THE JOURNAL OF WILLIAM MORRIS STUDIES VOL. XXV NO. 1 2022

THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

The Journal of William Morris Studies

Vol. XXV No. 1 2022

THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

The life, work and ideas of William Morris (1834-96) are as important today as they were in his lifetime. The William Morris Society exists to make them as widely known as possible.

The breadth of Morris's ideas and activities brings together those who are interested in him as a designer, craftsman, poet, and political activist, and who admire his robust and generous personality and his creative energy. Morris's ideas on how we live and how we might live, on creative work, ecology and conservation, politics and the place of arts in our lives, remain as stimulating now as they were over a century ago.

Established in 1955, the Society is a worldwide membership fellowship. It publishes a magazine and a journal covering all aspects of Morris's work. It also runs a small museum and holds a varied series of talks, exhibitions and events throughout the year exploring Morris's work, his wider circle and his enduring relevance.

The Society's office and museum are in the basement and Coach House of Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, Morris's last London home. Visit our website at williammorrissociety.org to find out more about the Society and the benefits of membership.

The Society maintains close ties with its US and Canadian counterparts, whose members receive the UK publications. For more information visit morrissociety.org or wmsc.ca

See also:

The William Morris Society:
williammorrissociety.org

The Journal of William Morris Studies homepage:
williammorrissociety.org/publications/journal/

The US William Morris Society's online archive of the *Journal*:
morrissociety.org/publications/journal-of-william-morris-studies/

The William Morris Internet Archive:
marxists.org/archive/morris

The William Morris Archive:
morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu

Please note that the William Morris Internet Archive is an independent venture and is not connected to The William Morris Society.

Contents

Vol. XXV No. 1 2022

Editorial

In 1909, Edith Mary Oldham Ellis, née Lees, writer, radical socio-philosophical thinker, marriage reformer, queer pioneer, and the wife of 'sex psychologist' Havelock Ellis, published a novel reflecting on and satirising her experience as secretary of Fellowship House, a middle-class socialist commune which had, among others, involved future prime minister Ramsay MacDonald. In it, her alter ego Rachel Merton involves herself sequentially in Christian philanthropy, well-to-do urban communitarianism, and passionate nature mysticism. A heady mixture, which badly needs a voice of common sense. Ellis provided it through a character who, in his 'rough loose blue suit' and looking as if 'escaped from some wild human jungle', is drawn obviously from the persona of the most dominant figure in late-Victorian British alternative politics and art: I mean, of course, William Morris.[1] Opening Rachel's eyes to the futility of selling matchboxes in the church bazaar, 'Robert Dane' sets her a course of reading (especially Marx), only to take it away again:

> 'Books won't help you a bit', said Dane. 'These may', pointing to the [British Museum's Parthenon] friezes. Rachel's eyes followed his finger. 'How?' she asked. 'Sheer beauty!' he said. 'It's just the one big thing, perhaps the only thing'. 'Why did you tell me to read Karl Marx then?' […] 'So that you'd reject the dry bones', he said. […] '[…] Imagine finding reality and freedom at your age and in books too. Reality indeed! Drawing-room chatter and intellectual essays won't give you realities. That's why you are disappointed. The slums and your own heart are better schoolrooms'.[2]

'Robert Dane' is a very Morrisian figure indeed: exuberant, self-contradictory, florid, performative, stark, decisive, and adamant about the social, indeed spiritual, value of beauty. His highly selective relationship with Marx, too, is typical. Moreover, Dane, by borrowing some of the immense, scintillating charisma of his real-life model, becomes the most alive, witty, believable character in the novel. Morris, by this point, had been dead for more than a decade: yet the memory of his idiosyncratic, passionate, gloriously wayward yet doggedly logical take on art and politics still impelled Ellis to give to his alter ego the best, most pithy and confident lines in the book. It is testament to the effect, as wide as it was intense, of the figure of Morris on his circle and his age.

Here's another one. Half a decade after the publication of Ellis's novel, a working-class Cambridge art worker called David Parr spent most of his little spare time painting the interior of his modest terraced house with Morrisian pattern. On a banner between the stylised foliage, he proudly wrote: '[i]f you do anything, do it well'.[3] What is it about Morris,

his life, thought, and art, that so captured the imaginations of people like Ellis and Parr, in their very different situations and outlooks on life? For that matter, what is it that enables this journal to productively revisit him twice a year, having done so now for decades?

Every reader will have their own answer to this question, and each issue of this journal, which I am incredibly grateful and proud to be allowed to edit, is and will continue to provide yet more answers to the endlessly fascinating conundrum posed by a man whose doctor famously noted that he had done more work in one life than ten men. Personally, I think it might be Morris's almost unequalled talent for combination, connection, the seeing of links and correlations. What one might call his holistic outlook, perhaps. I discovered Morris as an undergraduate literature student in Belgium, reading *News from Nowhere* and assorted essays in a room of what once had been a seminary for candidate priests. Morris seemed more like a strange prophet than a priest, however. I was impressed by the mixture of sensibilities that characterised his thought: his finely tuned sensitiveness to the claims of craft, of beauty, of the natural world, of work, of social equality, of story and saga, all mixed together, but not without method; his simultaneous allegiance to the past, to the future, and to the present; to magic and to stark realism. Morris, it seems to me still, refuses persuasively, by sheer force of vision, to separate forms of thinking, making, and living that are still being seen, almost automatically, as in tension: work and play, nature and human, past and present, idealism and realism, nationalism and internationalism, art and craft. In the age of war, recession, division, social exclusion, and environmental degradation that is ours (and indeed was his own), Morris stands for what John Ruskin called the 'wealth of life' through the hope offered by making connections (meaningful ones, not merely ornamental ones), intellectually and socially and artistically.

My discovery of Morris translated itself into neither novels nor murals, yet I spent most of my Master's, M. Phil., and Ph.D. work circling around Morris in a narrowing spiral, working on John Ruskin, Edward Carpenter, on Aestheticism, on late-Victorian socialism. Coming back to Morris, as the editor of this journal, feels somewhat like an early homecoming (if that is not too self-indulgent a phrase). I remember how, in my first ever proper university essay, I made grateful use of its articles. But there is also a challenge. 'Robert Dane's' call to 'reject the dry bones', and David Parr's exhortation to 'do it well' set important but tough standards. The *Journal* should be a resource that any Morris researcher turns to for the latest insights into his ideas and circle, that members of The William Morris Society trust for intriguing new takes and overlooked gems, and in which students continue to discover the dynamic, solid, creative, and thought-provoking material that I did. In other words, the journal should keep its course, 'doing well' its work of making sure Morris does not become 'dry bones', something which the very nature of his work, the incredible breadth of his activity, makes unlikely indeed (although one might occasionally bump into a Morrisian bone in gift shops, perhaps).

The *Journal* will continue to reflect this Morrisian breadth. Design, art, craft, architecture, literature, socialism, (proto-)environmentalism and utopia will each get their due. After all, as frequently remarked by previous editors, Morris is the interdisciplinarian *par excellence*. Moreover, the *Journal* will continue to judiciously cast its net widely and invite contributions on Morris's' relationship with his wider circle, family and contacts, both artistic and political. A special interest in the executors of Morris and Co. designs, the artworkers and local firms

who painted the mansion walls and church roofs according to Morris's plans, will hopefully find expression in a future issue. Contributions are also highly welcomed which consider Morris's humour: readers might remember that the word 'chaff' appears many times in the great biography of the much-lamented Fiona MacCarthy, and the hearty, self-deprecating humour of 'Topsy' might well be considered an inherent part of his style. Something to ponder, there.

It is, in a way, gratifying to note that, at this time of some insularity and exits, *The Journal of William Morris Studies* continues on its self-determined course by appointing what I believe is its first non-British editor. This fact, of course, will not influence editorial policy, outside of an interest in Morris's significant international connections and afterlife, on which contributions are very welcome. When this editorial comes out, French and Belgian readers will just be too late to catch the major exposition *William Morris (1834-1896): l'art dans tout* at Roubaix, but the journal will make an effort to flag up similar upcoming events, both UK- and internationally based, in future editorials.

The Journal of William Morris Studies now has a long and venerable history of excellent scholarship. Morris would not have approved if, by charging forward, we forgot to also look backwards (Bellamy pun unintended). I hope to do some self-education over the first periods of my editorship, reading somewhat methodically through back issues of the journal. Topics of interest and broader impressions from this journey into the journal's past will find a way into future editorials, no doubt.

However, the present is what is chiefly at stake for now. The current issue is still wholly the exemplary editorial work of Owen Holland, and I cannot take any credit for it, however much I'd like to. As usual, Owen has delivered a fascinating mix of material. This year saw the very welcome return, after its Covid-based absence since 2019, of the Kelmscott Lecture: the journal has recommenced (and will, hopefully, keep up) the tradition of publishing a revised version of the lecture, and readers will be pleased to note that Jan Marsh's thought-provoking piece on Morris's anti-imperialism and its resonances with present debates on public memory can now be read at their leisure here. Elsewhere in this issue, Mary Greensted explores the relationship to Morris of Arts and Crafts architect and designer Ernest Gimson, with especial attention to the roles played by his brother Sidney and Morris's daughter May. I would not be surprised if readers wish to revisit Kelmscott after reading it, as I do. Mike Roberts's essay on his own *News from Nowhere* symphony is regrettably delayed until the next issue and promises to be a somewhat rare but delightful foray of Morris studies into musical territory. Finally, it is also great to see the reappearance in this journal of short notes, with a brief piece by Greg Michaelson on an E. T. Reed *Punch* cartoon that features Morris prominently. As incoming editor, I would hereby wish to encourage potential contributors to consider the short notes format, for smaller discoveries of note.

I am extremely grateful to Owen for making the editorial transition as smooth as possible, and for all his extremely generous advice, hoping to soon be able to bombard him with articles for peer review in his role as an advisory board member! Happily, Michael Robertson has also kindly agreed to join the editorial board, and his work will be known to readers of his excellent 2018 monograph *The Last Utopians: Four Late Nineteenth-Century Visionaries and Their Legacy*. I also very gladly refer here to a few words of thanks on Owen's editorship from Michael, who also serves as chair of the Society's Education, Learning and

Engagement Committee:

> It's a pleasure to give thanks, on behalf of the entire William Morris Society, to Owen Holland, who took over as editor in 2015 as he was finishing his Ph.D. at Cambridge. Over the past seven years he has produced more than a dozen issues of the *Journal*, all of them at a consistently excellent level, all of them with a broad range of carefully researched articles that appeal not only to academic readers but to a broader public interested in Morris and his work.
>
> Owen's tenure as editor has been marked by no fewer than four special issues: on the Paris Commune, on utopia, on revolution, and most recently on the Kelmscott Press. It has also been marked by his sharp, well-informed, beautifully written introductions to every issue.
>
> In addition to his editorial duties, Owen provided an invaluable service to the Society by playing a central role in organising last year's symposium on the Kelmscott Press.

As the incoming editor, I am also extremely lucky to be able to count on Peter Faulkner (himself, of course, a former editor) as reviews editor and am looking forward to collaborating with him. With Sarah Wilson over at the excellent William Morris Society *Magazine*, I will aim to make sure we offer a coordinated and valuable membership benefit for The William Morris Society community. I am also grateful for all the work done by Andrew Sidford of Made In Earnest to ensure each issue is exemplary in its visual clarity and appeal.

I hope the readership will excuse my faults as an editor, among which this editorial itself has already shown a tendency to ramble and to quoting at great length, which four years of Ph.D. research and the best efforts of my supervisor have not been able to stamp out completely. I nevertheless will do my utmost to meet the high editorial standard set and to deliver a journal that continues to fascinate, surprise, provoke and widen horizons with original, thorough and innovative research.

