The chapter on medieval colours is unsellable, as well as the section on Scheele’s green, the deadly green pigment containing copper and arsenic found in early samples of Morris wallpaper.
From the collection

PORTRAIT OF SOCIETY BENEFICTOR MARION HELENA STEPHENSON
Kelmscott House curator Helen Eletson writes about the keen Morrisian and dear friend of May Morris

An ardent admirer of William Morris, Marion was born in Kensington, London, on 19 January 1885. Her mother Marion Clementina Mary Devereill died two days later. Her father was a barrister partly based in Bosomington in Hampshire and as a child Marion probably lived for some of the time with her older married sister in London. During the early part of World War I, Marion volunteered as a Reserve Staff Nurse with the Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service, based at Netley Hospital near Southampton. In 1916 she married Captain Morton Stephenson, who was serving in the Army Service Corps. Morton had studied law before enrolling at the Royal Academy of Music. He played the cello and composed chamber and orchestral music. Later, he was musical director for many London stage productions.

In 1926 the Stephensons purchased Kelmscott House, moving there from nearby 48 Upper Mall, where they had lived for two years. Marion was an enthusiastic collector of Morris artefacts. The notebook containing her reading list was discovered in 2015 and provides a fascinating insight into her literary interests. During a six month period in 1908-09 Marion read ten parts of Morris’s The Earthly Paradise. She complemented this with two Morris biographies. In the 1920s she read two books by former Kelmscott House resident George MacDonald: At the Back of the North Wind and the surreal novel Phantastes, as well as the 1924 biography George MacDonald and his Wife by MacDonald’s son Greville MacDonald. The Society owns the latter and contained within it is a lovely letter from the author to Marion dated 31 May 1927 telling her: ‘I may sometime take the opportunity of seeing you and the old house in which some of the happiest years of my boyhood were spent.’ The total number of books read and recorded in her notebook is 2,249.

In the 1945 article ‘Pre-Raphaelite Links’ in The Spectator, Sir Geoffrey Mander, MP and owner of Wightwick Manor, wrote: ‘Mr and Mrs Stephenson at Kelmscott House, Chiswick, maintain the traditions and interests of Morris’s residence on the lower Thames.’ For many years Marion was a member of the Kelmscott Fellowship and, from 1955, of the William Morris Society, generously allowing Society meetings and lectures to be held in her home. Marion died in 1972, bequeathing her home and many Morris treasures to the Society, including original Morris & Co designs, embroideries by May Morris, and Kelmscott Press books. Her extremely generous gift of the house enabled the expansion of the William Morris Society and after her death Kelmscott House accommodated the Society’s Offices, library and archive, as well as becoming a place for meetings and other activities.

This pastel portrait of our benefactor is currently on display in our new exhibition ‘The dear warp and weft at Hammersmith: A History of Kelmscott House’, until 26 October 2019.

Members wishing to view any aspect of the collection are welcome to do so, by contacting Helen Eletson: curator@williammorrissociety.org
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Painted decorated ceiling in the chancel of St Mary Magdalene's Church, Paddington after conservation.
The 18th century church & interior designed by George Edmund Street
By kind permission of Father Henry Everett

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