

The Companion

The Newsletter of The Guild of St George

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Clive Wilmer becomes Master of the Guild

We have tried over the years to find ways of keeping Companions informed about the day-to-day work of the Guild. For several years we did so by simply printing the Minutes of Directors' meetings in *The Companion*, but a couple of years ago we came to the conclusion that nobody gave them much attention. Minutes, after all, do not make for compelling reading and, for those who weren't in attendance, they can be hard to follow. So the Board asked me to write a series of readable summaries of the Minutes, which I have done for the last two years. I hope they had some success, but there was a problem with them too, which was that they did rather pre-empt the Master's Reports, which Companions receive later on among the AGM papers. So I have decided to discontinue these attempts and to entrust news of the Guild's work to the various contributions you will find in *The Companion*.

Much of our current activity is summarised in the speech I gave on taking over from Jim Dearden as Master, so we reprint that below. Other matters are discussed in various articles: for example, the Economic Symposium, which attracted a large audience and an article in the *Financial Times*, and the opening of the Ruskin Studio at Bewdley on a fabulous June day. Some of the furniture from the Norfolk Street Gallery, which has been in store since the Gallery closed, is now in use in the Studio. It was wonderful at the last Board Meeting to sit at our own tables with the William Morris fabric on the top. Companions who were unable to come to Bewdley should make a point of visiting when they can. We are hoping to deepen our connections not only with Uncllys Farm but with the region and we have been talking of collaborating with the Bewdley town museum.

A lot of work is going on in Sheffield. Museums Sheffield has been awarded a large grant to refurbish the Ruskin Gallery and make the collection more accessible and easier to communicate to the public. There has been a long consultation process and work is about to begin. The Gallery will be closed for several months and will re-open with a celebratory launch on 17 March 2011. As this work goes on, we are making plans with our Sheffield contacts – Kim Streets, Louise Pullen, Kirstie Hamilton and Rowena Hamilton – for the second Triennial on Ruskin and landscape. I can also report that we have just bought a splendid new painting for the collection: a very late oil (1882) by J.W. Bunney of the Porta della Carta, the entry to the Ducal Palace in Venice. This picture wonderfully complements the great painting of the façade of San Marco, which has recently been through an expensive process of restoration and reframing and will return to the wall of the gallery on the day of the re-opening. I am especially grateful to Peter Miller and Louise Pullen, who advised on the picture and obtained it for us at a surprisingly reasonable price.

Finally, I want to report that we have been especially fortunate this year in attracting new Companions, all of them distinguished in their different ways: Mark Cleaver, Paul Dawson, Celia de Piro, Frank Field MP, Mark Frost, Olivier Geoffroy, Jonathan Glancey, Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Hill, Catherine Howarth, Donald Measham, Ian Warrell and Stephen Wildman.

The Guild of St George

Master: *Clive Wilmer*

Directors: *Janet Barnes, James Dearden, John Iles, Peter Miller, Cedric Quayle, Clive Wilmer, Robert Wilson*

Secretary to the Board: *Norman Hobbs*

Editor of *The Companion*: *Professor Graham Parry (gp8@york.ac.uk)*

The new Master's acceptance speech

I should like to begin by expressing my thanks to my fellow Directors for putting their trust in me and to you for endorsing their judgement. It is not easy for me to say how honoured I feel. It is more than forty years since I first felt the force of Ruskin's extraordinary mind and to find myself now, as it were, standing in his shoes is really quite overwhelming. I hope I can live up to your confidence.

I'm going to say a few things about the Guild and its future and how I see them. But before I do, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor. The Guild owes a very great deal to Jim Dearden, who will be remembered as one of the most distinguished of all Companions. Anyone who cares about Ruskin – his life, his work, his legacy and his teaching – is indebted to Jim. As I'm sure you all know, Jim spent most of his professional life caring for the Whitehouse Collection when it was at Bembridge School on the Isle of Wight. In that curatorial role, he was an indispensable source of knowledge, insight and information to anyone working on Ruskin and was – as he remains – unstintingly generous with his time and attention; hardly any important book on Ruskin in our time has been without his influence. Moreover, in 1969 he was the prime mover in founding the Ruskin Association, which brought together a small international group of Ruskin scholars and enthusiasts and formed the nucleus of what is now a major academic industry in a wide variety of disciplines across the world. Without the work of the Association all those years before, the Ruskin centenary of 2000 could never have been such a grand event.

Jim's work for the Guild has been equally remarkable. It was as long ago as 1979 that he became – at one and the same time – a Companion and a Director of the Guild. In the former role, only Cedric Quayle has a longer record. In the latter, Jim has no rival. Most importantly of all, he stepped into the breach as Acting Master in 2005, and was confirmed as Master soon afterwards. This was a troubled time for the Guild, but Jim has been dedicated to the happy functioning of the Guild and has led us, with quiet and unostentatious determination, into what I see as a tremendously productive and hopeful period. He has been a collegial Master, achieving things through consultation rather than by fiat, and taking on board the initiatives of his colleagues. I very much hope to maintain continuity with what he has done and to learn from his conduct of the office. I am happy to announce that the Board has asked him to remain a Director, so we shall benefit from his advice for a good deal longer.



As everyone but Jim will be aware, we have over the past year been collecting funds for a gift in recognition of his contribution. We have commissioned two pieces of distinguished craftsmanship for him, items appropriate to the life of a writer and bibliophile: a letter-rack and a book trough. The wood in both cases is Wyre Forest oak donated by Cedric Quayle, so it stems from our Bewdley connection. It was designed and made by a Bewdley joiner, Colin Purdy, and the greatest of living letter cutters, Lida Cardozo Kindersley, designed the two brass inscriptions.

The book trough presented to James Dearden on his retirement as Master of the Guild. The wood was Wyre Forest oak given by Cedric Quayle. The trough was made by a Bewdley joiner, Colin Purdy. The brass inscriptions were designed by Lida Cardozo Kindersley (photo: John Iles).

At this time of transition, I'd like to go on to reflect on the purpose of the Guild. Ruskin wanted the Guild to advance art education, the crafts and the rural economy. Our last major campaign, the Campaign for Drawing, did great things for the first of these. The first of our Triennial exhibitions, *Can Art Save Us?*, develops all three concerns. In particular, it takes up Ruskin's concern with the condition of the countryside and agriculture in an industrial society and, through art and craft work, explores the issue of sustainability: a modern term, but an idea central to Ruskin's thought. His prescience with regard to climate change is unequalled in nineteenth-century writing; it is one of the reasons for pursuing his agenda today and regarding it as something to be developed. *Can Art Save Us?* is a model of such development. As the exhibition has been arranged, it will also be an excellent aid to serious and imaginative teaching. Special thanks are due to Kirstie Hamilton and Louise Pullen, who brilliantly curated the exhibition. The choice of objects and their juxtaposition is brilliantly imaginative and suggestive and

the labelling (mostly by Louise) is exemplary. Thanks are also due to Dorian Church, who has overseen much of this process, and to Jacqueline Yallop who served as the Guild's advisor on Ruskinian matters. I'd also like to thank Robert Hewison for donating his invaluable advice too.

In the rural economy itself, great advances are being made at Bewdley under the eye of John Iles and his wife Linda, who are the Guild's tenants at Uncly's Farm. You will be hearing more about their work from John today: about conserving the Wyre Forest in alliance with Natural England and the Forestry Commission, about the restoration of derelict orchards and generally restoring life to the land. You will also hear of a building, the Ruskin Studio, which provides a place and an opportunity for reflection on these activities through teaching, study, discussion and even exhibitions.

Later this morning you'll be told of two fascinating initiatives from Companions who are not Directors. Brian Lewis will tell you about his Rivers Project which has taken him to India, using writing to reflect on environmental issues in the two countries. Marcus Waithe, through the University of Sheffield, has set up a website which provides a virtual recreation of the St George's Museum at Walkley, the parent of our present Gallery. The web-address is www.ruskinatwalkley.org and I urge you to consult it. It is one of the best ways we now have of getting to know our Collection and Ruskin's purposes for it. Louise Pullen has also been active on this project through her work on the digitization of the Collection and her systematic description of the objects, now nearing completion (see <http://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/coresite/html/ruskin.asp>).

I very much hope that, in the course of my Mastership, we shall have more enterprises stemming from Companions, which the Board is happy to fund and encourage, as we have these. For although I am hopeful about our future, I do have some anxieties. I believe we don't make enough use of the energies and talents of our Companions, and I want to harness these to greater effect. Moreover, like many membership organizations today, we are in need of young blood. Can I encourage you to recruit new Companions? And we need to think about bringing younger Companions forward to take over from the gerontocracy of which I am part! We also need to make more use of modern communications and to remember that Ruskin himself always responded to particular issues rather than forming general policies. His wider significances always grew from particulars: the Hinksey Road, the Paddington teashop, Margaret's Well in Carshalton, the May Festival at Whitelands, and so on. All these were meant to be exemplary.

As both my predecessors were constantly reminding us, this is not a John Ruskin Supporters Club. We are here to do the sorts of things which Ruskin drew attention to, but we don't have to follow him slavishly or agree with him about everything or try to live as if this were the nineteenth century. When I first read Ruskin all those years ago, I was overwhelmed by a sense that, despite the gap of time between us, he spoke profoundly, truthfully and presciently about everything that seemed to me important. I still feel this way about him – which is not to say that he didn't get things badly wrong. He was wrong about Rembrandt, wrong about Darwin, wrong about race, wrong (though perhaps not entirely) about democracy – I could go on, and these are the most serious of what seem to me his errors. We do Ruskin no justice or honour by not noticing his faults.