And now, in Morrisian fashion, to work.

Wanne Mendonck
Editor

NOTES

1 Edith Ellis [as Mrs. Havelock Ellis], *Attainment* (London: Alston Rivers, 1909), p. 84.

2 Ellis, pp. 101-2.

3 David Parr House is open to the public and readers might want to browse their website, <https://davidparrhouse.org/> [last accessed 23 December 2022]. The new editor of this journal occasionally appears as a volunteer guide there.

Hypocrisy and Cant and Vicarious Ferocity: William Morris and Resistance to British Imperialism

Jan Marsh

I will begin with or in Oxford because it is so closely associated with William Morris and because the contested history of the unlamented British Empire is currently an active issue in the city in respect of the sculpted figure of Cecil Rhodes located on the external wall of Oriel College and the present campaign Rhodes Must Fall (Figure 1). The statue is modest in size and protected from pigeons by a net that makes Rhodes look as if he is wearing a spiv's checked suit. Demands for removal have prompted a 'retain and explain' response from Oriel.[1] Not far away, on a building where Rhodes lodged during his brief university career, is a complimentary plaque praising Rhodes for the 'great services' he rendered to his country (see Figure 2). These 'services' refer not to his benefactions to Oxford but to his efforts to further the expansion and imposition of British political-economic interests in southern Africa, extending from diamond exploitation to the state of Rhodesia created in his name.

In summer 2022, against the background of an ongoing public debate about the legacies of imperial violence, the late and unlamented Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries intervened in the heritage listing process. Historic England had argued that the memorial plaque did not merit legal protection; Dorries, by contrast, insisted it

Figure 1: Statue of Cecil Rhodes, Oriel College, Oxford; photograph taken by Howard Stanbury, 2 February 2016, creative commons license, available online: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stanbury/24487145290/in/photostream/> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

was of 'great historical significance'. I do not know the reasons she adduced. But unwittingly she drew attention to both robber baron Rhodes and his partner in diamond crime who installed the plaque, Alfred Mosely. Both Rhodes and Mosely derived immense profits from the Kimberley mines and, in later life, both spent part of their fortunes on 'good works'. I suspect Dorries confused Mosely's plaque with Oriel's statue, but as it happens the plaque usefully identifies Rhodes's imperial impact. To recap: Rhodes's commercial misdeeds were underpinned by his racist ambition of world domination, to extend the Empire by bringing 'the whole uncivilised world under British rule[,] for the recovery of the United States [and] for the making the Anglo Saxon race but one empire'.[2]

I will return to the question of historic monuments. For now, it can be agreed that Morris did not celebrate Cecil Rhodes or his colleagues in business or politics. As Peter Halton observes, to Morris, '[t]he British Empire was an "elaborate machinery of violence and fraud", and when the Colonial and Indian Exhibition opened in South Kensington in 1886 [he] suggested alternative displays showing the death and horror at the core of British policy'.[3] Morris's anti-imperialism was an integral part of his socialist conviction, but, as Frank Sharp has recently re-emphasised, it also predated Morris's decision to join the Democratic Federation.[4] In January 1880 he

Figure 2: Photograph of a portrait bust of Cecil Rhodes above No. 6 King Edward Street, Oxford; creative commons license, available online: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhodes%27_portrait_bust.JPG> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

Figure 3 (right): 'Burning of Coomassie', in James Grant, *British Battles on Land and Sea* (London: Cassell, [1875]), p. 367; no known copyright restrictions, via British Library Digital Store 9504.h.2, and available online: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11099508245> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

drafted 'Our Country Right or Wrong', an essay which took the form of a rhetorical attack on jingoist support for British military aggression throughout the globe. In characteristically caustic prose, which foreshadows the tone of his later socialist journalism, Morris described this aggressive stance as being prompted by 'opium-selling', 'land-filching' and 'greed gilded with flimsy stuff about the advancement of civilization, the beneficent influence of the Anglo-Saxon race and the like'.[5] 'People at home don't bother their heads with the rights and wrongs of a set of barbarians', he observed, adding that the claim to be securing a frontier in Afghanistan by 'carrying fire and the sword (say murder and fire-raising) among a people who have done us no wrong' was specious.[6] The end proposed was 'ruinous folly, the means employed villainous injustice'.[7]

Today, it is easy to see Morris's radicalism as his defining feature, but his socialism took friends by surprise. Initially, he was closer to the old-style Toryism of John Ruskin's self-definition – one might call him a young fogey in that regard. A hint of the future came however with his student entry for the Newdigate Prize at Oxford in 1855. The topic, chosen during the Crimean War, was 'The Mosque Rising in the Place of the Temple of Solomon' in the holy city of Jerusalem. Morris's poem is set during the Crusader battles with the Saracens, which in his own time had renewed resonance in the context of Christian rivalry over religious presence on the Temple Mount. As William Whitla notes in his exemplary edition of this largely unpublished text, the poem 'refus[es] to take a narrowly nationalist, racialist or archaeological side' in the contemporary arguments, which is perhaps one reason why it failed to win the competition.[8]

Subsequently, during the 1860s, Morris appears to have set aside his earlier desire

BURNING OF COOMASSIE.

to reform society, since there is scant evidence of vocal support for the progressive causes of the day – abolition during the US Civil War, impeachment of Governor Eyre (1865), franchise reform (1867). He did not initially protest the conquest of Burma to obtain 'oil, teak and rubies', nor the wars against the Asante kingdom, celebrated in the press with images of British soldiers torching Kumasi (see Figure 3), with the stated purpose of securing freedom of access to all trade within the kingdom.

Of course, the prevailing view was of a benign Empire, delivering prosperity, peace and national pride. One's country was generally right and, when wrong, was open to correction. The idea of the British Empire as a good thing for the world was shared by most sections of society, at least in what are now called the home nations. Morris's family and their inherited wealth were tied in to capitalist finance but not directly to the imperial or colonial systems – except for his younger brother Arthur, who became a career soldier. Arthur joined the King's Royal Rifle Corps. In 1860, when he was twenty, the regiment took part in the assault on Beijing and the looting of the summer palace, while William was happily decorating and entertaining at his new home, Red House, in Kent. Roof tiles looted from the summer palace and various other items brought back to Britain are now in regimental and other museums – one might think of these items as souvenirs or tokens of imperial aggression in defence of the opium trade.[9]

In most families such military links fuelled fraternal support for the empire, but

William's few recorded references to Arthur indicate quiet dissent. Fiona MacCarthy calls it toleration; it was tinged with disapproval.[10] In South Africa, in 1881, British forces having defeated and dispossessed the Zulu nation ('our once dreaded foe, poor Cetewayo', as Morris wrote of the humiliated monarch), Arthur's regiment fought against the Boer Republic for land and gold.[11] At Majuba Hill, the British suffered a major defeat. William's comment, in a letter to Janey, was that Arthur's regiment 'lost fewest men' because they 'seem to have run the fastest'.[12] By that time his political position had definitely altered, although he had yet to read Karl Marx and throw in his lot with the socialist movement.

His first datable concern with overseas or international affairs had come in the mid-1870s. In 1876 he publicly joined the Liberal outrage prompted by Ottoman suppression of Bulgarian dissidents and Disraeli's potential support for Turkey. He was also dismayed by the bellicose jingoism of the time: 'We don't want to fight,/ Yet by jingo if we do,/ We've got the ships, we've got the men,/ We've got the money, too!'.[13] In response Morris's never-delivered lecture, 'Our Country Right or Wrong', sought to resolve the tension between patriotism and 'national vain-glory'. Morris hated the jingoist appropriation of love of one's country. The drafted speech was in defence of long-standing Liberal values 'Peace, Retrenchment, Reform'.[14] It castigated the nation that had voted in a Tory government in the following terms:

> No, we cannot plead that we didn't know any better than our government that Sir Bartle Frere was about the land-filching business in S[outh] Africa till it became a war of which the very soldiers are ashamed; we cannot plead that we could not guess that any man who was trusted by us with tremendous office of governor General of India would slily shame us through lies and treachery in the hapless city of Cabul that we might have the honour and glory of generously *pardoning* men who have fought against us in open battle in defence of their native country – and their own necks.[15]

Before he took to socialism, he was thus already opposed to the Empire as a brutal engine of oppression and exploitation, only partly camouflaged by hypocrisy and cant.

As Florence S. Boos argues, Morris's critiques of capitalism *followed* his rejection of imperialist wars. So, to what extent does one think that opposition to national vainglory and greed, by which so many Britons were enthused, in fact drove Morris to socialism? For reform or pacifism he could have stayed with the Radical Liberals. Was it military aggression in pursuit of economic exploitation on a global scale that persuaded him that capitalism was the fundamental cause of misery and Empire its instrument? He certainly found Marxist analyses in agreement with his views. The

manifesto of the Socialist League to which Morris was a founding signatory, took its cue from the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847, and proceeds to quote a passage from Marx's text:

> For, owing to the fact that goods are made primarily to sell, and only secondarily for use, labour is wasted on all hands; since the pursuit of profit compels the manufacturer competing with his fellows to force his wares on the markets by means of their cheapness, whether there is any real demand for them or not. In the words of the Communist manifesto of 1847:
>
> 'Cheap goods are their artillery for battering down Chinese walls and for overcoming the obstinate hatred entertained against foreigners by semi-civilised nations: under penalty of ruin the Bourgeoisie compel by competition the universal adoption of their system of production; they force all nations to accept what is called civilisation – to become bourgeois – and thus the middle-class shapes the world after its own image.'[16]

By 1885, the Socialist League, of which Morris was co-founder, launched its journal *Commonweal*. The first major article after Morris's own editorial and the League's manifesto was 'Imperialism v Socialism' by Ernest Belfort Bax, in which Bax writes the following:

> Markets, markets, markets! Who shall deny that this is the drone bass welling up from beneath the shrill bawling of 'pioneers of civilisation', 'avengers of national honour', 'purveyors of gospel light', 'restorers of order'; in short, beneath the hundred and one cuckoo cries with which the 'market classes' seek to smother it or to vary its monotony? […]. The end of all foreign policy, as of colonial extension, is to provide fields for the relief of native surplus capital and merchandise […] [but] the foreign policy of the great international Socialist party must be to break up these hideous race monopolies called empires, beginning in each case at home.[17]

Bax's hand is sometimes detected to be at work in Morris's political writing; one might wonder, however, whether this particular passage of Bax's prose might actually be said to possess something of Morris's rhetorical ring.

