Mrs. Morris’s Other Children

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Based on research and notes by the late Dorothy Coles

Most family histories include secrets and myths. Dorothy Coles found little evidence to support the often-quoted belief that William Morris’s grandfather came from Wales and settled in Worcester, and that his father grew up in Worcester. However, she did find considerable evidence that his grandfather lived and died with his family, mainly in London. This was, to a large extent, supported by David Everett’s research. Coles wondered whether the accounts given by Morris’s biographers about his siblings might also be inaccurate. Had his brother Stanley become a farmer and cattle breeder near Southampton? Had his brother Edgar been employed at Morris’s Merton Abbey workshops as a dyer for the last years of his working life? Had the husband of the youngest sibling, Alice, died after an accident when he was out hunting? Birth, marriage and death certificates of Morris’s siblings, their partners and children were examined, as well as baptismal records, census records and wills. Morris’s letters were also studied for references to his contacts with his family, and the results of these investigations are set out in what follows. More recent research conducted by Martin Fisher and Katherine Fort, both of whom are family descendents, a volunteer at Kelmscott Manor and the author has been included, together with views of family history by later generations of the family which may be accurate or may illustrate family secrets and myths.

Morris himself is only included in terms of what is known about his contacts with his siblings, with some reference to his views of the family as an institution, which were expressed mainly in his writings about socialism. His ideas were influenced by his reading of socialist literature, including works by Frederick Engels, but probably also by his own family experiences. In an article published in Commonweal in 1885...
Morris states that ‘it is surely clear that Socialism could never assent that a family should be confined to blood-relations; for the rest there would be no hard and fast line about what a family should be; it would be what people might choose, what they might find convenient’. Meanwhile, in *The Manifesto of the Socialist League* (1885), he writes ‘[u]nder a socialistic system contracts between individuals would be voluntary and unenforced by the community. This would apply to the marriage contract as well as others and would be a matter of simple inclination. Women also would share in the certainty of livelihood which would be the lot of all; and children would be treated from their birth as members of the community entitled to share in all its advantages.’ Such statements offer an illuminating insight into Morris’s ideas about what a family might be. However, for the purposes of this article, further reference will be made to Morris’s views only when relevant to the discussion of his relationships with his siblings, whose life stories constitute the primary focus.

I. Background

The period preceding Morris’s father’s death has been written about before. Morris’s parents, William Morris senior and Emma Shelton, were married on 27 July 1826 at St. Nicholas Church, Worcester. Initially, they lived above a firm of billbrokers – Harris, Sanderson and Harris – for whom Morris senior worked, at 32 Lombard Street, London. Their first child, Charles Stanley, was born during 1827, but died after five days. The second, Emma, was born during 1830, followed by a third, Henrietta, in 1832. During 1833 the family moved to Elm House, Walthamstow, where William was born in 1834, Hugh Stanley in 1837 and Thomas Rendall in 1839. During 1840 the family moved again, to Woodford Hall, Essex, where the remaining children were born: Arthur in 1840, Isabella in 1842, Edgar Llewellyn in 1844 and Alice Mary in 1846. After the death of William Morris senior in 1847 the family moved to Water House, Walthamstow, then, in 1856, to a larger home named Leyton House in Leytonstone. On 26 April 1859 Morris married Jane Burden, born on 19 October 1839, in Oxford. They had two daughters, Jane Alice, always known as ‘Jenny’, born on 17 January 1861, and Mary, always known as ‘May’, born on 25 March 1862. May recalled family gatherings at Leyton House: ‘[L]ife there was a succession of amusements shared with young aunts and uncles and first and second cousins, all very animated and fond of gaiety’.

In 1871 Emma Morris and Henrietta, the only child still living at home, moved to ‘The Lordship’, Much Hadham in Hertfordshire. The 1881 Census recorded eight staff, including Rebecca Cockett, who had first worked for the Morris family at Water House, and Catherine Rogers, who had joined them at Leyton House. Emma Morris died on 8 December 1894 aged eighty-nine. In her will she left her ‘plate and
Figure 1: Mrs. Emma Morris, née Shelton, Rome, c. 1860s or 1870s (credit: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest).
plated articles’ to be divided equally between William, Hugh Stanley and Arthur. Arthur was to have her ‘pieces of jade’. She left £30 to her servant Rebecca Cockett and £20 to Catherine Rogers. Her diamond earrings, which might have been expected to go to her eldest daughter or her eldest son’s wife, were left to Hugh Stanley’s wife, Grace Maria. 13 Coles wondered whether Emma had heard about Jane Morris’s affairs with Dante Gabriel Rossetti or with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Jane wrote to Blunt on 12 December 1894: ‘but always I have the anxiety of my husband’s health […] his mother’s death a week ago was a shock to him although she had been ill so long, she passed away quite suddenly at the last’. 14 Jane expressed no sense of personal loss. The remainder of Emma’s estate, which totalled over £21,000, the equivalent of approximately £2,601,000 today, was divided equally between her eight surviving children. She stipulated that if any of her surviving children died before her, their share should be divided between their children, but there was no provision for the eight children of Thomas Rendall who had died in 1884.

II. Emma Oldham (1830-1915)

Emma was born on 29 October 1830. Coles explored Morris’s relationship with his eldest sister in ‘My Dearest Emma: William and Emma Morris’. 15 Letters from Morris, written while he was at Marlborough College during the late 1840s and early 1850s, illustrate the closeness of the relationship that formed between them as children. On 14 May 1850, Emma married Joseph Oldham, a curate, born on 25 March 1821. He met Emma while he worked in Walthamstow. They lived in Downe in Kent and, from 1851, at Clay Cross in Derbyshire where Joseph was Curate and then Vicar of the newly built St. Bartholomew’s Church. J.W. Mackail wrote that when Emma married, Morris ‘felt the separation keenly: the brother and sister had been closely intimate in all their thoughts and enthusiasms’. 16 Jack Lindsay, John Y. Le Bourgeois and Fiona MacCarthy, relying on evidence from Morris’s letters, poetry and prose writing, suggest that Morris’s deep attachment to Emma and his feelings of desertion by her when she married were replicated in his future relationships with women. 17 Peter Faulkner points out that Lindsay also thought that as Morris matured he moved beyond his early attachment to Emma. Reviewing Le Bourgeois’s argument, Faulkner acknowledges Morris’s ‘deep affection for his sister after her marriage’ but comments that ‘it is likely to have been on a far less intense plane than Le Bourgeois would have us believe’. 18

Coles traced continued contact between Morris and Emma after Emma’s marriage, as Morris visited Clay Cross during 1855, and sent poems to her. Morris and Co. designed and produced the south aisle window installed in St. Bartholomew’s Church during 1879. Coles also relates some of the history of Clay Cross, a growing
Figure 2: Emma and Joseph Oldham, Dover; c. 1850s (credit: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest).
industrial town, which had developed as a result of a railway tunnel being built beneath the town. The Clay Cross Limited Company, the largest employer of the area, provided part of Joseph’s stipend. Joseph remained at St. Bartholomew’s for thirty-seven years. Coles wrote that although he was dependent on the Clay Cross Company for part of his stipend he did not hesitate to voice his disagreement with their policies in issues about which he felt strongly. In 1853, Joseph successfully insisted that a new school, for which he raised funds, should only be for members of families who attended St. Bartholomew’s Church. When the churchyard became full Joseph wanted to limit burials to those who attended St. Bartholomew’s. This was resolved by the company establishing a new cemetery where two chapels were built, one for members of the Church of England and one for other denominations.19

There were three children from Emma and Joseph’s marriage: Emma, known as Emmie, born on 25 April 1851, when Emma was staying with her mother at Walthamstow; Joseph William, born on 22 September 1854; and Arthur Hugh, born on 8 May 1858, when she and Joseph lived at Clay Cross. Sadly for the family Arthur died on 4 July 1867, aged nine, after an illness of two months, suffering from ‘ulceration of the bowels’.20 The quality of the relationship between Emma and her husband, Joseph, is not known, but together they worked for many years in a challenging parish on a low stipend. Despite their limited income, Joseph William attended Winchester School.