But underneath those errors, his big picture was accurate. And even when in his troubled later years he turned savagely on Whistler or repudiated Dickens (whose books he'd always loved) what he had to say was never without sense and often illuminating. He had a knack, like the boy in the story of the Emperor's new clothes, of pointing to uncomfortable or (in Al Gore's phrase) inconvenient truths: truths we all know to be true but thought we were not allowed to utter. In fact, Gore's truth is one of them, and another concerns the state of our economy. Because of his prescience, Ruskin has found his way into the public media recently. We have heard a new Companion, Professor Bernard Richards, on More4 news talking about work in the light of what Ruskin had to say about it. There was a fabulously eloquent piece by the architectural critic Jonathan Glancey in *The Guardian*, in which he criticised the state of our public life in the light of Ruskin's social writings. Moreover, Andrew Hill in the *Financial Times* has been drawing the attention of bankers and business people to the lessons of *Unto This Last*. Andrew has made a video on the relevance of that book for the *FT* website. If you want to persuade your friends of Ruskin's value, you could do better than send them to Andrew's wonderfully compressed and lucid presentation: www.ft.com/ruskin

So Ruskin is in the news and we have decided to profit from this by setting up an Economic Symposium next year at the Art Workers Guild in London. We will be collaborating with the Ruskin Research Centre at Lancaster and its Director, Professor Stephen Wildman, and the event will be introduced by that great champion of the poor, Frank Field MP. This is the kind of thing I want the Guild to do more of: to engage fully in the current debates. We are not here to satisfy an antiquarian interest. I certainly have such an interest in Ruskin and in some of the things he wrote about. But he founded the Guild of St George to make St George's country a better place for all of us to live in. Nearly 140 years on, that is still the Guild's function, as I see it, and we have to agree, you and I, on how

that can be achieved. If we are to do that, we have to understand our limitations. We'd be fools not to notice that we have few funds to speak of and that almost nobody knows or cares about us. Our job is to use the resources we have – a little money, some properties, our own capacities and our good will – to make small things better, as if those small things were everything. We have learnt the folly of thinking that by saying all are equal or that workers are brothers and sisters we can make them become so. We must work at the particular and learn to make those particulars speak to the world at large. Not only that: we must love particulars – the ordinary, humble, real things of the world – and argue and fight for those.

One of the passages in Ruskin that most moves me is the one in *Praeterita* when he describes how he discovered that drawing was not about creating beautiful things but discovering and showing that the world itself was beautiful – more beautiful than we can easily grasp or describe or artistically imitate.

"Languidly, but not idly, I began to draw it [an aspen-tree]; and as I drew, the languor passed away: the beautiful lines insisted on being traced, – without weariness. More and more beautiful they became, as each rose out of the rest, and took its place in the air. With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they 'composed' themselves by finer laws than any known of men. At last, the tree was there, and everything I had thought about trees, nowhere ... The woods, which I had only looked on as wilderness, fulfilled I then saw, in their beauty, the same laws which guided the clouds, divided the light and balanced the wave. 'He hath made everything beautiful, in his time,' became for me thenceforward the interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things; and I returned along the wood-road, feeling that it had led me far ..."

Clive Wilmer, 14 November 2009

Robert Hewison, *Of Ruskin's Gardens*. The Ruskin Lecture, 2009. (Published by the Guild of St George at £5 and obtainable from the Secretary.)

The choice of Robert Hewison as the Guild's 2009 lecturer was an appropriate one in several ways. Robert is well-known to Companions and a good friend of the Guild's: someone who for personal reasons feels unable to join us but is hugely interested in what we do. As if in recognition of that interest, the published form of the lecture is dedicated to James Dearden, Master of the Guild until the AGM that preceded the lecture, and it was Jim, newly relieved of his responsibilities, who introduced the lecturer to Companions. We were meeting in Sheffield and, as Jim reminded us, it was exactly thirty years since Robert had last addressed us there. On that occasion, moreover, he had spoken on Sheffield and on Ruskin's involvement with it, notably in his creation of St George's Museum at Walkley. (That lecture, *Art and Society: Ruskin in Sheffield in 1876*, is still in print and available from the Guild Secretary.) This time his title was *Of Ruskin's Gardens*, and his purpose was to explore some of the issues behind the first Triennial exhibition *Can Art Save Us?*, which really ought to have been subtitled 'Ruskin, Art and Sustainability'.

As he announced at the outset, Robert's purpose was 'to introduce the words agriculture and horticulture' in relation to the exhibition's concerns and to show how the nineteenth-century idea of 'culture' grew from those terms. It was in gardens that man began 'to shape nature to his own ends' – to create something from the world he had been given. It is in gardens that human 'art' encounters 'nature', and nature is changed by art without ceasing to be natural. Resonating within all these conceptions, moreover, is the parent myth of Western culture, the story of our origins in the Garden of Eden. The myth inevitably carries with it the story of the Fall of Man and its consequences in the life of Christ, atonement, resurrection and redemption.

The main source of this fall/redemption myth is the Bible, which for Ruskin was reinforced by his reading of Dante, Milton and Bunyan, of Romance literature and, in later life, of Greek mythology. But the narrative becomes interwoven with his modern and Wordsworthian passion for divine nature, the nearly infinite garden which has been entrusted to our care as human beings. This interweaving encourages in Ruskin a habit of allegory that extends to everything – to painting and architecture, to the history of Venice and to his own life with its trials and tribulations – such that the real world of actual events is always loaded with symbolic significance.

It is not difficult to see how the godless and competitive modern world became the wilderness in which the knightly hero of Romance does battle with a variety of dragons. As the lecture approaches its conclusion, it turns to that hero and his Company, finding the same mythical and allegorical patterns in Ruskin's social criticism:

His social programmes were an attempt to change England, even if he could not find a spiritual Eden. For Ruskin, the perfect vehicle for this transformation was the Guild of the red-cross knight St George, whose entire iconography, with its associations of restoring a waste land, could meet the needs of his public and private self.

Through the Guild's agency England was to become a garden again.

That this never happened now seems inevitable, but it is something Companions should constantly reflect upon. The very localised and limited work we do should always be seen within the context of that larger aspiration. Robert concluded his lecture with the observation that Paradise cannot be recovered but that in Ruskin, as in all great art, it is 'constantly resurrected':

Art not only delights, it instructs; it reveals the horrors of the world, but also offers the possibility of redemption. Whatever the grim reality ... art has the power to show us a better world, or at least the possibility that such a world may yet exist, and that this imagined world should be the destination of our quest. Art alone cannot save us, but I firmly believe that through art, there is still the possibility that we can save ourselves.

Of Ruskin's Gardens met its occasion perfectly: as an account of those ideas in Ruskin upon which the exhibition was based and as a message to the Guild of St George about its own objectives. Charles Baudelaire wrote a book called *Les Paradis artificiels*, which is about drug-induced visions. The implications of Baudelaire's title were rejected by Ezra Pound in that very Ruskinian volume *The Pisan Cantos*. 'Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel,' he wrote, for paradise belongs to the real world. In the Book of Genesis, the Garden of Eden is not in another dimension or on some remote planet. It is part of the world which God creates for humans. It is, of course, eternally out of reach, but for those who take stewardship seriously – stewardship of art works or of the rural economy – it is always the impossible goal to aim for. The 2009 Guild Lecture was Robert Hewison at his dazzling best.

Clive Wilmer

The Sheffield Triennial Exhibition

Can Art Save Us? – some reflections on the exhibition at the Millennium Galleries in Sheffield during the winter of 2009-2010

After I had visited the exhibition myself, just after Christmas, it occurred to me to recommend it to a superlative master craftsman, Nicholas Hobbs of Wirksworth in Derbyshire, who has since then had a retrospective exhibition of his hand-made furniture at the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, 20 March-6 June this year. He wrote to say that he and his family had gone especially to Sheffield, and that they had found it 'Absolutely fascinating, could have done with a second visit. The *Stones of Venice* section struck a chord, as regards the work and practice of the original craftsmen. We had one pen between four of us, but at least the back of the catalogue was blank for note taking ... Irony of the day – when questioning the paucity of books by and about Ruskin in the shop, the senior assistant replied "they don't sell", and yet many 'soundbites' were printed upon pencils, mugs and other merchandise! Oh dear, what was that exhibition about?'

For myself I enjoyed the whole experience of visiting Sheffield for the exhibition, including the approach to the Galleries through the spectacular Winter Garden, which I had not seen before, and the pleasure of experiencing the nearby Peace Gardens, a 'Landscape of Memory', consciously developed as such between 1985 and 1998, which has finely lettered plaques. The exhibition *Can Art Save Us?* is the first in a series of three, curated by *Museums Sheffield*, that aim to show Ruskin's ideas reflectively and in a new light, through artefacts and well-chosen texts. The next two will be on the themes of *landscape* and *creativity & craftsmanship* (2015).