The launch of the Socialist League in early 1885 took place during the same season as a particularly notorious imperial episode, that of the seige of Khartoum, capital of Sudan. This event is hard to summarise briefly because the aggression against the people of Sudan, which caused their revolt under the leadership of the

Mahdi Mohammed Ahmed, was not mounted by the British state, although it was on behalf of British commerce and domination. When it was clear that Mahdist forces were in control of the rest of the country, the British government ordered the evacuation down the Nile of Khartoum's garrison and population (a beleaguered retreat not unlike the recent imperial withdrawal from Kabul). Charles Gordon, the military commander sent to organise the evacuation preferred to stay and fight, against instructions. Gordon incidentally won his spurs during the assault on Beijing, so will have been known to Morris by repute. His religious piety was also public knowledge. The British-appointed Governor of the region wrote that 'a man who habitually consults the prophet Isaiah when in difficulties is not apt to obey orders'.[18] The Mahdi reputedly responded that he was the direct successor of the prophet Mohammed.[19]

The standoff continued for months. A British 'relief force' was delayed, the Sudanese forces stormed the citadel, and Gordon was killed on 26 January 1885. The news caused a surge of patriotic anger in the United Kingdom, not least because Gordon had been sending regular dispatches to the British press, and was viewed as a national martyr. In stark contrast, the League's 'Manifesto on the Soudan War' laconically proclaimed that 'Khartoum is fallen: and fallen, too, into the hands of the Soudanese themselves'.[20] To the Foreign Office, Gordon was insubordinate; to the popular press, he was a heroic victim; to the left, he was the agent of imperial exploitation. Thus the Socialist League:

> Gordon, no more! In Fleet Street is there a cry heard […]. Never was the dust of hero so watered by the gush of newspaper before. Nowadays, however, we produce emotion like other things – primarily for profit and only secondarily for use […]. The result is that the public sometimes have emotion forced upon them when it suits the purveyor, for other reasons than the greatness of the departed. […] Anyway, from the well-watered dust of Gordon rises up for the *Times*, *Pall Mall*, and their clients, the fair prospect of a British protectorate at Khartoum, railways from Suakim to Berber, new markets, fresh colonial posts, etc. […] Citizens, if you have any sense of justice […], join us in our protest against the wicked and infamous act of brigandage now being perpetrated for the interest solely of the 'privileged' classes of this country […] through the foulest stream of well-planned hypocrisy and fraud that has ever disgraced the foreign policy even of this commercial age.[21]

In February 1889, Morris celebrated the anniversary of 'The Fall of Khartoum' as 'a victory of the oppressed' and personally damned Gordon's ostentatious christianity,

calling him 'an instrument of oppression whom fate at last thrust aside'.[22] So vainglory prevailed, as in George W. Joy's pictorial fiction of Gordon's last stand, and in subscriptions for mighty memorial statues at super-heroic size (see Figures 4 and 5).

Here is a typical press comment on Hamo Thorneycroft's statue from 1887:

> There is no finer example of the sculptor's art than that national memorial to General Gordon which now preaches to all who pass by in Trafalgar Square – the eternal condemnation of Gladstonian treachery.[23]

The statue was subsequently moved to Embankment (Figure 6). A similarly peripatetic itinerary can be traced for Onslow Ford's equestrian statue of 1890 (if a general riding a camel is equivalent to one on horseback). Originally installed in Khartoum (Figure 7), this splendid piece was shipped back to Britain after Sudanese independence, and is now re-erected at a boys' school in Surrey founded in 1885 in memory of Gordon, whom it describes as a 'British war hero, philanthropist and martyr'.[24]

The 1880s were conspicuously imperialist, especially in Africa where land and inhabitants were formally shared out by European powers – Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy and Belgium – for the sake of raw materials. These commodities included diamonds in the Cape, gold in Transvaal and copper in Katanga. Commodity trading concentrated in London, leading to the Edwardian age of plutocracy. This was the heyday of the British Empire, which had more or less vanished by 1960. Those of us who grew up in the wake of Empire's dissolution were sometimes inclined to look upon it as simply dead and gone, 'with O'Leary in the grave', and we certainly regarded the self-styled League of Empire Loyalists as racist reactionaries (as they were). Revisiting this topic, I have been amazed during the last couple of decades to read of nostalgia and bizarre admiration for this defunct Empire. It feels like wishing to revive the age of Shakespeare, but with less good reason. Empire was to me of historical not current significance.

I was, of course, mistaken; for very many people whose heritage includes regions that were once within or under the British Empire, its legacy remains vivid and resonant. In the world of contemporary art, one has only to think of the work of Hew Locke, Sonia Boyce, the Singh Twins or Lubaina Himid. To these artists and their communities, Empire is not a matter of nostalgic admiration, nor is it consigned to comfortable oblivion. Sometimes 'ancient' history feels very recent, and such a standpoint is surely the correct one.

Reverting briefly to Gordon, I note that, in a debate on heritage matters, Jacob Rees Mogg recently told parliament:

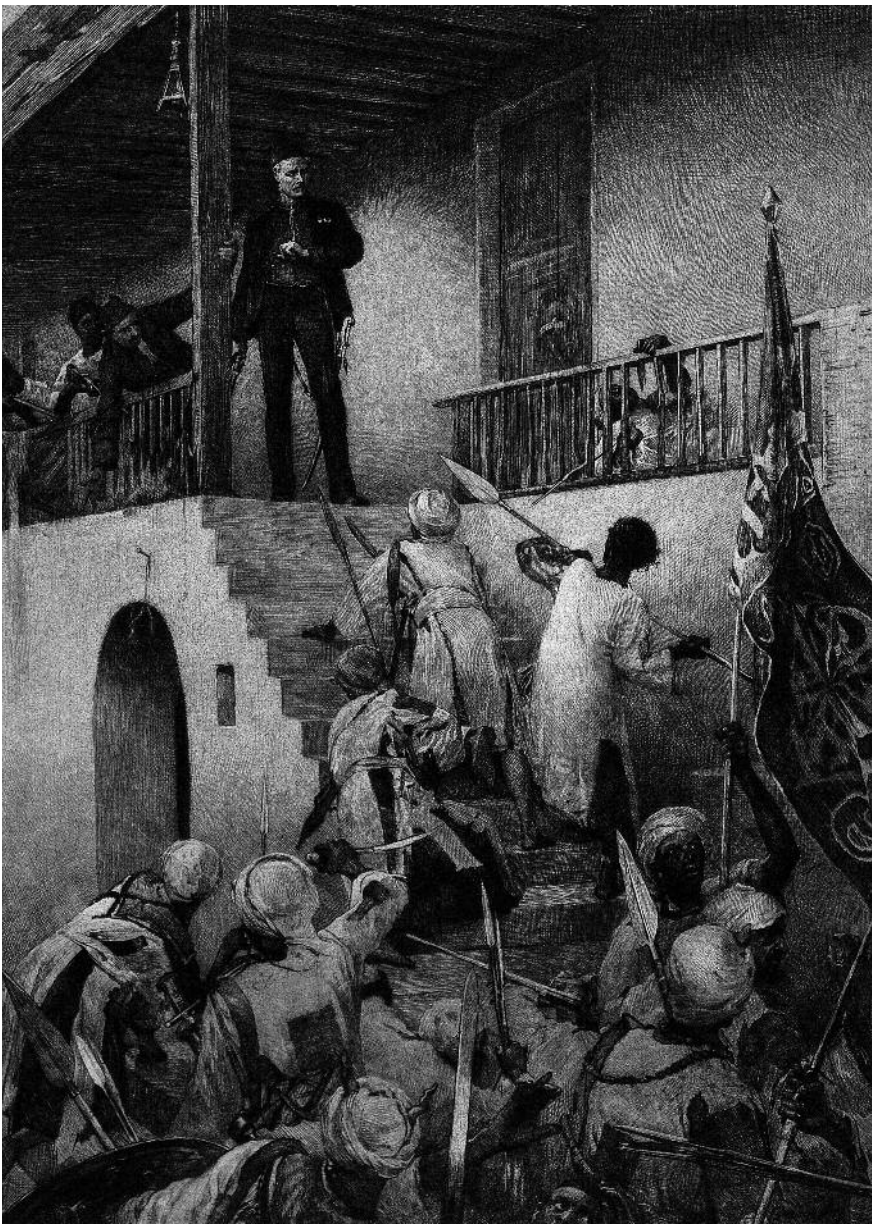

Figure 4: *The Death of General Gordon*, painted by G. W. Joy and etched by H. Dicksee; etching, with engraving, 44.8 x 32.5 cm (Bristol: Frost & Reed, 1897); image in public domain courtesy of the Wellcome Collection; available online: <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/eypu2kap> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

> In a funny way the woke brigade has done the nation a service because they've reminded people of the great heroes that we have […]. Lots of statues that people used to walk past and not really notice, they suddenly think: 'Gosh, that's Gordon of Khartoum, he's an interesting figure, I want to know more about him and what he did to put down the slave trade in the Sudan…'. I think this has helped remind people of our history, and that […] it was a most fantastic history that we should be proud of and celebrate in our statues and in our education.[25]

But let us return to our hero. Morris's attack on imperialism continued in speeches and in the pages of *Commonweal*. One forceful iteration is to be found in February 1887 in 'Facing the Worst of It'. Here, he wrote:

> the one thing for which our thrice accursed civilization craves, as the stifling man for fresh air, is *new markets*; fresh countries must be conquered by [the commercial system] which are not manufacturing and are producers of raw material, so that 'civilised' manufactures can be forced on them. *All wars now waged, under whatever pretences, are really wars for the great prizes in the world-market*.[26]

Though scant, Morris perceived that possibilities of arresting 'the onward course of capitalistic commerce to its annihilation' included global recession and 'a great European war' (both of which happened but did not arrest capitalism), and, most optimistically, the spread of socialism, which Morris identified with 'the tendency towards the union of the workers in England' and the spirit of workers' unity 'which already exists among the great nations of the Continent'.[27] It is important to recall that Morris formulated these views at the very beginning of the socialist movement's history in Britain. As Stuart Hall wrote a century later, '[w]hen the left talks about crisis, all we see is capitalism disintegrating, and us marching in and taking over', but

> There is no law of history which can predict what must inevitably be the outcome of a political struggle. Politics depends on the relations of forces at any particular moment. History is not waiting in the wings to catch up your mistakes into another 'inevitable success'. You lose because you lose because you lose.[28]

Later in 1887, Morris would learn the hard truth of Hall's insight in the wake of the Bloody Sunday demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

In *News from Nowhere*, Morris recapitulated his broadly Marxist analysis in the

Figure 5: F. W. Edwards, *Hamo Thornycroft with his Statue of Charles George Gordon*, albumen cabinet card, 15 October 1887, NPG x12593 © National Portrait Gallery, London, via creative commons license, and available online: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw121985/Hamo-Thornycroft-with-his-statue-of-Charles-George-Gordon?> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

conversation between William Guest and Old Hammond, who describes monopoly capitalism in the following terms:

> The appetite of the World-Market grew with what it fed on: the countries within the ring of 'civilisation' (that is, organised misery) were glutted […], and force and fraud were used unsparingly to 'open up' countries *outside* that pale.[29]

For Hammond, the 'great vice of the nineteenth century' was 'the use of hypocrisy and cant to evade the responsibility of vicarious ferocity'.[30] He reminds Guest that

> When the civilised World Market coveted a country not yet in its clutches, some transparent pretext was found – the suppression of a slavery different from and not so cruel as that of commerce; the pushing of […] religion […];

Figure 6: *Memorial to General Gordon on the Victoria Embankment, East of the Ministry of Defence*, photograph by Beata May, 2 March 2012, available online via creative commons license: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Charles_George_Gordon_statue,_Embankment,_London_%282%29.JPG> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

> the 'rescue' of some desperado or homicidal madman […] – any stick, in short, which would beat the dog at all. Then some bold, unprincipled, ignorant adventurer was found (no difficult task in those days of competition), and he was bribed to 'create a market' by breaking up whatever traditional society there might be in the doomed country, and by destroying whatever leisure or pleasure he found there. He forced wares on the natives which they did not want, and took their natural products in 'exchange', as this form of robbery was called, and thereby he 'created new wants', to supply which […] the hapless, helpless people had to sell themselves into the slavery of hopeless toil so that they might have something wherewith to purchase the nullities of 'civilisation'.[31]

There are other aspects relevant to Morris's response to imperialist aggression, notably