Emma kept contact with the wider family, spending holidays with her mother and sisters. Morris’s daughter Jenny stayed at Clay Cross during 1877 after she was diagnosed as suffering from epilepsy.21 Emma and Joseph also helped in the care of Rendall’s children after their father’s death. Rendall’s daughter Effie wrote that ‘[a]fter my father’s death in 1884 Clay Cross Vicarage and North Wingfield Rectory were my homes and Uncle Joseph Oldham was like a father to me’.22 In 1888, at the age of sixty-eight, Joseph became Vicar of the parent church of North Wingfield with a smaller parish and an increased income. Later that year, on 4 December 1888, Joseph and Emma’s son, Joseph William, aged thirty-four, who had trained and served as an apprentice in the Merchant Navy, died from drowning in Calcutta (now Kolkata). He was, at that time, serving as a private in the Royal Rifle Brigade at the military station in Toungoo, in the same regiment as his maternal uncle Arthur. Effie Morris relates that Joseph William fell accidentally into a sacred burial pool, and that his Oldham cousin, with whom he spent the previous evening, ‘wrote to his mother about it all and to comfort her that there was no question of his being drunk’.23 Morris visited Emma and Joseph in their new home during 1889. Emmie, their daughter, was away, but lived at home and was an artist who exhibited paintings at the Royal Academy, and Dudley Galleries in London and the Walker Gallery in Liverpool. In 1893 Morris
described Emmie as ‘a nice cheerful little woman, and very affectionate’.\(^{24}\)

Joseph Oldham died on 2 August 1896, after a stroke, leaving all his assets amounting to £720 net to his wife. At this time, Morris, who had been unwell, and was away on a cruise to the Norwegian fjords in an attempt to recuperate, does not appear to have had much contact with Emma.\(^{25}\) However when Morris died, on 3 October 1896, he left his sister an annuity of £100. Emma, along with Emmie, moved to Lyme Regis, where they rented a small house on the cliff top, ‘surrounded by her brother’s yellow marigold wallpaper and his blue carpets and chinzes’.\(^{26}\) After Morris’s death, Jane kept some contact with Emma, and when staying in Lyme Regis in December 1908, she wrote to Sydney Cockerell that ‘Mrs Oldham is not far off so that I shall be able to see a great deal of her […]’. She is wonderful and goes up and down hill without any help.\(^{27}\) Emma Oldham died on 30 June 1915, aged eighty-five. Letters of Administration were granted to her daughter Emma (‘Emmie’) on 30 July 1915. Her effects were £396. After Emma’s death May Morris arranged for the £100 annuity paid to her from Morris’s estate to continue to be paid to her cousin Emmie.\(^{28}\) Emmie later went to live at Parkstone with her cousins Effie and Ada, the children of Thomas Rendall Morris. She died on 12 June 1933.

III. Henrietta Morris (1832-1902)
Henrietta was born on 8 November 1832, while the family were living in Lombard Street, London. She was christened on 17 July 1833, after they had moved to Walthamstow.\(^{29}\) Linda Richardson, partly using autobiographical material from Morris’s own writings, records that Henrietta, Emma and William read stories together as children and played out scenes from them; Emma and Henrietta took the lead in early years, but, as time wore on, William began to take the initiative.\(^{30}\) May Morris referred to Emma being ‘of gentle nature and specially fond of’ William, and ‘Henny more given to ruling […] by way of keeping the others in order’.\(^{31}\) Richardson argued that Morris’s relationships with Emma and Henrietta were equally close and helped lead to Morris being ‘amenable to the intellectual influence of women’, to his enjoyment of companionship and intellectual stimulation from both men and women, and the importance for him of fellowship.\(^{32}\) Henrietta accompanied Morris on his first trip abroad in 1854, visiting Brussels and Bruges to see the Van Eyck and Memling paintings and some of the cities of Northern France, including Amiens, Chartres, Rouen and Paris. In 1855, Morris took his holiday with Edward Burne-Jones and William Fulford, revisiting and sharing with his friends many of the same places.

Following his return from France in 1855 Morris told his mother of his decision not to take Holy Orders. He wrote on 11 November: ‘[w]ill you tell Henrietta that I
Figure 3: Henrietta Morris, Rome, c. 1860s or 1870s (credit: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest).
can quite sympathize with her disappointment […] but I hope it will change to something else […] if she sees me making myself useful. Henrietta did not marry and lived with Emma Morris until her mother's death. When Henrietta was twenty-one her mother gave her thirteen of the Devon Great Consol shares which she had inherited, and which constituted the main source of the family fortune. This must have given Henrietta some independence until the income from the shares declined during the 1870s. In middle age she converted to Roman Catholicism during a visit to Rome. Janet Grierson, the biographer of Henrietta’s sister Isabella, wrote that when Isabella returned home after the death of her husband in 1882 ‘Henrietta was by now a Roman Catholic and her bigoted enthusiasm for her new religion made life at home none too easy’. A photograph of Henrietta in a black mantilla depicts a rather severe person, but May Morris’s recollection of her having a little dog suggests a lighter side.

In letters to his mother Morris sent messages to Henrietta. For example, in 1855 he wrote: ‘I will write to Henrietta at Emma’s – my best love to her and to all’; in 1871, ‘[b]est love to you and Henrietta, tell her I saw such beautiful hill flowers in the Faroes’; in 1874, ‘I should be sorry to miss Henrietta again so, if she wouldn't be at home that evening any other except Saturday would do’; and in 1893, ‘I got a letter from Henny yesterday enclose a nice neckerchief for me […]. Thank you very much for it.’

Living with her mother meant that Henrietta was used to helping manage large households without worry about money or bills as, despite the decline in the dividends from Devon Great Consols, her mother retained sufficient income to continue to keep them living in comfort. They often took holidays by the sea with others in the family. Henrietta took responsibility for caring for her mother. Her sister Isabella wrote that ‘if Henrietta had broken down or anything happened to her I must have gone to my mother and looked after her until her death’. Richardson points out that Morris ‘was able to see how women were disadvantaged in the sexual relationship, but unable to see the harm inherent in other relationships which made women dependent such as between parents and daughters […] and that behind their masks of selfless devotion spinster daughters like Henrietta […] might cherish worldly ambition and recognition of their talents and achievements’. Despite Morris’s belief that there should be equality of opportunity for women he did not consider that he needed to help Henrietta to lead a more fulfilling life. One might compare Old Hammond’s remark in News from Nowhere that ‘it is a great pleasure to a clever woman to manage a home skilfully’. It is not known, however, what Henrietta felt about her situation, or whether she would have agreed with Old Hammond’s sentiments.

The only letters from Morris to Henrietta which have been traced are two written
after her mother’s death in 1894, when his sister had to move out of the house at Much Hadham. In one he enclosed Philip Webb’s plans for combining two cottages for her. He wrote: ‘it will make a very sunny and pleasant little house […] I need not tell you how much I sympathise with your feelings about leaving the house which has seen so much of us all’. 42 Henrietta accepted the plans, moving in with two servants, one the same Catherine Rogers who had come to work as a lady’s maid at Leyton Hall over thirty-five years before. She was by then sixty-three, a year older than Henrietta, and had a younger girl to help.

The death of Morris in 1896 affected Henrietta greatly. She wrote to Sydney Cockerell that ‘the world is different now in every way to me and I feel utterly lost and alone’. 43 Henrietta died on 26 June 1902, aged sixty-nine, after a fall outside her home. Her sister Isabella was present when she died. Like Morris, Henrietta had developed diabetes, and also suffered from osteoporosis. Jane Morris wrote to Cockerell on 1 July: ‘I have just had the sorrow of losing my sister in law Henrietta […] It was a great grief to Jenny when I told her.’ 44 Henrietta had appointed her sister Isabella and a solicitor as executors of her will, and directed that her assets be invested and the income paid to her niece Emmie Oldham during her life. After Emmie’s death the residual capital was to be paid to Ada Morris, one of Thomas Randall’s children. The gross value of the estate was £421 but the net value was nil.

IV. Hugh Stanley Morris (1837-1911)

Hugh Stanley was born at Walthamstow three years after Morris, on 2 August 1837. He is named Hugh on his birth certificate but he was christened Hugh Stanley, and the family called him Stanley. 45 ‘The first-born Morris son who died in infancy had been Charles Stanley. Stanley was the maiden name of Elizabeth Morris, Morris’s paternal grandmother. Hugh Stanley was described by his niece Effie Morris, one of Thomas Rendall’s daughters, as ‘not very strong’. 46 In 1848 he was enrolled as a boarder at the Forest Proprietary Grammar School, Walthamstow. His younger brother Rendall, who had been admitted earlier, sometimes did better than Stanley but not always. During the summer term 1853 Stanley was placed in a higher class than Rendall for Mathematics, and awarded first prize for Greek. Stanley left school to go to a private tutor in Bonn in Germany at the end of summer 1853. 47 Following that, as far as is known, he lived at home and was there for the 1861 Census. In 1861-62, Morris, who had invested in building Red House and setting up Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., sold two of the thirteen shares in Devon Great Consuls his mother had given to him when he reached twenty-one. His mother, who looked on the family investment in the mine as their key to prosperity, bought the shares back from William and gave them to Stanley who would, like his other siblings, have also been given
Figure 4: Hugh Stanley Morris, photography by Adams and Stilliard, Southampton, September 1880 (credit: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest).
thirteen shares on reaching his majority.