One principle that, as a theorist and philosopher of conservation, I hold most dear is that in addition to exercising stewardship over what we have inherited from the past – and I believe that John Ruskin was the first to use the word 'stewardship' in that context, in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* – we have a responsibility and a duty to add a layer of beauty, interest and significance of the present day. Hence I greatly welcomed the following statement which explained in part the thinking behind the exhibition: 'We have made a purposeful decision to mix the historic and the contemporary as well as visual art, craft and design both in order to question Ruskin's influence on us today and also to explore and use the Collection of the Guild of St George in a different way.'



A corner of the Triennial Exhibition (photo: Museums Sheffield)

My impression is that the exhibition did not have as many visitors as it deserved, or perhaps I just happened to visit it on a quiet day. I also suspect that many of us who did go to see it were, like Nicholas Hobbs and myself, already converted to the idea that Ruskin still has a great deal to say to the contemporary world. What I found admirable was that the different sections of the exhibition were introduced by striking and memorable texts from Ruskin's writings – it would have been wonderful if they could have been printed in the catalogue, which was far too modest in scope but which could have served the complementary purpose of introducing visitors in a permanent form to the powerful sentiments which poured from Ruskin's pen. These texts were complemented by the most wonderfully authentic books, paintings, engravings and works of art which had been given by Ruskin to the Guild of St George.

It will be recalled that Ruskin founded the Guild of St George in 1871 to help create a better world. He shortly afterwards took possession of Brantwood, which is not just a house but an estate along the eastern shore of Lake Coniston, where he put into practice his long-pondered ideas about stewardship of the land and of the earth's resources, and of the nobility of working with our hands and the sweat of our brow as well as with our heads. As we learned, or learned afresh through visiting the exhibition, 'To this end, he aimed, through the Guild, to turn wasteland into food-producing plots, to protect wildlife, to educate people in schools according to their specific needs and to open public libraries and galleries as a "national store" for all people.' Here, even in that one short paragraph, is the gist of what makes Ruskin so important for our present-day economic, political and social agendas.

I was able to take a friend with me to the exhibition who had been to Brantwood, and had been inspired by the experience, but had not read much Ruskin. He was absolutely enthralled by the exhibition, and we both thought that it was wonderfully complementary to the permanent exhibition alongside it. There, too, the principle of showing authentic Ruskinian material alongside specially commissioned artistic craftwork had already been established. There, too, is the very Ruskinian emphasis on the materials from which objects are made, which is a knowledge surprisingly rare in our contemporary world except among specialists. Ruskin was, in fact, a resourceful gatherer of facts whether it was attempting to record a whole city, Venice, or parts of cities such as Florence, Lucca, Pisa, or the precise logic and structure of a cloud, a tree, a plant, water or a rock. One of the most telling of the quotations with which I felt reconnected as a result of the exhibition was that 'Art, devoted humbly and self-forgetfully to the clear statement and record of facts of the universe, is always helpful and beneficent to mankind.'

One of the undoubted links between Ruskin's world and our world is that there are so many parallels. As he observed of his own time, so thoughtful men and women in our time are aware that we are living unsustainably, but that human greed and selfishness makes it difficult to rein in the excess with which the advanced civilizations harm the natural world and exhaust the earth's resources. During the period of the exhibition we had had the spectacle of the Copenhagen Conference and the difficulty of achieving unanimity of purpose between nations. What would Ruskin have made of that? We can guess with what passion, with what verbal dexterity, with what inexorable argument he would have thundered against the reasons for failure.

The question posed by the exhibition is an important one and the exhibition buttressed my conviction that art, if it does not have it in its power to save the world, has at least the power to make it a better place. The visual and performance arts, fine works of craftsmanship and good design (such as fine lettering, so rare in our day-to-day world) undoubtedly have the power to affect our thoughts – and if our thoughts are influenced or affected, then so will our actions be. Ruskin's staggering generosity to the Guild, which we now have it in our grasp in our own time of stewardship to celebrate by showing these treasures to the world through this exhibition and the two to come, can continue to affect our actions. Ruskin was above all the 'good steward', who articulated more clearly than anyone writing in English had done before him, the idea of trusteeship – of looking after things, to connect with the succeeding generations as well as the past – and combined this with his passion for creativity. In Ruskin what for some commentators has appeared to be two opposing worlds, conservation and creativity, are brought together in harmony and can be harnessed to the benefit of the earth and of the earth's people.

I look forward to the next two exhibitions but hope they can be accompanied with more substantial catalogues, more ongoing debate about the themes of the exhibitions, and can allow photography.

We must end with some words of Ruskin: 'The greatest thing a human soul ever does is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way.'

Peter Burman

Peter Burman, who is a Companion of the Guild, has just published an article entitled Ruskin's children – John Ruskin, the 'Good Steward', and his influence today, in Michael Falser, Wilfried Lipp, Andrej Tomaszewski (editors), *Conservation & Preservation – interactions between Theory & Practice – in memoriam Alois Riegl (1858-1905)*, published by ICOMOS, Florence, May 2010.

The Economic Symposium

John Ruskin and the Modern World: Art and Economics, 1860-2010
Art Workers' Guild, Bloomsbury, 6 February 2010

Symposium Report

The symposium, jointly organised by the Guild and the Ruskin Library and Research Centre, to discuss in the 150th anniversary year of *Modern Painters V* and *Unto this Last* whether there can be an ethical economics in the face of the recent crisis in capitalism, was held in the splendid home of the Art Workers' Guild. The two sessions of the day, separated by lunch, and each lasting two hours, were introduced by Stephen Wildman.

The Talks

Labour MP, Frank Field, struck a self-consciously pessimistic note in his opening words: 'I must confess that, as a politician, I am deeply depressed.' He suggested that the position of critics of the economic system today may be less hopeful than it was for Ruskin. Global capitalism is now firmly entrenched and further removed from moral considerations than ever before, whereas in Ruskin's day, capitalism may have seemed to some like a mere disruption of 'the rural ideal'. Field characterised Ruskin as a collectivist in essence, and argued that collectivism reached its peak under Attlee, but has been 'overthrown' today, with only 'the soft under-belly of welfarism' remaining.

Yet Ruskin had also argued that society will be reformed only when individuals make a personal effort to transform themselves. This Christian morality, safely re-rooted as an ethical tradition in secular thinking by a figure such as T. H. Green, has now all but disappeared from British public ideology. It helps to lead us to the vast man-made inequalities of which Ruskin was so successfully critical. Field argued that the future of the country will be determined by the bond markets, not MPs' expenses, and that we should, like Ruskin, concentrate our attention on ideas. Ruskin has shown us what one individual can do to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy and to reform it. He should be our guide not merely for one day, or one year of celebrations, but for our whole lives.

Guild master, Clive Wilmer, spoke on 'An ethical economy? *Unto this Last* then and now'. Ruskin spoke of illusory prophets, and addressed the problems of a competitive system which had resulted in the foreclosed mortgages and rising unemployment caused by the Banking Crisis originating in the US. Ruskin's understanding of economics was greater than is often acknowledged. The basis of Ruskin's rejection of the 'wages fund' idea, Mill's theory that only a finite amount of money was available for labour at any time and that, therefore, wages must be kept down in order to avoid unemployment, is now the standard theory, namely that wages are paid from anticipated profits. The influence of his idea of 'wise consumption' can be traced through the expansionist economics of Keynes. But Ruskin's purpose in *Unto this Last* was to define wealth, and to establish that wealth could only be attained and comprehended in the moral conditions and ethical values of human society.

Victorian Britain, the workshop of the world, made considerable profits, but Ruskin argued that these implied corresponding, and all-too-easily-ignored, losses. He shone a torch on 'the dark streets' occupied by the losers in 'the great game of chance'. The gap between rich and poor is not as great today as it was in the 1860s, but it is considerable, and growing. We have been complicit in the illusion through which we have been living, and it is difficult to detect an alternative to the free market.

In *Munera Pulveris*, Ruskin argued that money is not wealth, but 'a documentary claim to wealth' which mediates our relationship to it and to each other. Thus it is that social relations and ethical values are undermined by a scarcity of money during an economic slump.

When justice fails, charity must assist with the distribution of wealth, and charity should be administered politically in a complex society (this has emerged in the welfare state). Wilmer said that his guess was that, despite Ruskin's claims, Ruskin had moved to the left in writing *Unto this Last*. His discomfort with traditional Tory hierarchies emerges at several points. His ideas are relevant across the political spectrum. His attack on the economic system remained always an ethical one, and his morality was a Christian morality drawn from the Bible. The conditions which regulate our personal behaviour apply equally to the national and global economy. But can there be an ethical economics? Ruskin's critics considered the suggestion naive and sentimental, yet his relevance to the economic crisis we face today should be considered.

In his unpublished letters to *The Times* of 1852, Ruskin had argued for universal suffrage, graduated income tax and a system of national education. All three would address inequalities, and the taxation proposal would have

helped practically to redistribute wealth more widely through the community. Where competition conspires to reduce or fragment common-wealth, co-operation increases and strengthens it. Societies become wealthier even as certain individuals, selfishly pursuing personal gain, become less rich. Wealth necessarily implies welfare and well-being, and is not synonymous with riches, concerned with money alone. Britain is richer than Sweden, but Sweden is wealthier than Britain: 'its social provisions are of a higher order'.