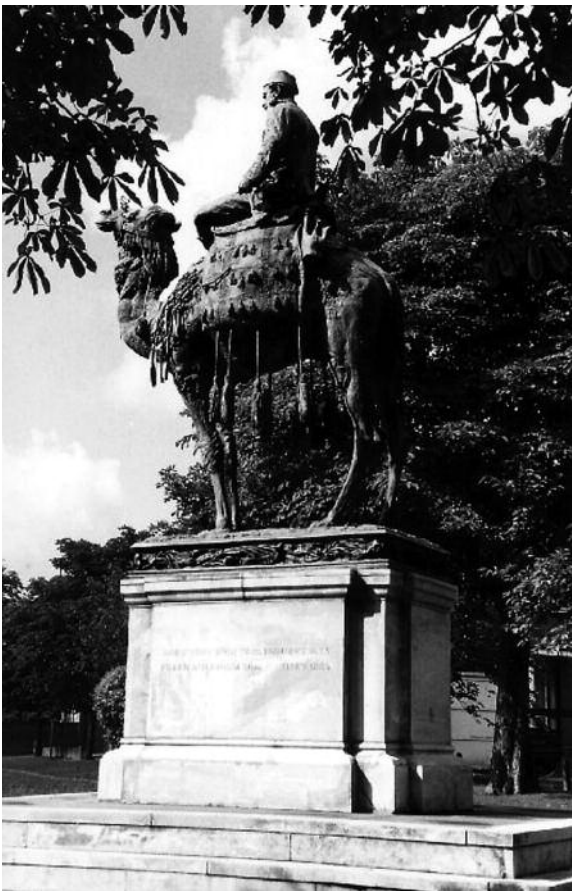

Figure 7: *Statue of General Gordon* [by Onslow Ford], photograph by Ron Strutt, 1996, available online: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_General_Gordon_-_geograph.org.uk_-_44414.jpg> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

his analysis and relation to Islamic and South Asian design and manufacturing, and his position on Irish affairs. My focus falls on African events chiefly because the continent was most fiercely ravaged in Morris's socialist years. There are further discussions to have, more aspects to research, more talks to be given.

One such talk ought to deal with the defeat of Ethiopia in 1868 – the punitive and unheroic British expedition to Abyssinia, and the plunder of precious and heritage items from Magdala (a foretaste of Khartoum), some of which were given in 1872 to what is now the Victoria & Albert Museum. I do not know of any recorded response to this event on Morris's part, but he was from an early stage involved with the V&A, advising on acquisitions. One wonders what he thought of the looted twelfth-century gold crown, which can be seen in Figure 8.

News from Nowhere was first serialised in *Commonweal* during the year in which the statue of Gordon was erected. It can be assumed that Morris deplored its installation.

I do not know that Morris ever explicitly included Rhodes in his list of imperialist villains, which was actually headed by the unprincipled adventurer Henry Morton Stanley, whose 'heroic' exploits 'opened up' what became the Belgian Congo, but he would certainly have deplored the racism, expressed in Rhodes's 1876 'Confession of Faith', proposing the 'formation of a secret society with but one object – the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of the whole uncivilised world under British rule', including 'the recovery of the United States'.[32] According to Rhodes, 'whites have clearly come out on top […] in the struggle for existence and achieved the highest standard of human perfection'; he therefore vowed to 'devote the rest of [his] life to God's purpose, and help Him to make the world English'.[33] This is one reason why Rhodes must fall (see Figure 9).

One might think it a sort of political parlour game to debate what Morris would think of this or that in today's world. Can we assume that, as he will have deplored memorials to Gordon, he would approve, even urge, the removal of statues of Colston, Gordon, Rhodes and other now reviled figures, decades, even centuries after their installation? Let's consider this question, since this could be a conundrum for us as well as Morris.

In *News from Nowhere*, Westminster Abbey is the site of discussion. The exterior was spoiled 'centuries ago', says Dick. However, the inside 'remains in its beauty after the great clearance, which took place over a hundred years ago, of the beastly monuments to fools and knaves, which once blocked it up'.[34] So: should memorials to knaves and villains like Rhodes and Colston be cleared away? Certainly, in the heat of revolutionary fervour, Morris appears to think this course of action is justified.

Figure 9 shows a bust of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town, which was decapitated in 2020. It was later repaired by group describing itself as the Friends of the Rhodes Memorial, who claim that thousands of visitors from all around the world as well as locally are drawn to the statue each year – from 'all walks of life, races and religions […] [t]hey are all brought together by a sense of peace, harmony and nation building'. The Rhodes Memorial is 'one of the finest monuments in the world', said their spokesman, Gabriel Brown, who added that '[p]erhaps we could have two plaques on either side of the bust, the good and bad side of Rhodes'.[35] That's one possibility. But what other considerations might come into view? It is not necessarily the case that one needs to construct an argument for or against certain individuals. The villains of Britain's imperial past (and present) are representative of 'bad' periods, bad actions and beliefs that later societies wish *not* to celebrate. But why should they be removed and erased from history?

Morris, of course, was also a passionate antiquarian. He devoted a great part of his political energy from the mid-1870s to the protection of ancient buildings. He did

Figure 8: Photograph of Maqdala crown (at the Victoria & Albert Museum) by Junho Jung, 17 July 2008, creative commons license, available online: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London-Victoria_and_Albert_Museum-Crown-02.jpg> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

so primarily for the aesthetic values he ascribed to them, together with his idealised notion of the pleasure that their masons, carvers and presumably labourers received from their work. And he did so even in spite of the fact that many of the buildings he campaigned to protect were created in honour and veneration of the saints and bishops of a religion that he regarded as so much superstition, and indeed, as sources of oppression, conquest and cruelty.

In *News from Nowhere*, Hampton Court stands for the Tudor buildings that Morris so admired, newly inhabited by ordinary folk rather than royal flunkies. The evil history of its past is ignored, airbrushed. Similarly Windsor Castle is a dwelling for 'a great many people' and 'a well-arranged store of antiquities of various kinds that have seemed worth keeping – a museum, it would have been called'.[36] Dick even defends the protection of such not-so ancient buildings as the Houses of Parliament and St. Paul's cathedral:

> I believe it was intended to pull them down quite at the beginning of our days; but there was, I am told, a queer antiquarian society, which had done some service in past times, and which straightway set up its pipe against their destruction, as it had done with many other buildings, which most people looked upon as worthless, and public nuisances; and it was so energetic, and had such good reasons to give, that it generally gained its point.[37]

And he adds: 'when all is said […] you know at the worst these silly old buildings serve as a kind of foil to the beautiful ones we build now'.[38]

Indirectly, Dick advocates a sort of 'retain and explain' response, just as the re-purposing of Parliament as a storehouse for manure is a form of architectural recycling and re-use, which is much in fashion today. Dick, indeed, might also have adduced current arguments over monuments to imperialist and tyrannical figures – that when statues of now reviled heroes are toppled, smashed or melted down, their misdeeds and influence are obscured, forgotten and erased from history. Colston, Rhodes, Stalin, Saddam Hussein should neither be celebrated nor deleted.

Like the Socialist League, Morris damned economic development under colonial or imperial conditions for offering only 'the nullities of civilization', such poor quality items that '[i]t was a current jest of the time that the wares were made to sell and not to use'.[39] But the socialist aim was not to keep non-western economies in a pre-capitalist state but rather to ensure their free choices of development – which to date has proved nigh-on impossible given the demand for minerals, oil, rare earths, timber, land for beef production, etc. The contemporary watchword, sustainability, is foreshadowed in *News from Nowhere*, albeit in terms that sound naïve, since it mainly

Figure 9: The bust of Cecil Rhodes at Rhodes Memorial in Cape Town, South Africa, decapitated overnight on 12-13 July 2020; photograph by Zaian, creative commons license, available online: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rhodes_bust_decapitated.jpg> [last accessed 14 December 2022].

consists in wanting and using less. Guest marvels at the 'deftness and abundance of beauty of the work of [those] who had at last learned to accept life itself as a pleasure, and the satisfaction of the common needs of mankind and the preparation for them, as work fit for the best'.[40] This short statement takes the discussion a far way beyond imperialism then and now. But that is one example of why Morris's texts and speeches remain so valuable. They do not provide programmes to follow but ideas to pursue and arguments to challenge. This is the reason I find Morris always inspiring. The question to ask is not 'what would Morris do or think of this or that situation?', but what do you say and think? This might also allow for the formulation of new questions in a more constructive way. One need not only seek to remove public statues of imperialist villains, or to clear all those 'beastly monuments to fools and knaves' from our public buildings, but one might also begin the work of choosing new heroes to replace those that cluster around Trafalgar and Parliament Squares, to take two sites.

I do not myself much like monumental bronze statues at all, but the idea is interesting in the context of the debate over Colston and Rhodes, and the vocal defence of Churchill, Gordon and Air Marshal Bomber Harris in some quarters.[41] The era of heroic public statuary surprisingly but obstinately lives on, with new emphases. This has happened with some thought-provoking results in Parliament Square. Sited aptly between Westminster and Whitehall, the thirteen statues include eight prime ministers – and these are Canning, Peel, Palmerston, the Earl of Derby, Disraeli, Gladstone, Lloyd George, Churchill – who have been joined by Abraham

Lincoln, Jan Smuts, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Most recently, Millicent Fawcett has been added, appropriately enough in respect of the Parliamentary franchise.

Whom would Morris have proposed, assuming for the moment he would support public statuary? Who would we choose? Whom would you propose? And for what achievements? Sadly, it would be difficult to propose a heroic statue of Morris himself for Parliament Square, given the Socialist League's vehement rejection of parliamentary strategies. And the closest we have to a public monument is the heroic bust by Conrad Dressler, and a street mural by Romanian-born artist calling himself ATMA, both of which are, I think, based on the same photo of Morris with bushy hair and beard.[42] I will leave open that question in favour of another of our current concerns with Britain's imperial legacy, which is that of heritage restitution – the museum objects obtained through seizure, theft, deceit and unfair purchase.

British museums really *are* packed with plunder from Empire. Alongside diamonds, oil, tea, rubber, teak and all manner of commodities, Britain coveted and took porcelain, silk, silverware, sculptures, bronzes, feathers, furs, Egyptian mummies, ivory, exotic animals to shoot and stuff, and much else besides. As a passionate antiquarian and craft connoisseur, Morris valued so many items from other lands. One feels he would have wished to retain all examples of decorative art. The 'ugly old building' that is the British Museum in *News for Nowhere* has 'wonderful collections in there of all kinds of antiquities' and 'exceedingly beautiful books'.[43] But where did these wonderful collections come from? And what do we wish to do when the return of objects from Greece, Benin, Ethiopia, China, or elsewhere, is requested? These are more current questions to be raised, debated and acted upon.

NOTES

1. Charlotte Keys, 'Academics Split over Rhodes "Retain and Explain" Plaque', *Cherwell* [website], 15 October 2021, available online: <https://cherwell.org/2021/10/15/academics-split-over-rhodes-retain-and-explain-plaque/> [last accessed 13 December 2022].
2. Cecil Rhodes, 'Confession of Faith' (1876) in *Sources of the Western Tradition, vol. 2: From the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Marvin Perry, 9th edn (Boston: Wadsworth, 2014), pp. 241-42 (241). (Afterwards Rhodes). For a fuller discussion of Rhodes's role in the imperial politics of the period, see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 255-56. Note that Alfred Mosely was no relation to Oswald Mosley.
3. Peter Halton, 'William Morris's anti-imperialism', 5 November 2020, *Verso Books* [website], available online: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4907-william-morris-s-anti-imperialism> [last accessed 10 December 2022].
4. See Frank Sharp, 'William Morris and British Politics: From the Liberal Party to the Socialist League', in *The Routledge Companion to William Morris*, ed. by Florence S. Boos (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 387-403. For a related discussion, see Owen Holland, *William Morris's Utopianism: Propaganda, Politics and Prefiguration* (Cham: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 181-248.