On 13 June 1865, aged twenty-eight, Stanley married Grace Maria Wright, aged twenty, born on 13 June 1845. Initially the couple lived with Grace's mother on a large estate, Mayfield, near Southampton where their first child, Grace Ellen, was born on 26 May 1866. They moved to their own accommodation, Upton Lodge, Hound, near Mayfield, where another daughter, Evelyne, was born on 28 April 1868, and a son, Eric William, on 7 April 1870. The Census returns for 1871 and 1881 record that the family had moved back to the house of Grace Maria's mother at Mayfield. Stanley and Grace Maria's youngest child, Charles, was born there on 21 September 1873. This large household under Mrs. Elizabeth Wright included her son Robert James Wright, her sister Charlotte Rolfe and twelve staff. In the 1861 Census Mrs. Wright declared her occupation as 'breeder of horses and mares' but this is not given in later returns. Effie Morris wrote in a letter to the William Morris Gallery that her cousin, Grace Ellen, told her of 'what good times they had when they were young at Mayfield Hall', and how her Aunt, Mrs Gilmore, Stanley's sister Isabella, told her that 'her greatest friend in her young days was Mrs Stanley Morris, they used to ride together'.

In May 1875 when Morris left the Board of Devon Great Consols, Stanley took his place, retaining the family influence. Morris wrote to his mother on 27 May 1875: 'I have just come from the DGC meeting and I suppose ended my business there [...] Stanley will tell you all about the meeting.' Stanley was part of the Board whose criticisms led to the resignation in 1879 of their uncle Thomas Morris, who until then had been Resident Director of the mine. However Stanley attended his Uncle Thomas's funeral in 1885, which Morris did not. Stanley was himself later forced out by the Board in 1890 but he continued to be involved in investment in mining until 1901. There is little information about Stanley's contact with Morris after Morris left the Board of Devon Great Consols except possibly a letter of August 1882 to May which states: '[y]esterday we went to Merton [...] meeting Stanley at the station'.

By the 1891 Census Stanley and his family were living at Pear Tree House, close to Mayfield, with three female servants. Nearby at Pear Tree Farm lived a herdsman and shepherd, his wife, a dairy woman and two children. It is unclear whether the herdsman was employed by Stanley, but, if so, this would support the view that he was a breeder of Jersey and Guernsey cattle. He returns himself on his marriage certificate and on the children's birth certificates as 'esquire', 'gentleman' or 'Stockholder Bank of England', and in some census returns 'living on his own means'.

Evelyn Cozens relates how she, her aunt and her grandmother had all worked for the family. She states that 'one boy died in childhood', and Effie Morris refers to
one of her cousins dying at school. Charles died aged twenty-two on 16 January 1896 at Ceely House, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, from ‘[e]pilepsy 8 years, Asphyxia’. This information is consistent with the Morris family history of epilepsy. Morris’s elder daughter Jenny had also developed the disorder during her teenage years. Fiona MacCarthy writes that Morris ‘felt himself the cause of her condition, the family inheritance descending from his mother to his own symptoms of anger induced fits’. There are no other known references to Charles’s epilepsy but this condition was often kept secret during the nineteenth century, and indeed Morris and Jane were secretive about Jenny’s condition.

Stanley is recorded as a visitor to Kelmscott Manor on 6 October 1896, the day of Morris’s funeral. His lifestyle was more conventional than that of his brother, and probably more acceptable to their mother, his family an example of the bourgeois class which Morris believed had no place in the classless society which he aspired to realise. By 1901 Stanley was living at Brownhill House, Bursledon, Hampshire, with his wife, two daughters and a staff of four women servants. He died there on 8 October 1911. In his will Stanley made bequests of £100 to his wife and his niece Emmie Oldham, £50 to each of his daughters; his silver plate, his case of knives, his Kelmscott Press books and three other books to his son Eric. He also left books by Morris to his daughters Grace Ellen and Evelyne. To his wife he left all other contents of the house and his stock and implements of husbandry in and about the farm, stable, garden and premises. The residue of his estate was to go to his son Eric. The reference to stock and farm further supports the family tradition that he was a breeder of cattle.

Both Cozens and Effie Morris relate that Eric went to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where he worked as a tea planter. He married Fanny Eleanor May Johnson in 1907 at Bursledon, but lived in Ceylon and had no children. He died in Ceylon on 14 May 1919. In New York, in 1906, Grace Ellen married Herbert Spencer Bevan, a childhood friend and a widower from Hampshire, with a child who, Effie Morris believed, was brought up by an aunt. When Herbert Bevan died in 1916, Grace Ellen returned home. Her stepson Emlyn Bevan was one the executors of her will when she died during 1958.

When Cozens herself worked at Brownhill, which remained the Morris family home, Grace Maria was still alive, but the housekeeping had been taken over by her eldest daughter Evelyne. When Grace Ellen returned home she supervised the garden. Cozens remembered Grace Maria as a tall straight-backed old lady, generally dressed in black. She also recalled the collection of Morris’s books, beautifully bound in white vellum, housed in a separate bookcase. Grace Maria died in 1929, Evelyne in 1935, and, as stated previously, Grace Ellen in 1958.
V. Thomas Rendall Morris (1839-1884)

Thomas Rendall was born on 27 January 1839, and probably named Thomas after his uncle Thomas Morris, the Resident Director of Devon Great Consols, and Rendall after his father’s paternal aunt, Sarah Rendall. In the family he was called Rendall. Rendall was enrolled for the Christmas term 1848 at the Forest Proprietary Grammar School in Walthamstow. Sometimes he obtained higher grades than his elder brother Stanley. In 1855 he won a prize for Biblical Knowledge, and was first in History and Geography, Theology and German. He then left the school for a private tutor in Bonn in Germany, as had Stanley. Rendall’s daughter Effie refers to him attending university in Germany, speaking German well, and that she had several sheets of his poems. Rendall’s grandson Tim Langley believed he attended Heidelberg University but no record of this has been traced. On 25 August 1857 Rendall was commissioned into the 92nd Gordon Highlanders Regiment of Foot as an Ensign. Army records for 1861 show that he joined the 53rd Shropshire Regiment on 18 December 1860. He sold his commission in 1863 after six years of service.

On 11 September 1860 Rendall, aged twenty-one, married Elizabeth Maxwell in Hackney, giving his profession as ‘esquire’, although he was in the army. Elizabeth, aged nineteen, was born in 1841, and came from Stirling. She was the fourth of six sisters. It is possible that she met Rendall when he was stationed at Stirling, the base of the Gordon Highlanders. Her father, a bank accountant, gave his consent and attended the wedding. Morris family stories suggest that Elizabeth was an (amateur) actress and that Rendall and Elizabeth led ‘a gay social life’ when living at Shurdington. Rendall and Elizabeth produced eight children. It is possible to trace the family’s whereabouts and their father’s occupation from their birth certificates. Their eldest child Rendall McEwen Morris was born on 15 October 1861 at Oving in Sussex while his father was still in the 53rd Regiment. The next, Ada, was born on 1 November 1863 at Hawkeshead in the English Lake District, Herbert Maxwell on 2 August 1866 at Shurdington, Gloucestershire and Arthur Gordon on 22 December 1868 at Scarborough, Yorkshire. Their birth certificates list their father as retired from the 53rd Regiment. Esme Verena was born on 30 April 1872 at Tranmere, Birkenhead; her father’s occupation was ‘gentleman’. Effie Mabel was born on 22 October 1876 at a different address in Tranmere, her father a ‘shipping clerk’. Violet was born on 14 March 1879 at the same address, her father a ‘merchant’s clerk’, and the youngest child Daisy Lilian at a different address in Tranmere on 6 August 1882, her father also a ‘shipping clerk’. Rendall’s grandson Tim Langley wrote of his being a translator for a shipping firm.
Figure 5: Thomas Rendall Morris and his wife Elizabeth, c. 1862 (credit: Don Fort).
In March 1870 Morris wrote to Jane to say that he had dined at Leyton House, and that Rendall had come to fetch him. He stated that Rendall ‘is gotten awfully fat: has taken a house at Acton (close to London) and is thinking of setting up a poultry farm there’, which Morris thought a good idea ‘if he will stick to it, and is pretty lucky’. There is no further mention of this matter so either Rendall never did it or the farm failed. In 1874 Morris wrote to his mother that he intended to continue making payments to Rendall, ‘at all events some of it’, but saying that he was in arrears. Norman Kelvin suggests that these were payments due from income from Rendall’s shares in Devon Great Consols, but as the shares had declined in value, Morris may have made up some of the amount himself. Recognition of Rendall’s need is shown in his mother’s elder sister Ann Turner’s will made in 1878, leaving a fifth of her estate to him. She died in 1883 a year before Rendall. Her net estate was valued at £600.