Capitalism has its virtues, but it is also flawed. For anything to be valuable it must 'avail to life'; for someone to be wealthy, they must be able to use what useful articles they own. And the opposite of wealth is 'illth', the concept which explains how some individuals can become very rich (short-selling hedge-fund managers, for instance), whilst the common-wealth is insufficient to fund the health and welfare of the community, including properly equipping our armed forces going into battle. Riches must be directed towards wise consumption, since 'there is no wealth but life'. It is a materialist argument, but one always rooted in ethical considerations.

Less palatable for many is Ruskin's fundamental insistence that competition necessarily harms society. Ruskin's 'Law of Help' was written around 1859 when Darwin wrote of competition in nature as 'the struggle for life'. Yet many scientists now emphasise the crucial role of co-operation in nature. Ruskin's concept is not confined to the market-place. Orthodox economists may see the opposite to competition as monopoly and not co-operation, but Ruskin's belief in medieval Gothic is based on an admiration of the collaboration of creative individuals, especially craftsmen, so successfully symbolised in the great Cathedrals. No doubt it is utopian, but no more so than the idea of a society based on individuals competing for personal gain. *Unto this Last* transformed Gandhi's life. It can transform ours.

Christopher May, Professor of Political Economy, University of Lancaster, keenly emphasised one point which neatly echoed the words of Frank Field's introduction: that political economy for Ruskin is personal, that is to say, not in an individualistic sense, but that we have responsibility for the behaviour and actions underlying it.

Presenting a tongue-in-cheek 'Bluffer's Guide to *Unto this Last*' he drew out seven key messages (presented as seven links in Ruskin's chain of argument): the model of economic man ignores the incentive of personal responsibility and relationships; how wealth is accumulated is more important than how *much* is accumulated (productive activity which benefits all Vs. exchange which implies a loser as well as a winner: not all wealth is socially valuable); craft and the artisan stand as a model for (socially-useful and personally-valuable) work and economic relations (work is not simply about pay); personal choice directs the market (the benefits of responsible consumption are best and most easily seen locally); price should be an index of just market/economic relations (economics is ethical); markets are socially embedded (markets should benefit society as widely as possible); social and market interests may be aligned by state-regulated economic activity.

A description of political economy for Ruskin is a prescription for its development. The fact that his ethical considerations are less easy to model than the orthodox focus on the rational does not mean that we should not attempt to model them, nor that we should reject everything orthodox economics tells us. To understand these moral considerations and personal motivations is more fully to appreciate the (social) basis of political economy. May suggested that Ruskin implicitly praises the virtues of a mixed economy.

It is not that Ruskin has (necessarily) been influential, but key developments parallel his ideas. Wealth today is not simply measured in terms of GDP and GNP. Corporate social responsibility echoes Ruskin's concern with personal responsibility. The recent banking crisis, Ruskin would tell us, is not an accident, and we should ask what has driven bankers to act the way they have acted and how the banking system has reinforced that activity? The plusses of exchange and the monetary value of wealth have been over-emphasised. The substance of Ruskin's message speaks to us today, partly because he faced a capitalist system similar to ours. His main message, that political economy is personal, means that we are responsible: we are to blame; and the answers start with us.

Panel Discussion

After a most enjoyable lunch, the panel discussion, with contributions from the floor, mediated by Andrew Hill, City Editor of the *Financial Times*, attempted to unfold some of those answers. The panel consisted of David Barrie (former Director, The Art Fund), Howard Hull (Director, Brantwood/Ruskin Foundation), Stephen Wildman (Director, Ruskin Library and Research Centre), and Robin Holt (Reader in Business Ethics, Management School, Liverpool University) plus Wilmer and May.

Hill explained in his introduction that he discovered 'Ruskin the social reformer' on a visit to Brantwood. This led him to *Unto this Last* from which he has become a 'partial convert' to Ruskin, appreciative of his value as 'an ethical counter-weight' to contemporary economic discourse, leading to the raised eyebrows of some of his colleagues who equate Ruskin with 'lefty' politics! Hill led the discussion to pursue the issue of the 'practical application of what Ruskin taught', to the 'real world' circumstances of modern business and economies.

The first part of the discussion revolved around Ruskin's notion of the usefulness of work. Hull reminded us that Ruskin saw 'the things that we do' – 'service' to each other and ourselves – as the expression of our humanity. Modern preoccupations with work-life balance contrast with Ruskin's sense of wholeness (that work is life, in the best sense): to reconcile that contradiction, through greater worker participation in working organisations, would be one means of practically applying Ruskin.

Barrie, who worked briefly in an investment bank 30 years ago, characterised the banks' unending demand to make money as Ruskinian 'illth': many of the investment bankers pay a heavy price to get rich. Hill rejoined that on leaving the 'rat-race' many spoke of 'giving something back' which begs the question of why and what they had taken in the first place?

Holt explained that Business Schools are focused on training their students to make money, to the detriment of ethical considerations, which are usually considered a luxurious if not an irrelevant 'bolt-on'. His work points out to students the etymological and ethical link between 'goods' and 'the [wider] good' – encouraging critical thinking. It is the lack of any face-to-face relationship in large banking institutions which, in Ruskinian terms, is the key to the cause of the recent credit crisis: there can be no 'trust' or human relationship when what all isolated individuals see are numbers on a screen.

May agreed, highlighting the problems caused by the distancing of management from ownership. When the reverse is true good things happen, as exemplified by the co-operative/mutual structure of John Lewis. Dissent is allowed within the management structure, as well as healthy competition between branches. There is 'real world' interaction, and it is not necessary (even healthy) to acquiesce: the critical engagement encouraged by Holt among his students is useful (even crucial) in the workplace.

Hill then moved the discussion on to Ruskin's antipathy to competition, and how this could be reconciled with the realities of the modern economy.

Barrie urged us to recognise a shift in economic thinking towards Ruskin's intuitions: the power of co-operation has been demonstrated in many (scientific) experiments and is at the core of human experience and identity. If this fact were recognised in business, what effect might it have? This notion was picked up later by members of the audience, one person urging the necessity to co-operate with one's environment, and a farmer emphasising the difference between his work, where the mistake of putting too many cows in a field would become immediately obvious, and that of a banker isolated from the consequences of his decisions.

Holt said that recent thinking emphasised the 'brand' qualities of competition as a 'perpetuation of contrasts' as opposed to something rooted necessarily in combat and conflict. Wilmer took up this point. Human beings are moral animals, and Holt's evidence was that business education, in emphasising technical administration and the theory of money-making, alienates people from moral considerations. Ruskin intuited that Gothic architecture was an expression of the society which produced it, a society which he characterised as very different from his own. The implication is that we do not have to live the way we do.

Wildman and May agreed that Ruskin saw the evaporation of personal responsibility, sponsored by the utilitarian 'science' of political economy, as undermining society and human life. Barrie argued that early twentieth-century political economy recognised no value in the muddying complications of moral considerations, but added that he believes that this has improved more recently.

On the point of considering the issue of how to encourage ethical considerations in the working of modern economies, the discussion was opened to the floor.

One speaker spoke of the marginalisation of the artisan in western cultures. We have over-valued the intellect, lost the confidence to be tactile, and our 'inner life' has suffered. Hull agreed that much artisanal activity was confined to the 'ghetto' and lamented that the arts and crafts movement became too elitist (creating 'lovely goods' only the rich could afford to enjoy). For Ruskin, more important than the product was the nature of its production. Subsequent speakers spoke more broadly about artistic activity. Barrie argued that more people than ever were engaged in 'artisanal activity' (in which, he said, one ought to include the creativity of computer programmers). May spoke of the productivity of the music industry, using technology democratically (viz. Lewis Mumford) to cut out the middle men. Later, from the floor, a speaker emphasised that 'handiness' was still much prized in China, and is a key to much of their economic potential.

Lord Frank Judd argued that now is the time proactively to engage society with Ruskin's ideas. He said that higher education had been 'subverted into a utilitarian culture' where people are trained as technicians instead of being encouraged to be independent thinkers: creative individuals with imagination. May later responded that one difficulty is that students are now encouraged to think of themselves as consumers, which he personally counters

with the gym club metaphor: you don't join a gym for a year, do nothing, and complain when you haven't got a body like Arnold Schwarzenegger! Personalities and characters do still get 'rounded', he said, but despite and not because of imposed priorities (crude targets, performance indicators and educational outcomes).

Judd detailed how his attempts to amend legislation on pensions funds so that the trustees should be bound by law to act ethically and with social responsibility, were frustrated by opponents who often conceded that it was a 'nice' idea but maintained that it was unrealistic. Such attitudes were at the core of the banking crisis, he felt. That capitalism has recently been rescued provides an opportunity for us to create a Ruskinian response.

Hill asked whether legislation was the best means to this end? One pensions trustee responded that the existing legislation, in privileging the 'best interest' of the pension fund, restricted the scope for ethical consideration by effectively confining activity to the maximisation of profit. She also argued that dialogue between pension-holders and trustees should be encouraged. May spoke about the dashing of past hopes that pension funds would help bring about the 'socialisation of capitalism'. Barrie saw merit in enshrining moral considerations in the regulatory or legislative framework for pension funds, and although Hill questioned whether Ruskin would have agreed with this, he admitted that such frameworks are part of the modern world. Judd concluded that endemic short-termism, and the ignorance of moral considerations, fails pension-holders and society more generally. Barrie cautioned us all against being the victims of the 'cult of expertise': we should all become involved in these decisions.