5. William Morris, *Our Country Right or Wrong: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Florence S. Boos (Hammersmith: William Morris Society, 2005), p. 70. (Afterwards Morris, *Our Country Right or Wrong*). Boos's introduction to this edition offers another useful and wide-ranging discussion of Morris's anti-imperialist politics.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
7. *Ibid.*
8. William Whitla, '"The Mosque Rising in the Place of the Temple of Solomon": A Critical Text', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, ns 9 (Spring 2000), 43-82 (57). I am grateful to William Whitla for the careful contextualisation of this early political intervention by William Morris, and to Michael Robertson for drawing my attention to it.
9. A pekinese dog was also taken to Britain as a gift to Queen Victoria, as depicted in Friedrich Wilhelm Keyl's 1861 oil painting. It was named 'Looty' after the newly-coined word 'loot', derived from Hindi. See Friedrich Wilhelm Keyl (1823-71), *Looty* (1861), Royal Collection Trust, available online: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/406974/looty> [last accessed 9 January 2022].
10. See Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 437.
11. Morris, *Our Country Right or Wrong*, p. 79.
12. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols in 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-96), II, p. 29.
13. See *ibid.*, pp. 90-91 n. 4.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 58 n. 8.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
16. 'The Manifesto of the Socialist League' (1885), quoted in E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, rev. edn (London: Merlin, 1977), pp. 732-40 (733-34).
17. E. Belfort Bax, 'Imperialism v. Socialism', *Commonweal*, 1: 1 (February 1885), 2-3 (3).
18. Evelyn Baring, *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1908), p. 347 n.1. Tariq Ali observes the analogy between the retreat from Khartoum and the more recent withdrawal from Kabul in an article on the *New Left Review* blog, commenting that the 'fall of Kabul […] is a major political and ideological defeat for the American Empire'. He adds that the 'closest analogy is not Saigon but nineteenth-century Sudan, when the forces of the Mahdi swept into Khartoum and martyred General Gordon. William Morris celebrated the Mahdi's victory as a setback for the British Empire.' See Tariq Ali, 'Debacle in Afghanistan', *Sidecar* [website], 16 August 2021, available online: <https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/debacle-in-afghanistan> [last accessed 9 January 2022].
19. See Lytton Strachey, 'The End of General Gordon', in *Eminent Victorians*, ed. by Michael Holroyd (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 189-267 (209-10).
20. 'Manifesto of the Socialist League on the Sudan War' (1885), in *Contemporary Thought on Nineteenth Century Socialism, vol. 4, Anglo-Marxists*, ed. by Kevin Morgan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 377-80 (379).
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-80.
22. William Morris, *Journalism: Contributions to "Commonweal", 1885-1890*, ed. by Nicholas Salmon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), p. 523.
23. [T. G. Bowles], 'Jehu Junior', *Vanity Fair*, 20 February 1892, p. 135.
24. 'History and Ceremony', *Gordon's School* [website], available online: <https://www.gordons.school/page/?title=History+and+Ceremony&pid=89> [last accessed 11 December 2022]. The school is now partly state-funded.
25. Joe Mellor, '"Ghastly stuff": Rees-Mogg offends SNP, "Woke" people and Teeside', *The London Economic* [website], 21 January 2021, available online: <https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/politics/ghastly-stuff-rees-mogg-offends-snp-woke-people-and-teeside-217500/> [last accessed 11 December 2022].

26. William Morris, *Political Writings: Contributions to "Justice" and "Commonweal", 1883-1890*, ed. by Nicholas Salmon (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), p. 225.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-26.
28. Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', in *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 161-73 (165, 169).
29. William Morris, *News from Nowhere; or, an Epoch of Rest, Being Some Chapters From a Utopian Romance*, ed. by David Leopold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 81. (Afterwards Morris, *News from Nowhere*).
30. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Rhodes, p. 241.
33. Quoted in Anthony Thomas, *Rhodes: The Race for Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1996), p. 114.
34. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p. 27.
35. Quoted in Francis B. Nyamnjoh, 'Cecil John Rhodes: "The Complete Gentleman" of Imperial Dominance', *The Jugaad Project* [website], 23 February 2021, available online: <https://www.thejugaadproject.pub/home/rhodes-the-complete-gentleman> [last accessed 11 December 2022].
36. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p. 139.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 28. The 'queer antiquarian society' is, of course, his own creation: The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
41. In October 1943, emboldened by his success in Hamburg and increasingly irritated with Winston Churchill's hesitance to endorse his tactics wholeheartedly, Arthur Harris urged the government to be honest with the public regarding the purpose of the bombing campaign: 'The aim of the Combined Bomber Offensive […] should be unambiguously stated [as] the destruction of German cities, the killing of German workers, and the disruption of civilised life throughout Germany […] the destruction of houses, public utilities, transport and lives, the creation of a refugee problem on an unprecedented scale, and the breakdown of morale both at home and at the battle fronts by fear of extended and intensified bombing, are accepted and intended aims of our bombing policy. They are not by-products of attempts to hit factories.' Quoted in Mark Connelly, *Reaching for the Stars: A New History of Bomber Command in World War II* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), p. 115.
42. A bronze cast of Dressler's bust is on display in the William Morris Gallery; ATMA's street mural on a nearby house is located on Bedford Road, London, E17.
43. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p. 44.

A Fruitful Relationship: William Morris and Ernest Gimson

Mary Greensted

William Morris is often described as the father figure of the Arts and Crafts movement – this was particularly true in the case of Ernest Gimson, one of the most interesting and in some ways most radical of the Arts and Crafts designer-craftsmen. His architectural career was nurtured by Morris and his approach to design, craftwork and country living was inspired by the older man. The initial connection came through the Gimson family's involvement with secularism and its enthusiastic promotion by his older brother, Sydney, and continued through the twentieth century when Ernest and May Morris co-operated on a number of projects.

Gimson was born in December 1864 and grew up in Leicester, a Midlands market town which had expanded dramatically during the nineteenth century into a major centre for commerce and manufacturing. The growing prosperity of the Gimson family mirrored the development of the city. Gimson's grandfather had been a carpenter. His father, Josiah Gimson, began his working life as an iron founder and machinist; with his brother he set up the engineering firm of Gimson and Company in Leicester in 1842. The firm had a somewhat chequered history, coming near to bankruptcy in 1864, the year of Gimson's birth, but Josiah managed to turn around the situation, pay his creditors and oversee the building of a new factory heralding the expansion of the firm. Alongside his business acumen, he had a strong social conscience and prided himself that the wages offered to the firm's workers and their conditions of work were among the best in the city.

Nineteenth-century Leicester had a reputation for political and religious radicalism. Josiah Gimson had been brought up as a Baptist but became disillusioned by what he saw as the Baptist movement's repressive attitude and the stifling of free thought. With his brother Benjamin he began attending meetings of the local Secular Society in the 1850s. When in 1873 George Jacob Holyoake, founder of the secularist

Figure 1: Ernest Gimson and his wife, Emily, in Gloucestershire, about 1890. Courtesy of Gimson Family Archive.

movement, was prevented from giving a lecture locally at the Three Crowns Inn, Josiah suggested that the secularists should build a hall of their own. He made a generous contribution to the costs, and was involved in choosing the architect, William Larner Sugden (from Derbyshire) whose socialist credentials included publishing some of Morris's lectures such as 'Art and Socialism' in the series 'Leek Bijou Freethought Reprints'. The building in Leicester's Humberstone Gate still survives today and is the only remaining Secular Hall in Britain.

Josiah Gimson died in 1883 and in his will left a generous bequest of £100 a year to the Leicester Secular Society. Subsequently, one of his sons, Sydney, took over the leading role in the Society and his recollections provide a vivid and useful picture of that part of his life.[1] Ernest Gimson, four years younger than Sydney, was particularly close to his brother. They shared many interests and enthusiasms, including secularism. Among the many speakers invited to the Secular Hall during this period were Eleanor Marx, daughter of Karl Marx; Annie Besant, founder of the theosophy movement; the Russian Anarchist, Prince Kropotkin; and the socialist playwright, George Bernard Shaw. The Society wanted to provide a free platform for different opinions on current issues and three lectures on the theme of socialism were arranged for January 1884. The first was given by Henry M. Hyndman on 'Constructive Socialism', then William Morris spoke on 'Art and Socialism' followed by a lecture in

opposition by the Rev. J. Page Hopps on 'Sensible Socialism'.

Hyndman, the flamboyant and maverick former Etonian, seems to have been somewhat of a disappointment. Sydney Gimson commented on the incongruity of an apparently successful and conventional businessman dressed in a frock coat and silk hat promoting violent revolutionary action. He found Hyndman's lecture neither persuasive nor convincing.

In contrast Morris's visit to Leicester the following week was a great success. The two brothers were understandably nervous as they waited to meet him at the railway station. Sydney wrote: '[h]e greeted us as friends, and as though we were equals, at once, and immediately, we were at "home"'. He went on to describe his first impressions of Morris:

> His was a delightfully breezy, virile personality. In his conversations if they touched on subjects which he felt deeply, came little bursts of temper which subsided as quickly as they arose and left no bad feeling behind them. He was not a good lecturer. His lectures were always read, and not too well read, but they were wonderful in substance and full of arresting thoughts and apt illustration. In their phrasing and general form they were beautiful.[2]

Morris began his lecture with these words: '[m]y friends, I want you to look into the relations of Art to Commerce […]'. He described the supremacy of Commerce as 'an evil, and a very serious one', because 'the greater part of the people have no share in Art – which as things now are must be kept in the hands of a few rich or well-to-do people, who we may fairly say need it less and not more than the laborious workers'.[3] He discussed the nature of work in an industrialised society, promoted useful work in decent surroundings with time for leisure, then put forward his argument about the important relationship between art, work and society. Finally, Morris believed that the comfortable middle classes could help to make these aspirations a reality. He tried to convince the audience that it was an achievable goal, although not under the current capitalist system.

Morris spent the night after his talk at the Gimson family home in Leicester's New Walk. After supper, Morris, Sydney and Ernest Gimson, their half-sister Sarah and another guest, the Rev. Page Hopps, retired to the smoking room on the top floor of the house. The spirited conversation continued until two o'clock in the morning. According to Sydney, Hopps described Morris's vision of society as 'very charming', but 'quite impossible' because it would 'need God Almighty himself to manage it!'. He recalled that, in response to this comment, '[i]mmediately Morris jumped up, ran his fingers through his hair and ruffled it, walked once or twice round his chair, then

shaking his fist close to Page Hopp's' [sic] face, exclaimed "All right, man, you catch your God Almighty, we'll have him!" At that point the entire group including Hopps burst into delighted laughter.'[4] Morris also found time to talk to Ernest, then nineteen years old and articled to a local architect, Isaac Barradale, about architecture, buildings and the crafts.