Census returns also indicate declining circumstances. In 1861 Rendall and Elizabeth kept two servants; in 1871, three, as well as Margaret Maxwell, Elizabeth’s sister, living with them. By 1881 there were no servants, but Margaret Maxwell was still with them. Rendall died on 4 August 1884. The cause of death is given as ‘Delirium Tremens’ which suggests alcohol abuse. The Registrar was notified by his eldest son Rendall McEwen Morris, aged twenty-two, who was present at Rendall’s death. It is not known where Rendall’s widow Elizabeth was at the time of his death. Family reports suggest she went to Australia, but this has not been confirmed. In 1901, in New Zealand, Elizabeth married Edward Cox, a widower from Essex, who is described as a painter, probably a decorator. A descendant has traced the information that Elizabeth’s eldest sister Helen probably went to New Zealand during the 1850s which could give a reason for Elizabeth going there (although Helen lived on the South Island and Elizabeth on the North).

Edward Cox died in 1927 and Elizabeth in 1928. Both are buried in Hamilton East Cemetery, New Zealand. Elizabeth’s death certificate gives her cause of death, which took place in a mental hospital, as senile dementia. Much about her life remains unknown. Her youngest daughter Daisy’s son, Tim Langley, suggests that Elizabeth was possibly persuaded to leave Britain by Isabella Gilmore. He thought that although his mother’s sister Effie probably knew what had happened, this was kept a family secret. Descendants have a photograph of Elizabeth with her new husband, and another taken in New Zealand in 1919.

When Rendall died and Elizabeth had left the family home, Rendall’s sister Isabella Gilmore took responsibility for the children whose ages at the time ranged from Rendall McEwen aged twenty-two, to Daisy who was only two. Isabella and her husband Arthur had already taken an interest in the children. In a letter written
after Christmas 1877 Morris commented that he had seen Ada recently at his
mother’s with the Gilmore’s, and thought her much improved. There is also a letter
from Arthur, to Ada expressing concern for her and interest in her.

After Arthur’s death in 1882, Isabella trained as a nurse. It is unclear to what
extent she took direct care of Rendall’s children. Janet Grierson states that Isabella’s
sister Emma Oldham took them initially while Isabella was nursing at Guy’s
Hospital. Isabella felt ‘at the time there were reasons monetary and otherwise which
made it impossible for me to have them except in their holidays’. When the Bishop
of Rochester asked Isabella to consider becoming a deaconess, after much hesitation
she agreed, and was ordained in 1887. Later she wrote: ‘my brother Rendall’s eight
children were left in my care and I had to do everything for them and very grateful I
am to have done it. They are good sons and daughters to me.’

The three boys emigrated, Rendall McEwen to Canada, Herbert Maxwell to
Australia, and Arthur Gordon to Canada, probably all in 1887. The four younger
girls were sent to boarding school run by the Sisterhood of St. Lawrence in Belper,
Derbyshire, paid for by Isabella who took them during the holidays. Census returns
show them all at the school in 1891. Grierson refers to the children calling her
‘mother’, taking them on a visit to Morris’s workshops at Merton Abbey and, with
Emma, for holidays in a rented cottage at Lyme Regis. Effie recalls visiting Kelmscott
House for the first time as a teenager with Isabella and a younger sister and seeing
Morris and Jane. She states of Jane that ‘[s]he certainly was a wonderful personality’. Morris wrote to his mother after Christmas 1885 stating that ‘Ada will be able to tell
you more about our household by word of mouth’. One of Daisy’s daughters recalls
her mother saying that she had been taken by her Aunt Issy, with Ada, to see Morris,
and that Isabella had said that she felt he might have given his nieces some money.
Effie writes of seeing Jane after Morris’s death. In 1908 Jane wrote to Effie from
Dartmouth, commenting that May had drawn a sketch of the Acland monument for
her. Sir Thomas and Lady Acland were Effie’s employers.

Rendall McEwan and Arthur Gordon, who both emigrated to Canada, worked
there as farmers. Rendall McEwan married Margaret Ellen Clegg in 1891. Five
children were born to them. Arthur Gordon married Nancy Ellen Snider, and they
parented three sons. Both families have descendants in Canada today. Ada worked
as a governess and, later, as she had delicate health, lived with Isabella, helping at the
Girls’ Preventive Home established by Isabella. Herbert joined the Merchant Navy,
than emigrated to Australia, worked as a farmer, and married Alice Atkinson. None
of their three children married or produced any heirs.

Esme, who trained as a Norland (i.e. children’s) nurse, also emigrated to Canada,
married Arthur Gordon’s wife’s brother, Henry Snider. Their daughter, Effie Snider,
married Thomas Dring, and bore a son, Charles. Effie Morris attended the Royal School of Needlework and then worked for twenty years with Lord and Lady Acland as a secretary. She lived with Isabella and Ada after the Aclands died, with Ada and Emmie Oldham after Isabella’s death, and later with a companion, until she died in 1969. Violet worked as a domestic nurse and married Alfred Toomey, a railwayman, in 1921. No children have been traced. The youngest child Daisy completed her schooling while living with Isabella, became a governess, and, in 1911, married Albert Langley, a coal merchant’s clerk. Their family included three children: Mary, whose son Martin Fisher’s research has contributed to this article, Tim Langley and Phyllis Millet, who are also quoted.83

VI. Arthur Morris (1840-1916)

Arthur, William and Emma Morris’s fourth surviving son, was born on 30 August 1840 at Woodford Hall. Like Stanley and Rendall he attended the Forest Proprietary Grammar School and was admitted in 1849. While there he won prizes for History and Geography, Theology and Latin. He left during Easter 1856 and went, as had his brothers, to a private tutor in Bonn.84 In 1858 Arthur joined the 60th Royal Rifle Corps as an Ensign. He became a Lieutenant in 1861, a Captain in 1869, a Major in 1880, a Lieutenant Colonel in 1885 and a Colonel in 1889.85 He took part in the capture of the Taku forts and the surrender of Peking (now Beijing) during the 2nd Opium War (1856-1860), receiving a medal with two clasps, and in the Anglo-Zulu War in South Africa (1871-1879), being awarded a medal with one clasp in 1879. He later served in India.86

Morris referred to him occasionally in letters. In 1872 he asked his mother to tell Arthur about some changes at Devon Great Consols, in which Arthur, as a member of the family, also held shares.87 In 1874 he wrote: ‘I am expecting Arthur here this morning to talk about the DGC […] things are looking a little better there’.88 Morris’s letters also refer to Arthur’s progress in the army. On 3 March 1881 he wrote: ‘[t]omorrow I go down to Hadham to see the last of Arthur before he goes to India; lucky he, that he did not have to run downhill at Majuba though I see that his old battalion seem to have run fastest and so lost fewest men’. The battle of Majuba Hill, in which British forces were heavily defeated by the Boers, took place on 27 February 1881 in the Transvaal during the First Boer War (1880-1881). Morris continued: ‘Isy is to be there, and Alice and the whole clamjamfry of them’.89 The Census of 1881 records Arthur aged forty as a ‘Major 60th Regiment’ on the troopship Jumna en route for India with his regiment. At Christmas in 1885 Morris wrote: ‘I was glad to hear that Arthur has got his Lieutenant Colonelcy. Will he stay out in India?’.90 Five years later, Arthur retired with the rank of Colonel on 5 March 1890.91 On this
Figure 6: Arthur Morris, Simla, India, c. 1861 (credit: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest).
occasion, Morris wrote to his mother on 25 March: ‘I have not seen Arthur yet; perhaps I ought to call on him as he is an invalid’; Norman Kelvin comments this was probably as a result of gout, from which Arthur had suffered for thirty years.92 Morris’s references to Arthur seem sympathetic despite Morris’s criticisms of the role of the army in suppressing working-class rallies and in exploiting indigenous populations abroad to further imperialist expansion. In 1888 in Commonweal, when writing about General Charles George Gordon, he refers to ‘that most dangerous tool of capitalist oppression “the Godfearing soldier”’.93 As an officer in the army Arthur was furthering a policy which Morris saw as ignoring the wishes and best interests of the inhabitants of the country where they were fighting to meet the needs of capitalist profit-makers.