The issue of economic growth was raised. Hill suggested that growth has incontestably raised standards of living. Barrie responded that since the collapse of the socialist project following the fall of the Berlin Wall, our only remaining ideology is ethically-vacuous managerialism. To do anything we need a political framework imbued with [Ruskinian] ideals [implying that growth must be measured as something greater than the sum of money]. Holt's argument was that for Ruskin, decay was as important as growth [in the economic/life cycle]: it is crucial to work with the environment and not against it. Growth should be seen as an experience not as an aggregation.

Various other issues were touched upon but not fully explored. One speaker from the floor reminded us that 'Capitalism with a heart' was a feature of turn-of-the-century thinking, with employers providing model villages on the basis that a happy workforce is a productive workforce. Wildman raised the issue of Cadbury's, contrasting the modern company with its past family ownership, and Hill replied with the example of Ferrero, but there was no time to pursue the issue of forms of ownership.

Hill concluded by asking the panel to consider one practical step we might take as a result of our discussion of Ruskin's contribution to the issues at stake.

Hull argued that what we really need is a cultural shift, where wealth and vision go hand-in-hand. It is what we do when things are good, even more than when things are bad, which defines us, he argued. Holt urged us to engage critically with the notion of possessiveness and practicality, but pointed out that the 'Law of Help' can be seen at the base of Muhammed Yunus's highly successful practice of micro-finance.

May agreed with Hull that cultural change is key: genuine freedom of information might lead us to better understanding, but we must look unto ourselves to begin that process of change. Barrie agreed, pointing to proportional representation as a potential means of promoting greater political engagement, and arguing that we should harness the power of the internet if we wish to disseminate the Ruskinian message more widely. Wrapping up, Stephen Wildman (half?-)joked that we might send copies of *Unto this Last* to members of the Cabinet.

Inevitably, the day asked more questions than it answered, but the explorations were genuinely engaging and stimulating, and demonstrated by their breadth and variety that Ruskin continues to speak to us today. The strongest of all the messages was that we must ourselves take responsibility for the society in which we live mindful, as we are, of the wisdom Ruskin bequeathed us.



Stuart Eagles Clive Wilmer addressing the symposium (photo: Gabriel Wilmer)

Ruskin Studio opening

On 29 June, 2010, I passed through Bewdley for the first time in many years with a keen excitement due in part to my own recent research on the Guild of St George's lands there. After a halt at St Leonard's Church, Ribbesford, which has Ruskinian connections of its own, I quickly made my way to the uneven and delightful track through the lovely Wyre Forest that leads to Unclys Farm, one of the tenancies held by the Guild since George Baker donated twenty acres of woodland in the 1870s. I was not the only one to have made the journey that morning, however, for a generous crowd had gathered to celebrate the opening of the Ruskin Studio at the farm. The new building, crafted from Wyre Forest oak, has for the past few years been the labour of love of John and Linda Iles (the latest tenants of the Guild smallholding), architect Rob Taylor, local builder Ron Clowes, and a small, but dedicated group of volunteers and workers. Its purpose, to provide a space for meetings, art and leisure activities, schoolchildren on outings, and those simply seeking a place for quiet contemplation, will surely be achieved, as it quickly became apparent that much good will surrounds the farm. The building, a combination of traditional and modern techniques, includes two floors, comprising separate spaces for meetings and other activities, and is connected to the farm's 1920s water-collection technology. In addition, solar panels and heat-capture technologies make good sense economically as well as environmentally.

On a bakingly hot day, a gathering of locals, amongst them the Mayor and Mayoress of Bewdley, Cedric Quayle, Companion since 1969 and local Guild historian, and other Companions of the Guild of St George, including the doyen of Ruskin Studies and former Master of the Guild, Jim Dearden, assembled for refreshments before hearing Clive Wilmer, the present Master, offer a fitting address in which he drew attention to the continuing work of the Guild, the sympathetic relationship between the building and its environment, and its ecological credentials (both key concern,



of course, for Ruskin). Clive Wilmer (photo: Sharon Aston)

paid tribute to the truly Ruskinian spirit in which John, Linda, and all those associated with the farm, have energetically but thoughtfully pursued their various activities. As Clive pointed out, the initial aim of the Guild



The Ruskin Studio under construction (photo: John Iles)

was, as Ruskin says in *Fors Clavigera*, 'to apply the proceeds of the St George's Fund to the purchase of land in England and Scotland, which shall be cultivated to the utmost attainable fruitfulness and beauty by the labour of man and beast thereon, such men and beasts receiving at the same time the best education attainable by the trustees for labouring creatures'. This meant the cultivation not only of the land, but of minds, through education and art. It is precisely this coming together of the different aspects of culture that Clive adeptly celebrated as a reality at Unclys.

It was therefore particularly pleasing to be able to hear John describe through

a pair of video presentations both the history of the building project and the other tasks being undertaken at the farm. Their aim is not merely to heal the land, an endeavour that is being richly rewarded by an increase in the diversity of wild flora, but also to heal people in need of contact with nature and work. These include children, but also, via the Care Farming scheme, individuals recovering from drug or alcohol addiction who come to the farm on a weekly basis and find there purpose, self-belief, and inner peace. I am sure that I was not the only person there who was touched by what they heard, and by the energy and purpose of John and Linda.



The completed Ruskin Studio (photo: John Iles)

A brief presentation from Sally Green explained the way in which Natural England had been working in partnership with John and Linda, other landholders, and with the Guild, to ensure that land management on the Bewdley holdings is sensitive to both the environment and the effective running of the farms; and that the forest can remain an important educational resource for children in the West Midlands.

A wonderful barbecue of locally reared meat and an accompanying feast followed, and with wine and locally brewed ales available, the assembled party took a little time to marshal their resources sufficiently to join John on a post-prandial promenade through the farm. Having visited the pigs, which are used to manage the woodland understorey, and chickens, Tabatha Leigh explained the way in which she worked with schoolchildren at the farm, attempting to inspire their own self-confidence, creativity, and love of nature. After stopping to admire the Dexters, miniature cows ideal for the kind of grazing management necessary in the area, John led us to the farm's orchards which, for the first time since John and Linda took up the tenancy in 2004 have yielded a handsome crop of fantastically-flavoured cherries. Here, and in a brief foray into the oak forest, John's love for and knowledge of the land became abundantly clear.



Jim Dearden, Peter Miller and Clive Wilmer at Unclyls Farm after the opening of the Ruskin Studio (photo: John Iles)

The day ended with teas, coffees, and relaxed conversations as we admired the energetic grace of the building that had brought us all together. As I drove away, it was with the pleasant knowledge that I would be back. I found it particularly pleasing that the ideas Ruskin pursued in the latter half of his career continue to find expression in places like this, where a commitment to quality of life, to care of the environment, to innovative ideas, and to beauty as a goal of life's experience all proliferate. The commitment of the Guild to support small-scale sustainable projects like these, and to be involved in a network of groups working towards the same goals, is a template for a future in which such issues will only become more pressing. Clive commented that many Ruskinians turn out to be 'anti-materialists who discover the life of the spirit in the care of material things' and who find out that 'it is only by caring for a cherry tree, a Dexter calf, a wild anemone, or a picture

by Giovanni Bellini, that we begin to make sense of what the human spirit is and what its capacities are'. Looking into my rear-view mirror as I departed, I could be certain that the building, the land, and the people on it, would all continue to grow.

Mark Frost

[This speech was given by the Master of the Guild of St George at the opening of the Ruskin Studio on 29 June 2010. It celebrates that event and pays tribute to the work of John and Linda Iles.]

On behalf of the Guild of St George, I would like to welcome you to this splendid new studio, as well as to Uncllys Farm and Ruskinland.

The presence of this building in the Wyre Forest represents an extraordinary and (until recently) unexpected consummation of certain hopes that belong to the Guild's early history. The Guild of St George was established as a charity in 1878, but, under the name of St George's Company, it had been in the making since 1871. Ruskin wrote in *Fors Clavigera* that the Guild's trustees were 'to apply the processes of the St George's Fund to the purchase of land in England and Scotland, which shall be cultivated to the utmost attainable fruitfulness and beauty by the labour of man and beast thereon, such men and beasts receiving at the same time the best education attainable by the trustees for labouring creatures...' We should notice that he was talking of two kinds of cultivation here: of culture – in this case, education – and agriculture. The land at Bewdley – farmland, orchards and part of the Wyre Forest – was given to the Guild by George Baker, Mayor of Birmingham and the second Master of the Guild, in the course of the 1870s. Ruskin hoped to build an ideal community here and, as the name 'Ruskinland' suggests, there has been a Guild presence in this area ever since – most obviously embodied in recent years in the person of Cedric Quayle, who has been a Companion of the Guild since 1969. For many years our Secretary, and now for the second time in his life a Director, Cedric is really the godfather of what I may call the Uncllys Farm project. His grandfather joined the Guild in 1886 and came to Bewdley in 1914, among the last of a string of migrations from the Liverpool Ruskin Society. But although, as his move to Bewdley suggests, a Ruskinian community was very much alive here when the Great War broke out, the founder's ambitions were never really fulfilled. What Ruskin wanted was a healthy rural community sustaining itself on the fruits of its labour as an antidote to the vicious effects of large-scale urbanisation, industrial pollution and competitive greed. He wanted a full community of adults and children, with an experimental school, a library and an art gallery. In other words, this was not to be quite the classic village community, dependent on vigorously local but inevitably limited cultural resources, but a community that could benefit from the full range of European culture. More specifically, it was to be a community that could reflect upon its own activities. To work the land and live off its fruits was healthy. It was healthier still to place that work in a larger context and to turn the ordinary experience of life into art. In a famous passage from *Modern Painters*, Ruskin says: '... all great art is the expression of man's delight in God's work, not in his own.' That recognition was at the heart of his plans, and one of the things we may hope for as a product of this building is the kind of human creativity that recognises the primary beauty of the natural world. Central to this building and this farm and the work carried on here is the notion of stewardship: the doctrine that the world has been put into our care – that it is not ours to do what we like with it.