This was the first of several lectures given by Morris in Leicester, with the Gimson family providing overnight hospitality each time. Sydney Gimson seems to have overwhelmed Morris with requests, inspiring an exasperated limerick sent to his daughter in 1885:

> Thank you for sending on Gimson's letter: though I will say this of him:
>
> There is a young person called Gimson
> I could wish that he never had limbs on
> For then, do you see
> His writing to me
> Would have been a tough matter to Gimson.[5]

May Morris subsequently sent Sydney a copy of the limerick in 1913. In his 'Random Recollections' he remarked of the poem that it was 'not a high effusion of Morris's muse, but I am proud to have been the cause of even a limerick from him!'.[6] Despite what was obviously a twinge of irritation, Morris did make further visits to Leicester, always providing additional insights and anecdotes:

> Distinguished in so many directions yet absolutely free from 'Side' there could be no jollier visitor in our home. Full of life and energy there was never a dull moment while he was with us. I remember so many characteristic and telling things that he said. One Sunday morning (by the way, on starting out Morris put on knitted woollen gloves, knitted with the four fingers in one compartment and two thumbs to each glove, so that, he explained, it did not matter which you put on which hand, there was no left or right hand glove!). Ernest and I took him for a walk all round about Stoneygate. When we got back Ernest asked him what he thought of the houses. Morris promptly replied, 'Oh, architect-tooralooral'. A lovely one-word comment. This would be in the mid eighties.[7]

Morris was known as an enthusiast for the writings of Charles Dickens and this comment comes from *Great Expectations*.

In 1886, Gimson wrote to Morris, outlining his desire to pursue his architectural training in London and asking for advice. Three letters of recommendation were immediately forthcoming and the first, presented to John Dando Sedding, won him a place in one of the most innovative architectural offices of the day. He moved from Leicester to London in the spring of that year, taking lodgings in Kentish Town.

His enthusiasm for every aspect of Morris's work continued unabated. He devoured Morris's poetry, writing to Sydney: 'I am reading *The Earthly Paradise* as I walk to and from the office and try to imagine London as Morris describes it. […] "Small and white and clean – The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green" and succeed pretty well till I lift my eyes from the book. He really takes you with him to "A shadowy isle of bliss".'[8] Gimson admitted to one of his sisters that he had bought the book with money saved by missing dinners, during which period he instead survived on milk cakes, each weighing half a pound and costing two pence each.

Sedding's offices at 447 Oxford Street were next door to the showrooms of Morris and Co., which Gimson visited regularly. To Sydney, who was setting up home with his new wife, Jeannie, Ernest wrote with suggestions for possible wedding presents: '[b]ye the bye if you have any particular desire to possess anything that a fellow with £150 a year could afford to buy you might let me know. Do you want a pendant lamp for either room, or two copper candlesticks, or a Burne-Jones Autotype, or would you like four Morris chairs for the Drawing Room…'.[9] Subsequently, he wrote: '[i]s 3/- per yard too much for your dining room curtains? If not I should get them at Morris's he has some delightful ones, printed cotton mostly. His shop is a treasure house for anyone furnishing.'[10] In September 1887, together with Ernest Barnsley, a fellow student in Sedding's office, he also visited the Merton Abbey works set up by Morris and William De Morgan. Morris's textiles were a constant source of inspiration. William Lethaby subsequently recalled how, on visiting Gimson in lodgings in Rochester in 1888 during a study tour with their mutual friend, Detmar Blow, he saw that Ernest had travelled with some pieces of Morris chintz which he had draped in the sitting room in order to have something to look at.[11] At the same time, he was beginning to design embroideries himself. At the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1890, he showed a sampler worked by a thirteen-year-old female relative, Phillis Lovibond. This traditional design relates to his studies of the historic examples of needlework at the South Kensington Museum and his photographs, many acquired from the museum's collections, indicate that his interests were not dissimilar to Morris's. He chose examples of English needlework from the fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries and Persian and Indian Mughal embroideries. Most of Gimson's embroidery designs, many of them executed by his sister, Margaret, were more unusual however, featuring both white-on-white and colourful naturalistic patterns.

Gimson also began designing a few items of furniture including, in 1890, an upholstered sofa for his brother. Sydney resisted his initial suggestion to buy more attractive and cheaper examples from Morris's shop, so Gimson filled several letters with sketch designs. The design for the sofa began as a curvaceous Regency-style piece before ending up as a plainer form with straight legs. Gimson had proposed Morris's Kidderminster carpeting as the covering but, as the sofa has not survived, it is not known whether this was the final choice. Also, in the same year Ernest was asked to design a fire screen to hold an embroidery from a kit sold by Morris and Co. and worked by his half-sister Sarah Gimson. He showed two pieces at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1890 – a Windsor-style chair and a writing cabinet, one of three cabinets with inlaid fall-fronts designed by Gimson between 1890 and 1891. These cabinets are severely plain in form, two feature decorative inlaid roundels typical of the stylised tree and plant forms popularised by May Morris and C.F.A. Voysey. The third cabinet, known best from a photograph included as part of an obituary for Gimson in the *Architectural Review*, has an all-over inlay of honeysuckle on the fall-front very reminiscent of May's *Honeysuckle* wallpaper of 1883.[12]

Unlike many of his colleagues in Sedding's office, Gimson was not convinced by Morris's politics. He did hear Morris talking on 'the Origin of Ornament' at the Art Workers' Guild in February 1888, which provoked a comment to his brother Sydney: 'Lethaby and Schultz and Butler were in their element applauding his socialism to the echo: "It's a d – d wicked world" (Sheridan Ahem!)'.[13] Ernest described himself as an individualist, inspired by the ideas of the radical philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who emphasised individual freedoms such as free speech, universal suffrage and the rights of women. Discussing the choice of a design for the Secular Society newsletter, he wrote to his brother Sydney: '[i]n reading Ruskin the other day I came across this motto: – "*Every man a law to himself*". That would be a good one for a heading don't you think? It shows a distinction between liberty and licence that should be made clear.'[14] Politics had been a regular topic of discussion in the Gimson household and, because of this, he was wary of the immediate and enthusiastic espousal of Morris's ideas by some of his contemporaries.

Morris did not forget Gimson once the young man had arrived in London. In 1890 he proposed him as a member of the committee for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). It must have been both exciting and overwhelming to attend the weekly evening meetings with the likes of Morris himself, Philip Webb, Sydney Cockerell and Emery Walker. These last three were valuable contacts and they became close, their friendship forged by the post-meeting adjournments to Gatti's, an Italian restaurant in the Strand. Ernest was also developing skills relating to building crafts by taking up plasterwork. He worked with

the firm of Messrs Whitcombe and Priestly, learning something of the trade as well as designing and casting decorative frieze and panels.

In 1892 Gimson made his first attempt at domestic building in the prosperous southern suburbs of Leicester where he and his brother had previously taken Morris. Rather than fitting in with the new English Domestic Revival style villas with tall Tudor-type chimneys, multiple gables and tile-hung walls, Gimson tried to build a house of which Morris would have approved. Inglewood in Radcliffe Road is severely plain but well-proportioned and built with local materials, Leicester red sand-stock bricks and Swithland slates on the dramatic cat-slide roof. He probably spent much of the time between August 1891 and June 1893 in Leicester, supervising the work himself and undertaking decorative plasterwork for the interior.

Together with Sidney Barnsley, Gimson left London for Gloucestershire in April 1893. The two men, joined by Sidney's older brother Ernest Barnsley and his family in 1894, took a step away from traditional office-based architectural careers. They wanted to live closer to nature, to experience hands-on involvement in the building crafts and to work collaboratively. Edward Barnsley later recalled his father Sidney saying that they were prompted by Morris, although, before the move to Merton Abbey in 1881, Morris himself had reluctantly decided against setting up his works in a more rural location at Blockley, in north Gloucestershire, which would have placed the works at too great a distance from London.[15] Although the group were resident in the Cotswolds, there is no indication that any of them attended Morris's funeral at Kelmscott in 1896. This is not surprising as cross-country transport was difficult – it would have been easier to get to the event by train from London. It is more curious that there is no mention of Morris's death in any of his surviving correspondence. Gimson and the Barnsleys worked together until 1901. They moved from Pinbury Park, rented from the Bathurst Estate, to the nearby village of Sapperton, where Earl Bathurst gave them land to build their own homes. Gimson designed a cottage, known as The Leasowes, for himself and his new wife, Emily, and laid out the garden along the Arts and Crafts lines first developed by Morris and Philip Webb at Red House. He continued making decorative plasterwork and working as an architect. His involvement with SPAB, both as an architectural adviser and designer of new fittings for old churches, continued. However, he became best known for his furniture. A partnership with Ernest Barnsley in 1901 saw the establishment of the Daneway workshops with Peter van der Waals as foreman but it was short-lived. Gimson took complete control of the workshops in 1903 which expanded with a workforce rising to ten men in 1911. As well as furniture, he designed metalwork and set up a smithy in the village employing three blacksmiths.

His relationship with May Morris developed after her father's death. She was two

years older than him; they had friends in common and both shared concerns for the crafts and the survival of rural life, including folk song and dance, a particular interest of both Ernest and Emily Gimson. Despite this, there was an underlying formality in their contacts. In the few surviving letters from Gimson to May, he refers to her as Miss Morris, while in her letters to others she refers to him as Mr. Gimson.

Sydney Cockerell and Emery Walker were the two people to whom May Morris turned for financial advice and support. Following her mother's death in January 1914, she was advised by Cockerell not to invest all her share of the inheritance, but to spend about £1,000 of it on herself – either on travel or on personal comforts. Her response to Walker was forceful: '[a]s it is quite impossible for me to "enjoy myself" under the circumstances of my life, it seems to me, I could at least get some satisfaction out of applying some of this to such a useful purpose, whereby I should be well-looked-on by the Kelmscott people'.[16] And to Cockerell she explained: 'I think useful building – that would be done officially if I didn't undertake it – would be a more satisfactory way of having a fling. We had often talked of possible building of late, and I don't think I could do anything better as a little memorial.'[17]

May decided that the commission for a pair of cottages as a memorial to her mother should go to either Gimson or Sidney Barnsley. Being based in the Cotswolds, both men were familiar with local building traditions and materials. By the spring of 1914, with Walker's counsel, Gimson was selected, possibly because his recent entry for the *Country Life* cottage competition was planned to make the best use of limited space. His semi-detached cottages were built on open land between Kelmscott Manor and the cottages commissioned by Jane Morris from Philip Webb as a memorial to her husband. Each had three small bedrooms in the eaves but the larger one had an additional room – a parlour – on the ground floor. It was earmarked as accommodation for the school mistress while the smaller cottage was intended for a labourer. Work progressed quickly, with a team of local builders supervised by Walter Gissing, Gimson's former assistant who had moved on to work with William Weir on the restoration of Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire. He quickly developed a close relationship with May. To Walker she wrote:

> My Mr Gissing is just gone, and I have one precious day of peace before my dull and worthy Mary returns. It has been so difficult working with one's head full of building work and this fortnight of the young man in the house finishing up has been just about "the limit". He is amiable, too.[18]

Gimson's Manor Cottages are smaller in scale than the Memorial Cottages and closer to the Cotswold vernacular, using coursed and textured limestone rubble. The oak

staircase, doors, and built-in settles as well as the metalwork – fire tools, casement windows and scrapers – were made by Gimson's craftsmen at the Daneway workshops, creating attractive and serviceable interiors. The design of the outbuilding at the back of the cottages alludes to the pyramid-shaped roof of the privy at Kelmscott Manor, while Gimson's distinctive roadside fencing, made of large upright slabs of limestone held together by iron bolts, creates a close link between the Manor and the cottages.

By November May was describing them to Cockerell in glowing terms. She regarded them as fitting neighbours to the Memorial Cottages, and added that 'I gather the men have been extremely glad of the work. I don't quite know how I am going to finish paying for them when my ready money is through.'[19] Their exact cost is not known; an early Gimson design includes the figure of £783 although it may have been closer to May's original £1,000. She had originally hoped that she might be able to share the cost of the cottages with her sister Jenny but Cockerell and Walker were concerned about the long-term cost of Jenny's care and advised against this. Finances seem to have been a constant source of concern for May.