On 6 October 1886 Arthur, by then aged forty-six, married Katherine Cecil Annette Trower (called Katie), aged twenty-five, born on 1 January 1861 and the youngest of five children. Her father George Trower lived on dividends and an annuity. In the 1891 Census Arthur and Katie are recorded as living at the home of Rose Bateman, a stockbroker’s agent in the Cromwell Road, London. Arthur is described as a Colonel in the army on retired pay. By 1897 Arthur and Katie were living at Hove, and a son, Lionel Arthur Noel, was born on 25 December that year. The 1901 Census gives them at the same address with Lionel aged three, and four servants. Few references have been found of Arthur’s contact with the rest of the Morris family after he retired from the army, except that in 1910 he wrote to May Morris, giving her details of his army career when she was preparing material for The Collected Works. In this brief letter he wrote: ‘I hear about you from Alice [his younger sister] tho I don’t often see her’.94 Arthur died aged seventy-six in 1916 in Brighton. He left his wife all his real or personal property. The net value of his estate was £97. In 1952 Arthur’s son Lionel, aged fifty-four, a Major on retired pay from the King’s Royal Rifle Corps, married Hilda Geraldine Clarke aged fifty-five, a widow. They had no children. He died on 14 November 1971.

VII. Isabella Gilmore (1842-1923)
Isabella was born on 17 July 1842 at Woodford Hall, after four boys and followed by another, Edgar. Edgar wrote many years later that ‘there were the three of us, her [Isabella], Alice and myself and the red haired governess […] Issy was rather a tomboy and we had a most delightful wild garden with a great pond’, and also records that they made bonfires, cooking potatoes in the ashes.95 Grierson refers to Isabella attending a private school in Brighton, and a finishing school at Clifton, Bristol. On 18 September 1860 Isabella, aged eighteen, married Arthur Hamilton Gilmore, known as Archy, who was aged twenty-eight and a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He
was often away at sea but from 1865 was based mainly at Pembroke Dock, serving in
the coastguard service. In the 1871 Census, Isabella and Arthur are recorded as living
in a flat in Mayfair, London but with no resident servants.

Both Isabella and Arthur were concerned for the welfare of others. A neighbour
recalled that when they were living in Weybridge around 1877 Isabella caused uproar
in the village by supporting a young pregnant gypsy girl through the birth of her
child.\footnote{As a naval officer Arthur Gilmore ‘is reputed to have been the first promoter
of canteens for the men in the Navy’, in which Isabella supported him.\footnote{The 1881
Census records Arthur as a retired naval commander living in Notting Hill, London
with two servants, but soon he and Isabella moved to Lyme Regis where Arthur died
on 1 November 1882 aged fifty. His death certificate records effusion on the serum
of the brain and paralysis. Isabella was still only forty, and after returning to her
mother’s home, she decided to train as a nurse. This occupation was still regarded as
rather low-grade and menial, and was disapproved of by the family including her
mother. She trained at Guy’s Hospital and became a ward sister.

In 1884 when her brother Rendall died leaving eight children, although Isabella
took responsibility for them, as already recorded, she did not give up her nursing
career. As also previously noted, while still a nursing sister, she was approached by
the Bishop of Rochester to establish a new order of deaconesses. The Bishop believed
that the best way for the Church to influence and improve the lives of the working
classes was to send trained women to work among them, since such people would
more easily be able to establish relationships with mothers and children. Eventually
Isabella agreed despite family opposition, although William and her sister Emma
supported her. She wrote: ‘I had many troubling times to go through with my
relations, many hard unkind things were said but it had been so before when I went
to Guy’s and except for my mother being angry with me I did not trouble very much,
that did trouble me [...] and it was a great comfort that before she died she had
entirely forgive me’.\footnote{Isabella helped the Bishop plan the training of recruits for the new order even to
the detail of the clothing. Isabella wished the dress to be blue, and stressed that ‘it has
to be useful and not easily spoilt by the weather’, while ‘the Bishop insisted that it was
to be ‘a lady’s dress in every particular and one in which a woman would look nice’.
The requirement proved to be justified, as the trainees became known in the district,
and if drunks or bullies began to abuse them, local people would come to their
defence. A suitable residence was found at Park Hill, Clapham. The house needed
decorating, some of which Isabella did herself to save money. She approached Morris
who ‘was in one of his happy tempers’ and The Firm decorated her two private rooms
and the chapel, the walls of which were ‘hung with a beautiful madder chintz of my

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Figure 7: Isabella Gilmore, Head Deaconess, 1906 (credit: Church of England Record Centre).
brother’s’. Isabella was ordained on 16 April 1887. She recalled: ‘I had one of my mother’s dear old servants come with boxes of things for the tea and my sister Mrs Oldham came ready for the service’, and stayed a few days. 99

The trainees worked in Battersea, one of the poorest districts of London, where there was poverty, dirt, poor sanitation, overcrowding and little education: children were neglected and there was a high level of alcoholism. The deaconesses set up a school, ran a soup kitchen, distributed clothing and blankets, taught basic sanitary standards, nursed the sick and gave religious instruction to the children. 100 Morris is reported to have said to Isabella ‘I preach Socialism, you practice it’. 101 Isabella’s religious faith was strong and while addressing people’s physical requirements her concern for what she saw as their spiritual needs was high.

In 1891 the Order moved into a larger house, ‘The Sisters’, at 83 (now 113) Northside, Clapham Common. After her mother died in 1894 Isabella used her inheritance to add a chapel. Morris put her in touch with Philip Webb, who designed it. He also designed the altar super-frontal which was embroidered by Isabella’s niece May, and the silver cross, which was made by Robert Catterson-Smith. 102 The work was completed by 1897. A stained glass window designed by Burne-Jones depicting Martha and Mary, representing the active and the contemplative aspects of the deaconesses’ vocation, was added in 1911. Two more stained glass windows by Morris and Co. were added in 1912 and 1913. 103

Initially it was difficult to find parishes willing to accept trainees, and to recruit suitable personnel, but soon they were much in demand. Isabella was an inspiring leader, although one of her trainees wrote: ‘[h]er rule over the students was strict and she had little mercy on any slovenliness or unpunctuality […] in real illness or trouble no-one could be more understanding and sympathetic’. 104 When trained, deaconesses would work with a parish priest, licensed by the Bishop. They were paid a small stipend. Isabella offered support if required and established a rest home in Lyme Regis. The role was expanded to include working with rural parishes and with the Royal Navy, based on the depot ship HMS Pembroke, Chatham. Deaconesses trained by Isabella worked in other countries, including India, South Africa, Canada and the United States.

Isabella also established many heavily-subsidised schemes, such as the provision of clothing for small loans, provident clubs, a Girls’ Preventive Home, founded in 1893, and holiday homes for children from 1898. Jane Morris contributed annually to the Girls’ Preventive Home. 105 In 1897 Isabella asked Sydney Cockerell to print the Deaconesses’ Institution Associates’ card at the Kelmscott Press. In 1906 she retired from training deaconesses but continued to tour, addressing meetings, fundraising, and being involved in discussions with Head Deaconesses about the
future of the order.