The enduring Guild presence in the Wyre received a boost with the arrival six years ago of Linda and John Iles as our tenants at Uncllys Farm. Cedric Quayle had recommended them. To put their arrival in context, it is important to realise that Ruskin thought and wrote prophetically. He could see where the world was going and he didn't like what he saw. At the same time, he could also see how the future he feared might be averted. Those of us who represent his legacy today have to adapt his ideas to the realities of a world that has changed beyond recognition. Some argue that, in his book *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, Ruskin anticipated the threat of climate change. As the voltaic panels on the roof of this building advertise, Linda and John have brought to Ruskinland the standards, values and practices of modern Environmentalism. They are fulfilling Ruskin's vision with the tools of the twenty-first century. John is now a Director of the Guild. He and Linda have united with other farmers – several of them here today, and Companions of the Guild – in a project called Grow with Wyre, and at the same time they have brought the Guild into collaboration with Natural England and the Forestry Commission in the Wyre Community Land Trust, through whose agency they are busily restoring the traditional orchards of this area, many long derelict, as well as its wildflower meadows.

I don't think John and Linda realised when they decided to replace their old barn with a handsome new venue for study, classes, talks, exhibitions and meetings that they were in effect fulfilling part of Ruskin's original dream, for this Ruskin Studio will perform some of the functions of library, gallery and school: hardly all of them, it must be admitted, but the building will enable people to learn from the countryside and rural labour and to make art out of it. And given the time it has taken for much of Ruskin's thought to be accomplished, there is surely room for some further development of what has been done here now. The Ruskin Studio is also a considerable achievement of building and architecture: an elegant modern vernacular building, made of our own Wyre Forest oak, which generates its own energy. I'd like to pay tribute to all those people responsible for its creation – in particular to Rob Taylor, who designed it, and to Ron Clowes, who built it, directing its construction and managing all the different sub-contractors. I understand from John that both of them have involved themselves in the thought behind the project, something which is immediately apparent in the rightness of the building. I'd

also like to thank Natural England for their grant of £64,000 and their vision of a network of on-farm education facilities, masterminded by Satpal Kang. I offer a special welcome to Satpal and to Sally Green, who is here as representative of Natural England. I'd also like to have offered thanks and a welcome to Ian Hickman of the Forestry Commission, but unfortunately he cannot be with us today. His involvement with 'Grow with Wyre' has been crucial to this development and I thank everyone involved in that body for their vision of a restored Wyre Forest landscape. I also thank them for the work they did to secure funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund – part of which has been used to acquire the woodburner and the thermal store. I'd like to mention, as well, the help and support of members of the Wyre Community Land Trust, in particular Mark Cleaver for all his hard work – especially his toil with the mobile sawmill to get all the timber sawn. Thanks are also due to Paul Bye for the film he has made of the Studio in construction; this, along with a record of today's events, will be shown at the Guild's AGM this coming November. Today's events and the growth of the Studio have also been recorded by the photographer Sharon Aston. The pictures of hers I have seen are strikingly beautiful, so we are also grateful to her for her contribution. I have already mentioned Cedric Quayle, whose support in his role as the Guild's local representative and guardian has been indispensable to Linda and John and the whole project. I'd like to thank him, as also his wife Thelma for all her encouragement throughout this period. Above all, those of us in the Guild who are not based in Bewdley must feel a special gratitude to John and Linda, who have transformed the modern Guild of St George and renewed its hopes and prospects. John has often talked at Board meetings and elsewhere of the pleasure he derives from watching the land, as he puts it, 'heal'; the satisfaction of bringing something to life again; restoring orchards; watching the wild flowers increase in number and variety year by year; growing and nurturing food which is good for the body; helping those to whom life seems to have dealt a poor hand the means to their own healing and renewal – I am thinking of Care Farming.

For Ruskin, the value of the things we make lies in the service which they give to life. In a lecture on church architecture – seeming for once to disparage the beauty of churches – he declared: 'I am trying to prove to you the honour of your houses and your hills; not that the Church is not sacred – but that the whole Earth is.' So the natural world, social conscience, creativity and the things of the spirit come together here in Worcestershire much as they do in Ruskin's writings. I have often been struck by a paradox concerning Ruskin and those who learn from him: they are anti-materialists who discover the life of the spirit in the care of material things. It is only by caring for a cherry tree, a Dexter calf, a wild anemone, or a picture by Giovanni Bellini, that we begin to make sense of what the human spirit is and what its capacities are.

Clive Wilmer

The Farm at Uncllys

Care Farming at Uncllys – the story so far.....

Uncllys Farm is situated in the middle of the 10,000 acre Wyre Forest just to the west of Bewdley. The farm is 13 acres of permanent pasture including a 6 acre traditional cherry orchard.

The farm and the forest around it, is owned by the Guild of St George – the charity set up by John Ruskin and some of his friends in 1878 to pursue his ideas of developing the rural economy, craftsmanship and appreciation of the arts. Ruskin saw what was happening to people through the Industrial Revolution and was concerned about the dehumanising effects of machinery and industrial processes and wanted to offer an alternative. His ideas are as relevant today as they were in 1878. Indeed when we see around us the casualties of our modern society there is a pressing need to have places where people can just 'be', can have time and space to breathe, reflect and yes, rebuild, their lives. Ruskin appreciated the '*sweet air of Worcestershire*' and hoped that the land in the forest – Ruskinland – would provide the opportunity for people to keep rural skills and crafts alive.

John and Linda Iles took on the tenancy of Uncllys in 2004 and have worked hard with the Trustees of the Guild to restore and develop the farm. From the beginning they have sought to involve many people in the process of restoring the health of the land believing that this has a healing effect on people as well. They both come from a background of working for the BTCV many years ago. John had also worked as a helper at the Camphill Village Trust's, Botton Village in North Yorkshire for adults with severe learning difficulties and mental illness.

Some of the helpers that came along to Uncllys were people who were going through bouts of depression or were recovering from illnesses. They seemed to benefit from the time with us. John was introduced to David Harper at Top Barn as a result of an article that was in *Worcestershire Life* and saw how many more people could benefit from a land based experience to develop skills and self confidence and that this process now had a name – Care Farming. David has been a pioneer in developing opportunities on his Worcestershire farm for people with

many different needs – adults with learning difficulties, young people excluded from school, persistent offenders and those recovering from alcohol or drug dependencies.

The Wyre Community Land Trust was established by John to take on the many small parcels of land in and around the Wyre that are just not economic to manage now. The vision is to build a social enterprise that has about 300 acres of grazing land and orchards that can then be sustainable by operating at that scale. The Trust (based at Uncllys) now manages over 60 separate fields, 33 of them Sites of Special Scientific Interest for their wildflowers and invertebrates.

The Trust's approach is to secure a 10 year Higher Level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England for each parcel of land. This often means bundling parcels together to score enough points – a Group Application – and then Natural England will pay for all the capital items required to manage the land (fences, water supplies and troughs, cattle handling facilities etc) and a guaranteed annual payment for the next 10 years. With applications in the pipeline the Trust now has a 3-4 year forward work programme to implement.

Natural England have been hugely supportive and have helped finance an oak framed education centre at Uncllys – the Ruskin Studio – which will be hosting courses (including CEVAS accreditation for other farmers hosting education visits), informal days, retreats and quiet days.

Care Farming takes place on a variety of sites working as the seasons (and weather!) dictates. The first contract was with Worcestershire County Council's Drugs and Alcohol Action Team and is for 6 helpers a day each Tuesday for 6 months. The results have been very good with one person getting a job and the others gaining in self confidence, motivation and health. As a result the contract has been renewed for a further 6 months. The next contract was with the Kidderminster Pupil Referral Unit with one young man who had been excluded from school attending every week. Other enquiries have come from the Primary Care Trust, individuals and their carers and other PRU's. The Care Farm Helpers have been working to restore a small farm nearby by planting 3,000 hedgeplants, over 50 new orchard trees, new fences and water supplies.

The Trust is also developing a volunteer programme and associated training in traditional countryside skills of orchard management, hedgelaying and woodland management. Some of the Care Farming helpers have benefited from this training.

The helpers who have joined the Trust all say how much they have benefited from their time at Uncllys. Uncllys is also a better place with them there as together we all explore life together – life in all its fullness.

As Ruskin said "There is no wealth but life".

John Iles

Contact John & Linda Iles 01299 488083 or john@uncllys.co.uk See also www.uncllys.co.uk

St George's Field

Background

St George's Field was given to the Guild of St George by Miss Margaret Knight in 1937 and is leased to Natural England who manage it to conserve its biodiversity. It is accessible on foot from the village of Sheepscombe and there is a public right of way across the field to enable people to enjoy the wonderful wildflowers there. The map reference for those who want to visit is SO 895106.