In October 1915 she invited Gimson to a celebratory tea to see the completed cottages together with his friends and fellow-architects, Ernest Barnsley and Robert Schultz Weir.[20] She wanted a dedication on the cottages and Gimson had suggested a lozenge on the smaller of the two. It was cut by Gissing in Roman lettering with the wording 'JM BUILT BY MM 1914'. The relationship between May and Walter Gissing was fruitful: as well as digging the gardens together, they also cut the inscription for her mother on the Morris grave in Kelmscott churchyard. Shortly after its completion, Gissing was called up and tragically killed at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

The Kelmscott commission provided opportunities for Gimson and May Morris to discuss social issues in relation to the countryside, which had been highlighted by the outbreak of World War I. In 1914, May came across something her father had written which inspired her to find a glimmer of hope in the dreadful situation. She passed on her thoughts to Cockerell: '[i]n one of my father's lectures I've been correcting proofs of lately, he mentions if some great disaster to the country might bring us to living a simpler kind of life – the disaster has come – who knows what will come out of it'.[21] By 1915, Gimson was coping with the wartime disruption to his workshops: commissions were coming in but many craftsmen had left to join up or contribute to the war effort. He was, however, hopeful for the future and he took positive steps to ensure that there might be some positive outcomes. He had bought a piece of land in the south Cotswolds and was approaching wealthy and influential contacts to support his plans for an enlarged craft community. The scheme was to

involve other designer-makers to run craft workshops. May Morris and Birmingham-based Mary Newill both appear in Gimson's memorandum of 1916 as potential leaders of needlework workshops.[22]

The 1916 Arts and Crafts exhibition, organised by Henry Wilson with the theme of reconstruction and held for the first time at the Royal Academy, offered an opportunity to discuss these ideas further. May Morris and Gimson worked together on two of the room settings. One room was hung with William Morris's *Fruit* wallpaper and included examples of his needlework as well as Wedgwood pottery painted by Louise Powell and Marjorie Turner, a waste paper basket by Thomas Okey, and a work box bound and tooled by Katharine Adams. The main display was of embroidery and jewellery by May and examples of Gimson's furniture and metalwork. May wrote a lengthy introduction to the room for the catalogue:

> The furniture in this room comes from workshops established in a fourteenth-century manor-house which is situated at the bottom of a valley of almost unbelievable beauty. The village of Sapperton lies scattered about a winding corner of the Thames and Severn Canal; the canal was busy enough once but is now stagnant and uncared for, awaiting the time when our villages shall be re-populated and our water-ways utilised for traffic and for the carriage of village made wares to their 'cheaping-towns'. This is one of Mr. Gimson's dreams for the future, and meantime his workshops and his smithy employ local labour, and develop the traditional skills in the crafts which is latent in most English villages, though so little called upon as to be in danger of dying out altogether.[23]

The second display was a bedroom, planned as a showcase for the Women's Guild of Arts, the organisation founded by May and others in 1907 for women working in the crafts and design yet excluded from the Art Workers' Guild on account of their sex. Exhibits included a bedstead, chest, chair and footstool designed by Gimson, painted vermillion by students from the Birmingham School of Art who had their own display at the exhibition, and decorated by May Morris and others. Unfortunately, there are no surviving images of these pieces and their whereabouts are unknown. The room settings were largely well received although there was some comment about the cost of a bedstead with embroidered hangings priced at £170 in the Women's Guild of Arts section whereas in her introduction May had described the display as one where 'elaboration and luxury have been purposely avoided'.[24] For Gimson, however, the whole project was a success and he was described in *The Manchester Guardian* as 'the presiding genius' and in *The Builder* as the 'high priest' of

furniture.[25]

The Morris family took their involvement with the village of Kelmscott very seriously. Jane Morris had been aware of the lack of any community facilities for the inhabitants of Kelmscott, a concern she raised with Cockerell in a letter dated 13 August 1897: 'I have had a talk with Mr. Hobbs about the possibility of founding a sort of club-village reading room but there appears to be little chance of any success. He has no barn he can spare and any new building in the place would be an eyesore unless we can spend a large amount of money and much thought on it.'[26] May's enthusiasm for the completed Manor Cottages inspired her to ask Gimson to produce a design for a village hall. Gimson provided some sketches, including one with some indication of potential costs which were discussed with her sister, Jenny, but plans were left in abeyance until after the end of the war. At that point May wrote to Cockerell:

> The village must have a hall, and if one is built in our lifetime, as a memorial, we shall see to it that it is done as he would wish it in Kelmscott. My reason for moving at such a time as this is that the villagers are stirring for a war-memorial to their fallen men and *entre-nous* there is a danger, which makes me perfectly terrified, that money can be procured for a cheap 'arty' building that will simply ruin the village. Apart from this terror, I don't wish that their local scheme and my larger scheme should be things apart: I wish that the villagers should have a share in raising a dignified monument not only to their friends who have died in the war, but to my Father who was their friend and champion and who believed that any hope for the Art of England lay in the reawakened life of the 'simple people'. I think a small hall, built and furnished as his friends and colleagues would like it done, would be a fitting tribute to one who hoped and worked for this awakening of village-life …[27]

The pleasure May derived from the successful completion of the Manor Cottages spurred her on to discuss this project with Gimson who had immediately produced a few sketch drawings for her. He died however in August 1919, aged fifty-four, before work could be started. Sidney Barnsley was then approached to carry it forward but, because of his existing commitments including the realisation of Gimson's War Memorial Library at Bedales School in Hampshire, he declined and suggested Norman Jewson as a suitable alternative. Jewson, who had been Gimson's architectural assistant and had worked with his father-in-law, Ernest Barnsley, on the building of Sapperton Village Hall, was taken on. The project cost, to be built on land donated by Lord Faringdon between the Plough Inn and the church, was

estimated at £4,000, half of which was to be provided by May and her sister. Gimson's initial design was for a two-storey building with a massive chimney gable dominating the front elevation but this was somewhat altered by Jewson, probably to fit the budget which had been hit by post-war inflation. It was built by Mr King of Lechlade using largely local materials including timber from a field near the Manor and stone from a quarry at nearby Filkins, owned by Sir Stafford Cripps.

May started fund-raising in earnest in 1921, setting up a committee, chaired by the architect, Walter Shirley, Earl Ferrers, and including Sydney Gimson who remained as committed to promoting his younger brother's reputation after his death as he had been during Ernest's lifetime. Kelmscott Manor became May's permanent home from 1923 and she continued to play an active role in the project, organising fund-raising activities locally, welcoming visitors to the house, and working cross-stitched place mats that sold for £1 each. It took her more than a decade but finally, the hall was opened on 20 October 1934, the centenary of her father's birth. George Bernard Shaw had been invited to give the address although on the day he was somewhat overshadowed by an impromptu speech by the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald.

Despite May's plans for the village hall to serve partly as a monument to the war dead, in the end there was no reference in the building to World War I. Before his death Gimson had designed a plaque for two Kelmscott men, George Taylor and Thomas Stevens, who had been killed on active service, but it seems it was never executed. St. George's Church at Kelmscott, however, has a stone memorial for Frank E. Haynes and Henry Will Haynes, with some fine lettering, possibly by Norman Jewson. The Morris Memorial Hall was May's last big project; she died on 17 October 1938. The hall itself continues to serve as a tribute to William Morris and is well used by the local and wider community.

Sydney Gimson's accounts provide a vivid impression of Morris's humanity as well as the impact of his personality and ideas on all who met him. For Ernest Gimson, Morris was an inspiration for his architectural and design work, but more than that, their first-hand contact provided a life-changing motivation for Gimson's life and work, promoting handcrafts and running workshops in the Cotswolds. He found a sympathetic colleague and client in May Morris. Their partnership ensured that Kelmscott Manor, described by Morris as 'a house that I love; with a reasonable love I think', has flourished and been enhanced by their subsequent building projects for the village.[28]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to Annette Carruthers and Barley Roscoe who are editing Ernest Gimson's correspondence for publication in 2023.

NOTES

1. S. A. Gimson, 'Random Recollections of the Leicester Secular Society' (1932), typescript, Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland (ROLLR), text available online: <http://leicestersecularsociety.org.uk/PHP_History/history_gimson.php> [last accessed 8 December 2022]. Afterwards Gimson, 'Random Recollections'.
2. *Ibid*, part 1, p. 22.
3. *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. by May Morris, 24 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910-15), XXIII, p. 192.
4. S. A. Gimson, 'Random Recollections', part 1, p. 23.
5. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols in 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984–96), II, p. 498.
6. S. A. Gimson, 'Random Recollections', part 1, p. 72.
7. *Ibid*.
8. Ernest Gimson to Sydney Gimson, 21 August 1886, The Wilson, Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (CAGM), 2006.5.7.
9. Ernest Gimson to Sydney Gimson, March 1886, CAGM, 2006.5.4.
10. Ernest Gimson to Sydney Gimson, 31 March 1886, CAGM, 2006.5.5.
11. W. R. Lethaby, A. H. Powell & F. L. Griggs, *Ernest Gimson, His Life & Work* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1924), p. 4.
12. 'Obituary of Ernest Gimson', *Architectural Review*, 46: 4 (October 1919), p. 100.
13. Ernest Gimson to Ernest Barnsley, 19 Feb. 1888, ROLLR, DE 1763/4. Gimson's three companions were William Lethaby, Robert Weir Schultz and Walter R. Butler.
14. Ernest Gimson to Sydney Gimson, 24 November 1889, CAGM, 2006.5. 39.
15. Edward Barnsley Educational Trust, Edward Barnsley to Olga Barnsley, 25 November 1968.
16. May Morris to Emery Walker, undated but probably August 1914, William Morris Gallery (WMG), MG, J485.
17. May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 2 May 1914, WMG, The Ronald Briggs Gift, S4.3.16.
18. May Morris to Emery Walker, undated letter but probably October/November 1914, CAGM, Emery Walker Library, 1991.1016.42.
19. May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 30 November 1914, WMG, S4.3.16.
20. Robert Weir Schultz had changed his name to Schultz Weir because of anti-German sentiment at the outbreak of World War 1.
21. May Morris to Sydney Cockerell, 25 August 1914, WMG, S4.3.16.
22. Ernest Gimson, 'The Association of Architecture, Building and Handicraft', 10 June 1916, Henry Wilson archive, Royal College of Art.
23. *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Eleventh Exhibition* (London: Royal Academy, 1916), p. 207.
24. *Ibid*, p. 214.
25. *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 October 1916 and *The Builder*, 20 October 1916.
26. Quoted in Jan Marsh, *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story, 1839-1938* (London and New York: Pandora Press, 1986), p. 242.
27. Quoted in *Friends of a Lifetime: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell*, ed. by Viola Meynell (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940), pp. 72-73.
28. William Morris, 'Gossip about an old house on the upper Thames', *The Quest*, no. IV, November 1895.

Prehistoric Morris: A Caricature by E. T. Reed

Greg Michaelson

As what we would now call a public intellectual, William Morris was repeatedly held up to ridicule in *Punch*. For example, in December 1879, and again in January 1880, Edward Linley Sambourne guyed Morris's controversial intervention over the fate of San Marco in Venice, with other members of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.[1] In December 1883, Morris was mocked in verse as *Sigurd the Socialist*, whose egalitarian politics appeared to conflict with managing a profitable business.[2] And, in November 1903, *Punch* published a parody fragment from the purported *A Defence of Wardour Street, and other Poems*.[3] The caricature by Edward Tennyson Reed, from May 1894, is far more ambiguous.