With Ada, Isabella moved to live in Reigate in 1906 and began Sunday School classes there. In 1908, she underwent a serious operation. Around 1914 she and Ada moved to Kew, where Isabella acted as sacristan at St. Luke’s Church. They were joined there in 1920 by Effie, one of Ada’s sisters. Isabella experienced a number of health problems. As well as caring for her brother Rendall’s children Isabella had maintained relationships with Jane and Morris’s daughters, Jenny and May. Frank Sharp quotes references to Isabella in letters from Jenny to Sydney Cockerell, and to May seeing her aunt often.\textsuperscript{106}

In 1921 Isabella, Ada and Effie moved to Parkstone in Dorset, and on 15 March 1923 Isabella died, having become increasingly weak with heart problems and bronchitis. She was buried with her husband at Lyme Regis. In her amended will she left £10 each to Violet, Esme and Daisy, £15 to a servant and the remainder to her niece Ada with the explanation that ‘I wish her to feel that she can keep a home for her sisters if she so desires’. Isabella’s only surviving sister, Alice, is reported to have said: ‘I do not know what I would have done without her; she was so good to me’.\textsuperscript{107}

A memorial service in Isabella’s honour was held at Southwark Cathedral where a monument to her was erected and a choir stall named after her. In the Cathedral there is also a chalice incorporating Isabella’s rings. A list of floral tributes at Isabella’s funeral include one ‘from Alice with dearest love’, one from ‘Emmie’, another ‘with dearest love from three Canadian nephews who fought in the Great War, Jim, Gordon and Willie’, and another was ‘with dearest love to our beloved Mother Aunt’, naming all eight of Rendall’s children, whom she befriended after their father’s death.\textsuperscript{108}

\textbf{VIII. Edgar Llewellyn Morris (1844-1924)}

Edgar, the youngest of William and Emma Morris’s five surviving boys was born on 6 June 1844 at Woodford Hall. He was only three when his father died but remembered that distressing time, writing years later to his niece Ada: ‘money had to be found to pay off the great liabilities incurred by father’s partners’; rather denying that his father as the only active senior partner may have borne some responsibility for these debts.\textsuperscript{109} Like his elder brothers, Edgar attended the Forest Proprietary Grammar School and was enrolled in 1853. He left in 1858, and was admitted to Harrow in September 1858 but, always in the lower half of his class, he left at Christmas 1860.\textsuperscript{110} The 1861 Census does not record him as being at home.

On 11 January 1866 in Perth, Edgar married Robina Maxwell, aged nineteen, the youngest sister of Rendall’s wife Elizabeth. A daughter, Florence Ethel, was born at Trelleck in Monmouthshire on 24 July 1867. On her birth certificate Edgar’s occupation is given as ‘Landed Proprietor’. By 1871 the family were living in
Dumbartonshire, Scotland, and Edgar’s occupation was ‘Annuitant’. Robina’s sister Mary was living with them. In November 1877 Morris wrote that he had ‘heard of a sort of place for Edgar’ as ‘superintendent of a sort of boy’s home in Dean Street, Soho’, and commented that he ‘is going to try for it on the principle of any port in a storm’. He did not obtain that position but the information suggests that Edgar was desperate for work. Morris spent Christmas 1877 with his mother, and wrote to Jenny and May that ‘Edgar and his missus and baby are here, also Isabella and her naval officer and Ada’.111

The following year Morris writes of Edgar visiting Kelmscott Manor and going fishing with him. On 29 June 1878 a son Edgar Cecil was born when Edgar and Robina were at Walworth. Edgar’s occupation is given as ‘Gentleman’. In August 1880 Morris wrote: ‘Edgar expecting twins or some such mess’.112 Only one child, another daughter, Catherine Dora, was born on 25 September 1880 when the family were living in St. Pancras. They were still there for the Census in 1881, in a house with four other families totalling twenty-three people, including again Robina’s sister Mary. Edgar is registered as a commercial clerk.

In 1880 Edgar began working for his brother at Queen’s Square. In September 1880, Morris wrote to Jane that Edgar would send on to her worsteds and silks.113 In January 1881 he recorded in his diary ‘Edgar taking stock of wools: 1100 and more’.114 In February 1881 he wrote that Edgar had gone to look at a possible site in Crayford, in March 1883, that another member of staff, or his brother, would show Mrs. Magnusson round at Merton. In April 1883, after two trees were blown down at Merton in a storm, he wrote: ‘Edgar is getting me a large willow’ to fill up the gap, and in May 1883: ‘there is one pretty blossom tree which is new to me […] Edgar says it is the Dog-wood’. In 1884, in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones, Morris outlined staffing structure and payments at Merton Abbey. Edgar is not mentioned.115

Edgar’s fourth child a boy, Hugh Gilmore, was born on 10 May 1887. On the birth certificate Edgar’s occupation is given as ‘Proprietor’. The family lived at addresses in Wimbledon, near Merton Abbey, from 1886, but are not recorded there after 1897.116 The 1891 Census mentions Edgar as a skin dyer, possibly an error, and that he was, as later recorded, a silk dyer. In 1892 Wilfrid Scawen Blunt saw him at Merton Abbey working in the dye vats, and described him as ‘a dreamy man in workman’s clothes, with his shirt sleeves turned up and his arms blue with indigo to the elbows’. He commented that Morris had said that Edgar had ‘gradually fallen in the world, and after trying one thing and another to get a living is now glad to be employed on weekly wages. He lives at Merton and is quite happy’.117

In 1890 Morris wrote: ‘my brother Edgar’s daughter is here for company’.118 Edgar and Robina’s eldest daughter Florence worked as a secretary. At Paddington,
on 3 June 1893, aged twenty-six, she married Herbert Philip Middlemore-Whithard, aged twenty-four, of independent means. A son, Wilfrid de Ferrand was born at Shepperton on 28 September 1897. This looks like someone who moved up in the world; two very aristocratic names, and independent means. The 1901 Census records a change of circumstances. The family were living in Lambeth and Edgar, aged fifty-six, is recorded as a retired Baker and Confectioner: the elder son, working as a pattern maker; the younger daughter working as a hairdresser, and the younger boy aged fourteen, were all still at home. Robina and Edgar certainly remained in Lambeth until 1915. In the 1911 Census the sons Edgar, Cecil and Hugh were at home and both are recorded as employed as Engineers’ Pattern Makers. From at least 1909, Edgar Cecil used his own work premises.\textsuperscript{119} He married Hebe Kate Trille in 1917.

By the time Edgar’s wife Robina died on 12 May 1920 aged seventy-four, they were living at Shepperton, not far from their daughter Florence and her family. Edgar’s occupation is given as retired silk dyer. Robina’s death was registered by their son Edgar Cecil. Edgar himself died on 15 October 1924, aged eighty-one, at the same address, from myocardial degeneration and acute dyspepsia syncope. On his death certificate his occupation is given as Confectioner (Master) retired. His son Hugh was there when he died.

Edgar and Robina’s eldest daughter Florence died in 1945, and their only grandchild, Wilfrid, died in 1946.\textsuperscript{120} In later years the family was based at South Cowpen, Wisborough Green, Sussex. Florence’s husband Herbert died in 1953, and Hugh Morris in 1954. Edgar Cecil lost his wife in 1962, and he himself died in 1973. Catherine is described in a letter to William Morris Society members as living in a very remote cottage there. She was a member of the Society and, during her later years, received an annual donation from some Society members until her death in 1978.\textsuperscript{121} Edgar and Robina appear to have established a close family, the children supporting their parents and each other. How long Edgar remained working at Merton Abbey, and when he trained as a baker and confectioner remain uncertain. He was still living in Wimbledon when Morris died. In 1894 he inherited money from his mother, which may have financed a career change.

\textbf{IX. Alice Mary Gill (1846-1942)}

Alice was born on 5 May 1846 at Woodford Hall, the youngest of the family, and only a year old when her father died. She shared a governess with Isabella and Edgar. In the Census for 1861 Alice is not recorded as living with the family, and so was possibly away at school. On 2 June 1864, aged eighteen, Alice married Reginald Butler Edgcumbe Gill, aged twenty-eight, born 26 September 1833. He came from
an old Devonshire family, and took her to live in his home district, West Devon. Gill worked as a banker for Gill and Rundle of Tavistock, a firm which supplied banking facilities for Devon Great Consols. His father, John Horbrook Gill died in 1874, leaving £10,000 in trust, with income for life, to his son Reginald. The remainder of his estate, after other trusts and legacies were paid, was to be held by the trustees for use of his son, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns. A stained glass window designed by Edward Burne-Jones and Morris in Reginald’s father’s memory was installed in St. Eustachius the Martyr Church, Tavistock, Devon in 1876.