Directors' Visit

Some of the Guild directors visited the site on 7 July 2009 and were guided to see the wild flowers and to hear about the management from Natural England staff.

The Site

St George's Field is part of the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods National Nature Reserve. This internationally important area includes some of Britain's best beechwoods and limestone grasslands. The meadow is situated above the village on a south-east facing slope in the Sheepscombe valley and lies between Sheepscombe Common and Workman's Wood, also part of the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods NNR.



The Field notice at Sheepscombe (photo: John Iles)



The field is a haven for wildlife (photo: John Iles)

Wildlife Importance

Unimproved limestone grassland, such as that found on St George's Field, is an increasingly rare habitat and the Cotswolds has more than half of the remaining grassland of this type in Britain. The term 'unimproved' refers to the fact that the field has almost certainly never been fertilised or ploughed. Fertilisers destroy the nutrient poor conditions that wildflowers thrive in so land that has never been agriculturally 'improved' tends to be much more rich in wildflowers. St George's Field is a great example of this and is important not only for wildflowers but also for the butterflies and other insects associated with them. You can find many orchids here including the pyramidal and common spotted as well as the

bee orchid and its rare variant, the wasp orchid. Many other plants associated with limestone grassland are also present such as oxeye daisy, common rockrose, thyme and field scabious. More than 25 species of butterfly have been recorded on St George's Field and Sheepscombe Common including small blue, chalkhill blue and green hairstreak. Kestrels and buzzards are regular visitors throughout the year and flocks of goldfinches and long-tailed tits often pass through during the winter months.

Management

Grazing is essential to maintain the wildflower rich sward in the meadow and keep the tor grass at bay. Tor grass is an integral component of limestone grassland but, in the absence of management, it can become dominant and reduce the diversity of wildflowers present. The Welsh Black cattle that are used to graze the meadow are perfect for the job as they thrive on the rough grasses and scrub that more modern pastoral breeds would be less keen to eat. Grazing the meadow during the summer months also helps to keep the scrub at bay although a bit of supplementary scrub cutting is occasionally necessary.

Visiting the meadow

The meadow is open all year round but the wild flowers are at their best from May through to the middle of July. If you do visit please do keep to the public footpath and keep any dogs under control especially if there are cattle in the field. Nearby is the Butcher's Arms – a good place to pause and get some good food and a drink – postcode GL6 7RH, telephone 01452 812113 website www.butchers-arms.co.uk

Further information

This short article has been compiled from information supplied by Kate Gamez, the Reserve Manager for the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods National Nature Reserve, phone 0300 0602696 or email kate.Gamez@naturalengland.org.uk. More information about this National Nature Reserve can be found on the Natural England website at www.naturalengland.gov.uk

John Iles, 9 August 2010

Mary Greg and the Guild

Mary Greg at Manchester Art Gallery and the Guild of St George

Many readers will be familiar with the art collections at Manchester Art Gallery. Holding over 25,000 objects of fine and decorative art and costume, the gallery is most renowned for its Pre-Raphaelite paintings. It also has over 13,000 objects of craft and design, from ceramics, glass and furniture, to metalwork and wallpaper. Some readers may also be familiar with the newly redisplayed Gallery of Costume at Platt Hall, one of our significant branch galleries, holding over 21,000 items of clothing and accessories dating from 1600 to the present day. Yet what may be far less familiar, perhaps something of an oddity for a world-famous art collection, is that to be explored in this paper: the Mary Greg collection of 'handicrafts of bygone times'.

This quirky collection is astounding: it comprises over 2000 beautiful, yet humble objects, ranging from domestic utensils and keys, to clothing and embroidery, to toys, games and children's books. Most of the material dates from the 19th century, with some purporting to be far earlier (for example, a Roman comb). Interestingly, Mary Greg even made some of her own items to donate, such as embroideries. Her 'bygones' collection was given to the gallery and enjoyed significant popularity in the 1920s and 1930s when Mary's dolls' houses had their own

room at Heaton Hall. Her collections were also exhibited to much acclaim and huge visitor figures when Platt Hall first opened to the public in 1926 (outnumbering audiences to the important Thomas Greg collection of ceramics).

Yet for much of its life at the gallery, the collection has lain dormant. In storage for some 50 years, most of Mary Greg's objects (with the exception of a small display) have been housed, almost forgotten, in dark cupboards and drawers. In fact, the place of the collection is contentious within the art gallery: it has even been suggested that it might be better placed within the context of a social history museum, or even disposed of, as it is simply not deemed 'art'. But the truth is, it remains a collection too important in the gallery's own biography and narrative of collecting for any such transition.

In addition to the physical objects within the Mary Greg collection, the gallery also has the complete correspondence of 800 letters dating from 1920-1949 between Mary Greg and the then assistant curator at Manchester Art Gallery, William Batho. These fascinating letters document a rich and ever-developing relationship, in which Mary, highly courteous, nevertheless has a way of ensuring that her own mark is firmly stamped onto the gallery displays. As well as outlining her motivations, passion and the energy behind her collection, these letters also describe the attitudes and culture of the gallery in the first part of the 20th century in voices that still resound clearly.

So who was this remarkable and indomitable woman? Born Mary Hope in 1850, she came from a well-connected wealthy Liverpool family of bankers and philanthropists. She married the renowned ceramics collector, Thomas Greg (of the Greg cotton family from Quarry Bank Mill), whose collection of English pottery dating from Roman times to the early 19th century was bequeathed to Manchester upon Thomas' death in 1920. Mary's own donation to the gallery followed suit, piecemeal, with main donations accessioned in 1922. Yet while Thomas' collection is seen as scholarly, focused, methodical and comprehensive and is well documented, Mary's has been seen, by contrast, as personal, eclectic, chaotic and unreliable. As such, it is unfortunate that there is no dedicated curator at the gallery whose remit is to work with the 'bygones'.

Mary Greg is unusual both in being a female collector, and in being such a multitudinous one: "We must not lose *any* good thing which will add to the interest of those concerned in the future," she states in February 1929. She exerted considerable influence not only on Manchester's collecting habits but on those of many other museums. Indeed, the curator of Bethnal Green Museum, A.K. Sabin, refers to Mary Greg as his "fairy godmother" responsible, along with Queen Mary, for much of the foundation of the collection there. In February 1930, Mary notes that she "turned Mr Sabin away with nearly a taxi full of things." In addition to the V&A, her manifold collections can be found in museums including the British Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum, National Museums Liverpool, National Museum of Wales, Stockport, Salford, and even as far afield as South Canterbury Museum in Timaru, New Zealand. On hearing about this final destination, William Batho remarks on Mary's generosity, "How splendid of you after doing all you have for galleries in the old world that you should now tackle galleries in the new world." She even set up her own museum at Westmill in Hertfordshire, close to her home, some of the agricultural contents of which have now found their way into Stevenage Museum.

It was alongside these abundant donations that Mary Greg discovered the Guild of St George in the mid 1930s, later becoming one of its significant benefactors. Ruskin's principles of active, moral education paralleled Mary Greg's own thinking on the value of learning for all through creativity and imagination, through seeing and making, ideals which formed the basis for her collecting (and making) habits and inevitably drew her towards the Guild. She was something of a pioneer in early museum education and the capacity for museum collections to inspire children, and notes her delight in one of her letters: "I am glad indeed to hear so many visitors have seen the collections. How glad I should be – we all should if we could know if any of them ever make a single thing as a result which will be a delight to themselves or their children and also for those who come after. We must leave the answer to the future!" (September 23rd, 1928)

In September 2009, we were delighted to spend a day in Sheffield where Louise Pullen showed us Mary Greg's stunning and fascinating nature diaries housed within the Ruskin Collection, books which Mary herself describes as 'entirely amateurish', but on inspection reveal her to be an extremely capable watercolourist and interested observer of the seasons - "...I tried to paint little things which I thought of interest or beauty – this Ruskin taught me to aim at!" This we followed by a visit to Sheffield Archives to look at the extract from Mary's will, details of 'The T and M Greg Trust' and, yet again, an extensive correspondence, this time between Mary and the Guild Secretary, Alexander Farquharson.

In these, Mary first discusses bequeathing property to the Guild in 1938, and, by 1947 she has conclusively decided to leave to it properties in Westmill and in Somerset. This generosity was acknowledged in her Guild status as 'Companion Extraordinaire'. In Sheffield as in Manchester, Mary has a say in the curation of her displays, and sends

a variety of objects for these, in addition to paying £50 to upgrade the library. In November 1931 having donated several items, she states, "I have come to the end of my treasures." Visitor feedback of 1947 reveals: "everyone who visits the Ruskin Room is really lost in admiration for your cabinet." In another poignant anecdote, Mary apologises to the Guild for the late sending of her subscription in 1948, "I remind you that I am now more than 98 and a ½ years old. I trust to be forgiven... I now send a cheque for 2/2/0.- and hope to be forgiven for the delay." And so her avid correspondence with the Guild continued right up to her death in her hundredth year in 1949.