Reed (1860-1933), who contributed to *Punch* from 1889 to 1912, is generally acknowledged as the originator of the 'cave man' cartoon which he termed *Prehistoric Peeps*.[4] His first Peep, from December 1893, is shown in Figure 1.[5] This stereotype of cavemen as modern Europeans, wearing fur togas, hefting hafted stone tools, and hunting mammoths, has persisted down to the present.

Reed subsequently drew over thirty-six *Peeps*, showing contemporary activities as if performed by prehistoric people, using stone-aged simulacra of contemporary technology, often overseen by dinosaurs.[6] Thus, Reed's Peeps are the predecessors of familiar modern creations like *The Flintstones*.[7] Reed was also the *Punch* parliamentary cartoonist, from 1894 to 1912, regularly using the Peeps form to mock contemporary statesmen as cave men.

The *Peep* that includes Morris portrays the 'Opening of the Primeval Royal Academy' (see Figure 2). [8]

This cartoon is one of a minority of *Peeps* that caricature Reed's contemporaries. Reed himself stares out from the lower centre of the melee of squabbling artists (see Figure 3).

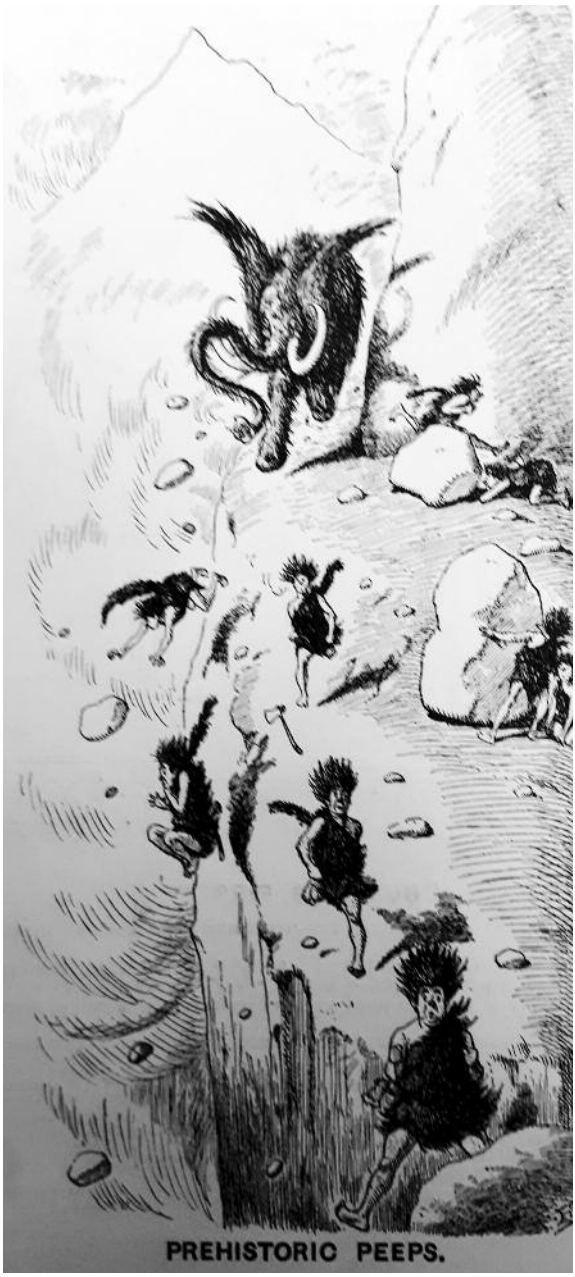

Figure 1: 'Prehistoric Peeps: Owing to His Notorious Eccentricity Their Relations with the Local Mammoth were Extremely Strained', *Punch*, Volume 105, 23 December1893, p. 292.

Figure 2 (right): 'Prehistoric Peeps: Opening of the Primeval Royal Academy', *Punch*, Volume 106, 12 May 1894, p. 226.

Figure 3 (right): Detail showing E. T. Reed from 'Opening of the Primeval Royal Academy', *Punch*, Volume 106, 12 May 1894, p. 226.

Figure 4 (far right): Detail showing bas-relief of cave man and mammoth from 'Opening of the Primeval Royal Academy', *Punch*, Volume 106, 12 May 1894, p. 226.

Figure 5 (below right): Detail showing William Morris from 'Opening of the Primeval Royal Academy', *Punch*, Volume 106, 12 May 1894, p. 226.

In the background above him is a bas-relief showing a mammoth chasing a cave man, as in the Peep in Figure 1 (see Figure 4).

William Morris is in the bottom right-hand corner (see Figure 5). Morris carries a furled red flag over his right shoulder, and a wicker basket over his left, presumably symbolising his socialist, and Arts and Crafts, affinities.

I have been unable to locate any reference to Reed, or *Punch*, in Morris's letters, or in the biographies by Thompson or MacCarthy.[9] In turn, Reed's edited autobiography does not refer to Morris.[10] However, it does say that, as a student, Reed was on 'friendly terms' with Morris's close friend Edward Burne-Jones, so it is not implausible that Reed and Morris met.[11]

Perhaps a clue to Morris's presence lies in his blast in *Justice* in 1884, titled 'Individualism At The Royal Academy'. Here, Morris wrote:

> In plain words, corruption has eaten out the higher arts almost entirely, and I repeat that it is common for artists to prostitute their talents such as they are, not to popularity, which would be respectable comparatively, but to fortune-hunting: the ignorant public I have been mentioning is not the simple, uneducated public, but the cultured and guinea-shedding public, and there is no limit to its gullibility; for in fact it likes to be gulled.[12]

Neither Reed nor Morris were Royal Academicians. Clearly, Morris would have been appalled at the prospect. Reed's self-awareness, in including both himself and his work in the Primeval Royal Academy, has a sardonic appeal. As a cartoonist, his advancement to the RA was extremely unlikely. Perhaps here he shares Morris's disdain for contemporary high art, and portrays Morris in solidarity. It is striking that Reed considered Morris, with flag and basket, familiar enough to be recognised by *Punch*'s readership, and, perhaps, for the symbolism of his representation of Morris himself to be understood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am pleased to thank Florence Boos, for her assistance in locating Morris's *Collected Letters*, and my supervisors, Jeff Oliver and Elisabeth Niklasson.

NOTES

1. *Punch*, Volume 77, 13 December 1879, p. 266; *Punch*, Volume 78, 10 January 1880, p. 2. The cartoons are discussed in 'The SPAB's early campaigning in Venice', *SPAB* [website], 4 April 2019, available online: <https://www.spab.org.uk/news/spabs-early-campaigning-venice> [last accessed 14 November 2022].
2. *Punch*, Volume 85, 15 December 1883, p. 286.
3. *Punch*, Volume 125, 25 November 1903, p. 365. The parody is presented and discussed in 'So from the Castle Gate', *Victorian Web* [website], 4 April 2008, available online:

<https://victorianweb.org/authors/morris/punchparody.html> [last accessed 14 November 2022].

4. Mark Bryant and Simon Heneage, *Dictionary of British Cartoonists and Caricaturists 1730-1980*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 176; Andrew Horrall, *Inventing The Cave Man: From Darwin to the Flintstones* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), ch. 4. (Afterwards Horrall).
5. *Punch*, Volume 105, 23 December1893, p. 292.
6. *The Lost Art of E. T. Reed: Prehistoric Peeps*, ed. by J. V. Procopio, with an introduction by Stephen R. Bissette (Silver Spring, MD: Picture This Press, 2010). The edition reprints the complete 1896 book and contains useful biographical information about Reed.
7. Horrall, pp. 187-89.
8. *Punch*, Volume 106, 12 May 1894, p. 226.
9. See *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. By Norman Kelvin, 4 vols in 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-96); E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, rev. edn (London: Merlin, 1977); Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 1995).
10. *Edward Tennyson Reed, 1860-1933*, a memoir compiled by Shane Leslie from an incomplete autobiography with a choice of his caricatures made by Kenneth Bird (London: Heinemann, 1957).
11. *Ibid*., p. 48.
12. William Morris, 'Individualism at the Royal Academy', *Justice*, 24 April 1884, p. 4, available online: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/justice/11RA.htm> [last accessed 14 November 2022].

Reviews Editor

The Journal of William Morris Studies invites applications for the voluntary role of Reviews Editor, to work with the editor in curating the reviews section of the journal, starting from the Winter 2023 issue or as soon as possible thereafter.

Applications from those with expertise in Morris or a related field are very gratefully received.

Please send an expression of interest and a CV to: journal@williammorrissociety.org.uk

Notes on Contributors

MARY GREENSTED worked with the Arts and Crafts collections at Cheltenham and on the Ernest Gimson website launched by Leicester Museums Service in 2009. Her publications include *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain* (2010) and *Ernest Gimson: Arts & Crafts Designer and Architect* (with Annette Carruthers and Barley Roscoe, 2019).

JAN MARSH is a curator and author or editor of numerous publications on the Pre-Raphaelite circle. In 2019 she curated the *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. She was President of The William Morris Society between 2008 and 2018.

GREG MICHAELSON is a part-time PhD student in Archaeology at the University of Aberdeen. He is exploring popular understandings of prehistory, through representations of cave people in cartoons, gleaned from *Punch* between 1841 and 2002.

Guidelines for Contributors

Contributions to the *Journal* are welcomed on all subjects relating to the life and works of William Morris. The Editor would be grateful if contributors could bear in mind the following guidelines when submitting articles and reviews:

1. Contributions should be in English, and be word-processed or typed using 1.5 spacing, and printed on one side of A4. They should be circa 5,000 words in length, although shorter and longer pieces will also be considered.
2. Articles should ideally be produced in electronic form (e.g. preferably in Word.doc format). Please send your article as an email attachment to journal@williammorrissociety.org.uk, or on a memory card or CD, marked for the attention of the Editor, *JWMS*, to:
   The William Morris Society,
   Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall
   Hammersmith
   London W6 9TA
   United Kingdom.
3. Contributions in hard copy only are also accepted, and should be sent to the same address.
4. In formatting your article, please follow *JWMS* house style by consulting a recent issue of the *Journal*. Back issues are available from The William Morris Society at the above address, or online at: <morrissociety.org/publications/journal>
5. An expanded version of these guidelines, which contributors are also encouraged to consult, may be found at: <wms.bookswarm.co.uk/guidelines-for-contributors> or may be obtained from the Editor. Articles which do not follow *JWMS* house style may be returned to authors for re-editing.
6. Copyright. Please remember to obtain permission from the copyright owner/owning institution(s) (e.g. the Tate Gallery, William Morris Gallery, etc.) to reproduce any image(s) you wish to include. Please note that it is ultimately the author's responsibility to secure permissions to reproduce images. Copies of permissions to reproduce copyright illustrations will be requested once articles have been accepted for publication. Permissions relating to Morris's own works should be sought from:
   The General Secretary
   Society of Antiquaries of London
   Burlington House, Piccadilly
   London W1J 0BE
   United Kingdom
   or by email at: admin@sal.org.uk.
7. Biographical information. At the end of your article please include a short biographical note of not more than fifty words.

Please note that the views of individual contributors are not to be taken as those of The William Morris Society.

ISSN: 1756-1353

EDITOR
Wanne Mendonck (journal@williammorrissociety.org.uk)
PROOF READER
Lauren McElroy

DESIGN
Made In Earnest
PRINT
Hall-McCartney

The William Morris Society
Kelmscott House
26 Upper Mall
Hammersmith
London
W6 9TA
+44 (0)20 8741 3735
williammorrissociety.org