In 1877 Morris wrote to Jane referring to a letter ‘from Alice apparently’ which he said he would forward to her. The Census for 1871 records Alice and Reginald at Ward House, Beerferris (now Bere Ferrers) in Devon, and for 1881 at Tamar House, Beerferris. Morris ‘went on the long promised voyage to Alice’ in February 1881. He thought their ‘house is not a bad one: plan very fair, somewhat plain, but looks human: all but the furniture which Gill would stick in it and which I suppose he half repents of now since he is getting me to do some things for him’. By the time of the 1891 Census Reginald and Alice were at Bickham House, Buckland Monachorum, Devon. They had no children. A family story refers to Reginald getting a servant ‘into trouble’. There may be some foundation to this story. The 1871 census for the Gill household includes a housemaid Elizabeth Hooper. On the marriage certificate dated 1901 of a Gertrude Hooper, aged twenty-six, a Reginald Butler Edgcumbe Gill, banker, is recorded as her father. Whatever might have happened Alice and Reginald remained together. In a future socialist society Morris envisaged that women would not be economically dependent on their husbands and that a ‘couple would be free’ but ‘if unfortunately distaste arose between them […] friendship would go along with desire, and would outlive it, and the couple would still remain together’.

On 10 February 1897 Reginald died when he was thrown from his horse while hunting, dislocating his neck. He left £1000, all the furniture, silver ornaments, china and pictures (except certain named articles) to Alice, legacies to other named people, and the residual estate to William Thomas Gill. Thus, the second part of 1896 and early 1897 was a particularly difficult time for the Morris family as Reginald’s death followed soon after that of the husband of Morris’s sister Emma, Joseph Oldham, in August 1896, and that of Morris himself in October 1896.

Sir Geoffrey Mander, who saw Alice when she was ninety-four years old, wrote: ‘since she married […] her life was cut off’ from that of her brother William although she related happy memories of him. However, Jane Morris kept some contact with Alice after Morris’s death. In February 1899 she wrote about Alice giving up her groom and coachman, and in July 1899, when Jane was planning to go to Buxton for treatment for her rheumatism, she wrote: ‘Mrs Gill will go with me’. The 1901
Figure 9: Alice and Reginald Gill, London, c. 1860s (credit: William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest).
Census records Alice as living in Lyme Regis with three servants, close to her sister Emma who was also experiencing bereavement.

Alice later moved to Tunbridge Wells and was living there during the Census of 1911. One of Rendall’s grandchildren wrote of visiting her: ‘[i]n the hall were two large paintings of her and her husband […]’. She had only a staff of two […] Mary Geach was her cook – she had been Granny Morris’s kitchen maid and went to Aunt Alice on the latter’s wedding – she became general factotum […]’. Aunt A was short and fat with sparse grey curls atop. She wore voluminous skirts and bolero jackets and had two fat pug dogs […]’. She had an uncertain temper and was very out of touch with the modern world.128

Alice died from cerebral embolism, thrombosis and senility on 27 September 1942, aged ninety-seven at her home in Tunbridge Wells. Her niece Grace Bevan, her brother Stanley’s daughter, was with her and registered her death. In her will small legacies left included those to Grace Bevan, her nephews Edgar Cecil and Hugh Morris, and niece (Florence) Ethel Whithard (three of her brother Edgar’s four children), to her nieces Violet Toomey and Esme Snyder (two of her brother Rendall’s eight children). She also left annuities to Edgar Cecil and to Hugh Morris, and to her servant Mary Geach. Her clothes were left to Edgar Cecil’s wife, who would also inherit his annuity if he died, suggesting a close relationship with them. Her estate was valued at over £19,000 net. She left the remainder to Lionel Morris, her brother Arthur’s son.

**X. Conclusion**

During her lifetime Emma Morris provided a focal point for the members of her family. There are accounts of various members meeting at her home, particularly at Christmas, and for holidays by the sea. There was interaction between family members, who visited each other and helped each other at difficult times (for example, Isabella’s caring for Rendall’s children after his death), and there are many examples of siblings staying with other members of the family at times of illness, bereavement, or when approaching death. Several siblings also remembered selected family members in wills. After Emma’s death it seems likely there was less contact between family members. One of Rendall’s grandchildren wrote of the Morrises as being a ‘disparate family – even Aunt Issy spoke little of her brothers and sisters’.129 There is also reference to lack of contact between Rendall’s daughter Daisy and her Uncle Arthur’s family, because Daisy was thought to have married beneath her. Arthur relied on Alice for news of the family.130

Despite Morris’s view that families need not be limited to blood relations, and his own very close friendships with men and women who were not related, he maintained
some contact with his siblings and their families, although not as part of his everyday life. He was ready to help at times when it was needed, sometimes possibly prompted by his mother. Morris seems pleased to have been able to assist his siblings using his professional knowledge, skills and contacts. He also tried to help his brothers Rendall and Edgar, both of whom had come down in the world. There is some record of nieces staying with Morris and his family. Otherwise his life was extremely busy with his own activities and his direct family. Comments by Morris about his siblings in Kelvin’s edition of Morris’s *Collected Letters*, although infrequent, are usually friendly and positive despite some quite radical differences in their lifestyles and beliefs, although Isabella and Emma shared his concerns for disadvantaged people. After Morris’s death Jane’s letters contain some evidence that she maintained contact with his sisters but no obvious record of any with his brothers.

Regarding Dorothy Coles’s initial hypothesis – that there are often inaccuracies in what is passed down from generation to generation – no dramatic discrepancies have been discovered about Morris’s siblings, although many matters remain unconfirmed. When and why did Edgar leave Merton Abbey, and when did he train as a baker and confectioner? Was it known in the wider family that, as well as Morris’s daughter Jenny, Stanley’s son Charles suffered from epilepsy? There is also a major secret about why and when Rendall’s wife Elizabeth left England for Australia or New Zealand, apparently around the time of Rendall’s death, leaving care of the children to be arranged within the family, and there is doubt about which child went initially to which member. There is also a lack of explanation for Emma Morris leaving her
diamond earrings to Stanley’s wife Grace Maria rather than to Jane and the omission
of any bequest to Rendall’s children when she died in 1894. Further exploration could
provide more information and a better understanding of the quality of relationships
between Morris and his siblings, and their relationships with each other and with
their mother.

In 1895 Morris refused the offer of an unnamed person to write his family history.
This could be explained by his expressed belief that, in a socialist society, blood
relationships would not be of major importance, or it could be that there were things
in his family that he preferred to be kept secret. Morris’s own explanation concludes:
‘I don’t think I approve of the whole affair. What I offer the public is my work, I don’t
want them to know anything else about me.’131 However it may be of interest today,
when family history has a relatively high profile, to consider the lives of the brothers
and sisters of William Morris, whose work is still so well remembered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
I am very grateful to the following for the use of their material: Nicholas C. S. Mason, Dorothy Coles’s
nephew, on behalf of her family; Martin Fisher and Katherine Fort, family descendants; the Society of
Antiquaries; David Everett; the College of Arms; the William Morris Gallery; and the Church of England
Record Centre. I would also like to thank Helen Elletson, Curator of The William Morris Society, and
Owen Holland, for their suggestions and advice.

