

## GRAEME SHANKLAND

The founding of the William Morris Society thirty years ago owed much to the vision and energy of Graeme Shankland, our first Honorary Secretary. With his death in November 1984 at the age of sixty-six, after a long illness which he met with courage, the Society has lost one of its most respected members.

He had had a distinguished career as an architect and town planner. Trained in Cambridge, at the Architectural Association School and the School of Planning in London, he joined the Planning Department of the London County Council in 1949. In 1962 he set up his own practice and was joined by Oliver Cox. This partnership has been responsible for a wide range of outstanding housing and planning schemes in Britain and abroad—in recent years acting as an adviser to the French Government.

His skill as a practical designer on a domestic scale and his love of Morris were evident to any visitor to his home in Hampstead. An earlier move had been a wrench because he had to leave behind a room papered with 'Bower', one of Morris's most intricate and subtle designs. He admired fine books and had on his shelves a few treasured examples of Morris's work. But most of his books were working tools: side-lined, annotated, bristling with page markers. His own writing had an exemplary clarity and directness, as can be seen from his succinct essay—of less than six pages—which accompanies the selection of Morris's writings and designs edited by Asa Briggs, first published by Penguin Books in 1962 (and still in print).

Graeme Shankland came to William Morris from the standpoint of an architect and a socialist. From his student days onward a recurrent theme was the importance of Morris's views on art and labour, and on work 'which will be useful and therefore honourable and honoured'. In recent years, with the recurrence for the second time in his life of mass unemployment and its waste of human skills, he became increasingly concerned with economic issues and the problem of how to bring about the conditions in which useful, varied and satisfying work would be available to all. In two stimulating books he explored the 'informal economy' as well as the formal one and saw merit in a more open relationship between the two. His thesis is as interesting in the context of 'News from Nowhere' as it is relevant to the problems of western Europe today.

The Society grieves the loss of a friend; but the remarkable amount Graeme Shankland accomplished 'in the short days of life' means that we now are the better able to celebrate Morris's inspiration as a designer and to heed his words on 'how we live and how we might live'.

*John Kay*