

Merton before Morris : a Note

Looking over the Spring number of the *Journal*, I saw a piece of carelessness in my article 'Merton before Morris' which I should like to correct. This is a factual matter to do with Welch's tablecloth printing, but had an effect on Morris's preparation for the transfer of his workshops to Merton. I completely failed to see what is there in the illustration but which in any case common sense should have told me. Welch's need for double-width cloth meant not only printing tables of double width, but, since the limit of the printer's action was the length of his arm placing and printing the block, this operation had to be done first along one side of such a table, then back down the other. A consequence of this was the need for a tier for the dye to move with him along its rail on each side of the table. To make tablecloths out of narrower material would have meant a seam to join two pieces – inconvenient, unsightly, and would have made difficulties in the embossed/engraved process. Morris would use a narrower fabric; the tables, too wide for his printers, would have to be modified before work could begin. It is clear in the print that a rail runs along each side of the table: this would not be so in Morris's time. Images, like words, must be closely scrutinised at every turn.

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