NOTES
1. This article is based on incomplete drafts and notes for a talk given by the late Dorothy Coles to
The William Morris Society on 26 February 2005. (See the obituary in The William Morris Society
Newsletter (Summer 2012), pp. 4-5). It also includes extensive later research carried out by her, held
in the Dorothy Coles Papers in The William Morris Society Archives, Kelmscott House, 26 Upper
Mall, Hammersmith, W6 9TA. (Afterwards Dorothy Coles Papers, WMSoc. Archives). Dorothy’s
structure and some of her text have been used in preparing the version of the article that is
presented here.
3. Dorothy Coles, revised by Barbara Lawrence, ‘William Morris’s Paternal Ancestry’, JWMS, 20: 4
(Summer 2014), 19-33. (Afterwards Coles, revised Lawrence).
34-59. (Afterwards Everett). David Everett’s research indicates a Thomas Morris, probably William
Morris senior’s youngest brother, being christened in Worcester in 1804, and, traces since publication
of the article, an entry in The Worcester Journal, 24 July 1811, requesting that debts be repaid to a
tobacconist named William Morris of Broad Street, Worcester, with a threat of proceedings if not
paid. This could be a reference to William Morris, grandfather, whose will states that he was a
tobacconist.
5. Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels,
6. William Morris, Journalism: Contributions to Commonweal 1885-1890, ed. by Nicholas Salmon (Bristol:
Socialist League Office, 1885), Note F.
8. See Coles, revised Lawrence; Everett.
9. Documents held at The College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4BT and the Register of Marriages at St. Nicholas Church, Worcester 1826, no.234, available online: <www.ancestry.co.uk> (accessed 14 July 2017). (Afterwards College of Arms). The 1936 Act of Parliament which established compulsory registration of births, marriages and deaths came into force on 1 July 1837. Records from some Church denominations are available for the period before this time but these are often incomplete and not always reliable. Copies of certificates of events registered after 1 July 1837 have been obtained from The General Register Office, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 2JD, and are available online: <www.gro.gov.uk> (accessed 14 July 2017). Citations from particular certificates are not noted separately.
10. Charles Stanley Morris was born 20 August 1827 according to an entry in a family bible. This information is provided in 'Kelm scott Manor volunteer research paper' (2014, revised 9 May 2017). Typed copy held in the library, Kelm scott Manor, Lechlade, Gloucestershire. This very comprehensive research includes detailed information about later generations. From the dates referred to in this paper it has been possible to fill in some gaps and to obtain relevant documents to obtain more information. (Afterwards 'Kelm scott Manor research paper'). Charles's burial is listed for 7 September 1827, aged five days, in the Burial records for St. Edm und the King and Martyr 1827. Greater London Burials Index, City of London Burials 1751-1855, p. 16, no. 127. Guildhall ref. GLMs20, 210.
12. Census records for the United Kingdom from 1841 may be available locally, or from The National Archives at Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU. (Afterwards National Archives). In this article, the relevant year and sometimes the district are given.
13. Will of Emma Morris, probate granted 11 January 1895. Wills made after 1858 are available from Leeds Probate Registry, York House, 31 York Place, Leeds LS1 2BA; available online: <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk> (accessed 14 July 2017). This online source provides the date of death and probate, and place of residence prior to death. Wills, dates and places referred to in the text will not be separately noted.
20. Copies of documents and further information relating to Joseph and Emma Oldham’s children’s lives are held in Dorothy Coles papers, WM Soc. Archives.
23. Ibid.
24. Kelvin, III, p. 127; IV, p. 89.
25. In a letter to Morris dated 8 August 1896, Philip Webb informed Morris that his sister Isabella had


27. Sharp and Marsh, p. 416.


Richardson, pp. 10-12, 306.

32. Kelvin, I, p. 25.

33. Records of the Devonshire Great Consolidated Copper Mining Company, Transfer of Shares for year preceding 30 June 1854, held at The National Archive, ref. PRO BT 31/142/445 Annual Returns.

34. MacCarthy, p. 45.


37. Reminiscences of Isabella Gilmore, Church of England Record Centre (CERC), 15 Galleywell Road, London, SE16 3PB; CERC: CWMC/IG/4, pp. 9-10. (Afterwards Gilmore, *Reminiscences*). These memoirs were written out, and pages numbered by Ada Morris.

38. Richardson, p. 92.


40. Kelvin, IV, p. 255.

41. Henrietta Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 9 October 1896, held in the British Library, quoted in MacCarthy, p. 671.

42. Sharp and Marsh, p. 355.


44. Kelvin, IV, p. 255.


47. Kelvin, II, p. 123.
54. Date of death provided in ‘Kemsctt Manor research paper’.
55. MacCarthy, p. 370. MacCarthy refers to George Bernard Shaw’s review in The Observer of 6 November 1949, in which he suggests that Morris’s famous rages were in fact eclampsia, a form of epilepsy, and that Jenny inherited the condition from her father (MacCarthy, p. xiii). MacCarthy also refers to Morris’s mother experiencing partial seizures, and Marsh to Morris’s mother suffering mildly from the same condition as Jenny (MacCarthy, p. 5; Marsh, p. 143). It has so far not been possible to trace the original source of this information about Morris’s mother. A project by authors, artists and doctors explored the effects that epilepsy had on the Morris family in a series of art installations, events and a novel. This was co-ordinated by the late Leslie Forbes, who completed the first part of a novel entitled Embroidered Minds of the Morris Women (2016).
57. Date of marriage provided in ‘Kemsctt Manor research paper’.
58. Documents relating to Stanley and Grace Maria’s children can be found in Dorothy Coles papers, WMSoc. Archives and further information can be found in ‘Kemsctt Manor research paper’.
59. ‘Kemsctt Manor research paper’; Effie Morris, March 1959. Effie refers to Grace Ellen’s parents being dead when she returned home during 1916, but Grace Maria did not die until 1929.
60. Reynolds, Autumn 2006, pp. 6, 9; Spring 2007, p. 11.
64. UK War Office, A List of Officers of the Army on Full, Retired and Halfpay, corrected through to 31 March 1861 (London: Clowes, 1861), p. 457; A List of Officers of the Army on Full, Retired and Halfpay, corrected through to 31 March 1863 (London: Clowes, 1863), p. 789.
65. See Langley.
66. Ibid.
67. Kelvin, I, p. 112.
68. Ibid., p. 215.
69. Everett, p. 44.
70. Material concerning Elizabeth Cox, previously Morris, has been taken from the research of Martin Fisher, Rendall Morris’s great-grandson, in ‘The Fisher/Langley/Morris/Laslett Families, 19th and 20th Centuries’ (revised August 2015); typewritten copy, plus other information, is held in Dorothy Coles Papers, WMSoc. Archives. (Afterwards Fisher). This source has been supplemented by the research of Katherine Fort, a descendant of Rendall McEwen Morris in Canada. (Afterwards Fort).
71. Fort’s research discovered that Edward Cox’s first wife was buried at Te Awamutu, New Zealand, in 1899 and his son William in 1901. Fort also traced a Helen Maxwell, probably Elizabeth’s oldest sister, who married Edward Manning in 1855 in Sawyers Bay, New Zealand, had three children and was buried with her husband in Otago New Zealand in 1907. Helen’s burial records show that she was born in Edinburgh. She has not been traced in the Scottish census records after 1851. Her marriage certificate does not give further identifying information.
72. See Langley.
73. See Fisher.
74. Kelvin, I, p. 423.
75. CERC, letter dated 18 June (no year given), ref. CERC: CWMC/IG/2, Family Letters 1920.
76. Grierson, p. 33.
83. There are fuller details about Rendall and Elizabeth’s children in Fisher and ‘Kelmscott Manor research paper’, and copies of relevant documents in the Dorothy Coles Papers, WMSoc. Archives.
85. Hart, 1890, p. 304.
87. Kelvin, I, p. 161. Devon Great Consols was to be reconstituted as a limited liability company, and the shares had been revalued. Morris reassured his mother that there was ‘no chance of all this money being called for’ and asked her to tell Arthur that ‘the price of copper was high and likely to remain so’.
88. Kelvin, I, p. 223.
92. Kelvin, III, p. 150.
94. See Arthur Morris.
97. Grierson, p. 16.
100. Sharp, p. 34; Grierson, pp. 83-102. Isabella’s work as a deaconess is fully described by Sharp and by Grierson.
101. Grierson, p. 95.
102. Gilmore, *Reminiscences*, pp. 75-76. The silver cross, the altar super-frontal and its design, are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
105. Subscription lists in *Annual Reports of Girls’ Preventive Home* (1894-1898 and 1901), quoted in Sharp, p. 36.
106. Sharp, pp. 36, 38.
107. Robinson, p. 49.
109. See Edgar Morris. His father’s bill broking firm, Sanderson & Co., suspended business following William Morris senior’s death, which came at the time of the British Commercial Crisis of 1847-48. Emma Morris lost her husband’s income and share of the capital and probably also had to liquidate some
111. Kelvin, I, pp. 414, 420, 423. The ‘baby’ must have been Florence, aged 10.
112. Ibid., I, pp. 452, 586.
113. Ibid., I, p. 591.
114. Morris’s manuscript diary, 4 January 1881, British Library Add. MS 45407B.
116. Records of Electoral Registers for the Wimbledon division, North East Surrey 1886 to 1897, show that from 1886 to 1893 Edgar and Robina were at 7 Norman Road, and, from 1893 to 1897, at 74 Quicks Road. Kelly’s Directory of Wimbledon, Merton, Mitcham, Worcester Park, Sutton, Carshalton etc. 1896-1897 (London, Kelly & Co., [1897]), p. 44, also records them at 74 Quicks Road, but no one is listed at that address in Trim’s Wimbledon Almanack, Directory and Trade Advertiser for 1899 (Wimbledon: Edward Trim, 1899), p. 224.
120. See ‘Kelsmcott Manor research paper’.
122. Kelvin, I, p. 413.
123. Ibid., II, p. 19.
129. See Langley.
130. See Arthur Morris.