So what have we been doing with this wealth of emergent research at Manchester Art Gallery? Over the last three years, we have been working collaboratively and in an open-ended way with Sharon Blakey and Hazel Jones, artist-lecturers at Manchester Metropolitan University, as well as with their students, to re-imagine this collection, exploring its hidden narratives and the life of its collector. Amongst several activities, we have developed a unique project blog with Manchester Digital Development Agency to share our findings as they emerge at www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk Through this, we have discovered a whole gamut of interested parties, academics from wide-ranging disciplines, artists, writers, historians and so on, all keen to impart a wealth of useful insight and information.

Our idea is that in 2012, all this harnessed research will culminate in a Mary Greg exhibition to be held at Platt Hall Gallery of Costume, home to the largest proportion of her works in store, and a building which itself has the appearance of a dolls house. This will be an exhibition in which we aim to give audiences something of an immersive experience of Mary Greg, her collections and her relationship with Manchester Art Gallery and the wider world. There will be a full programme of public events, particularly with schools and community groups, as well as with creative practitioners and academics and we are currently seeking funding to develop this. We hope there will be a publication to disseminate this body of research and interpretation. So far, we have only really scratched the surface. Just as Mary Greg herself was fired up with passions, so too has this project become all-consuming to those of us who have the pleasure of being involved. I am glad to say there is still so much more to be done, and we look forward to hearing from anyone with an interest.

Alexandra Woodall,
Interpretation Development Officer, Manchester Art Gallery
a.woodall@manchester.gov.uk
0161 235 8844

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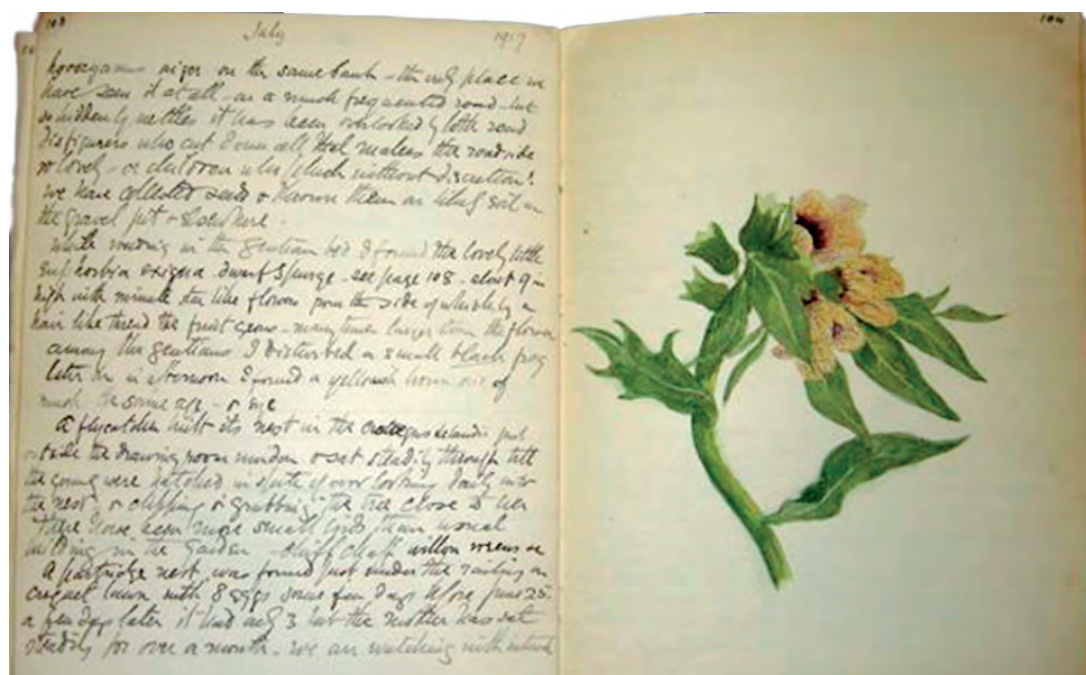
Selected further reading:

Burton, Anthony and Goodfellow, Caroline 'Arthur Sabin, Mrs. Greg and the Queen', *V&A Album* no.4, 1986 pp.354-366

Ewing, Guy *A History of Westmill* (1928)

Harris, Anthony 'Mary Hope Greg – Companion Extraordinary', *Fors* (March 1994) Manchester Art Gallery *Mary Greg project blog* – www.marymaryquitecontrary.org.uk

Ormerod, Sheila *The Greys of Westmill* (Buntingford, 1996)



Page from Mary Greg's
Nature Diary of 1917
(photo: Museums Sheffield)

Ruskin in France

Association Française des Amis de Ruskin (AFAR)

The legacy of Ruskin's thought and writing is alive and well in France. Many people are interested in Ruskin, from all walks of life, but they rarely come together or know each other. Differences in language can also be a barrier. A new association hopes to put this right, by celebrating and promoting Ruskin's work, bringing together those with a fair command of both French and English, disseminating current Ruskin scholarship and connecting those who share a Ruskin interest within France and beyond.

The Association Française des Amis de Ruskin (AFAR) was launched in September 2009 at a meeting in Toulouse. It aims to create a network for all those who live in France or spend a lot of time there and who have an interest in Ruskin. It is based at the University of Toulouse, but is in no way confined to scholars. Anyone can join – and no work is involved! Initially, the Association is working to develop a website to act as a networking focal point, and an annual bulletin. If you would like to be on the mailing list or just to find out more, contact laurence.constanty@gmail.com or jacqueline.yallop@inbox.com You'll be made very welcome.

Laurence Roussillon Constanty

Reviews

Robert Hewison, *Ruskin on Venice, 'The Paradise of Cities'*. London: Yale University Press, 2009. 460pp., 148 illust, many in colour. £45

John Ruskin, Venice, Robert Hewison and I go back a long way. In 1978 we were the first to resolve together the riddle of the interconnection of Ruskin's Venice 'Worksheets', the Venice notebooks, and the manuscripts known as 'M' and 'M2'. Later in that year we went to Louisville together, with his 'Ruskin and Venice' exhibition.

In 1983 Hewison arranged a substantial Ruskin section for the Ottocento Exhibition at the Correr Museum and we travelled together to Venice in conjunction with this event. Together we went to the printers to see the final sheets of his *Ruskin a Venezia* being printed and a few days later we went to Danieli's to spend his royalties on a couple of cups of coffee.

At Christ Church in Oxford in 2000 I bought his big *Ruskin's Venice*, and now in 2010 I have just added Hewison's magisterial *Ruskin on Venice, 'The Paradise of Cities'* to my library. I can say with conviction that no one knows more about *Ruskin's Venice* than does Robert Hewison. *Ruskin on Venice* is the most important Ruskin publication of the decade.

And how much more it is than just Ruskin on Venice. Since the city loomed so large in Ruskin's life, there is much more to his connection with it than his mere visits. Venice pervaded his entire life and Hewison begins by quoting from 'Velasquez the Novice' written by Ruskin before he ever saw Venice.

The *Library Edition* index has nine pages devoted to Venice and I am sure Hewison has found more connections than those listed by Cook and Wedderburn! Effectively this is a new biography of Ruskin based on his Venetian connections, references, interests, activities and influences.

Although it was on the itinerary Ruskin never got to Venice in 1833; the first visit was two years later, followed by another in 1841. Ruskin was beginning to notice the architecture - the Ducal Palace capitals and corner sculptures. On his own in the city in 1845 studying the art and architecture, he discovered Tintoretto, and he was developing a drawing style of his own. He was seeing the sites drawn by Turner, realising his artistic license, and all he saw was background material for the developing *Modern Painters*.

In the long visits to Venice during his married life Ruskin was assembling material for *The Stones of Venice*. Hewison was the first since Ruskin to look at the whole mass of working material for the book and he explains in detail what method Ruskin used as a means of recording his measurements and notes.

Ruskin began by recording his measurements, notes and detailed sketches of the architecture of the city on some two hundred sheets of paper, now known as the "Worksheets". Additionally the recording gradually spread into a series of small thematic notebooks. Probably daily he wrote up his findings from these notes into a larger vellum-bound volume which he called "M". When this was filled, he continued in a second similar volume called "M2".

"M", most of the smaller notebooks, and many of the Worksheets are now in the Whitehouse Collection at Lancaster. "M2" is in the Beinecke Library at Yale and other Worksheets are spread through other collections worldwide.

What we worked out in 1978 is a mere minor part of the whole. The way in which the manuscript of the book was written is a story of its own. It was written in various different ways, and then largely pieced together in a sealing wax collage of sheets. The 1500 sheets of the 'manuscript', for which Pierpont Morgan paid the princely sum of £5,000 in 1907, is only an intermediate version of drafts, notes and fair copies. And even in the 1850s Ruskin was leaving the punctuation to be completed by others, just as he was telling his printer in the 1880s that he left the punctuation to the compositor!

The Seven Lamps of Architecture was written at the same time as *Stones* and although it was published two years before the first volume of *Stones* the two works are very much related and the theological element common to both works is also in *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*, 1851. The religious influences at play throughout all of these works - and others - are carefully examined.

Related to *The Stones of Venice* is the influence of Ruskinian Gothic on the work of architects Deane and Woodward, and the Oxford Museum. Ruskinian Gothic was later used to good effect by the Birmingham architect J.H. Chamberlain, an early Companion and Trustee of the Guild. At the same time Francis Furness was promoting the same architectural style and influence in America. Despite the spread of the style, Ruskin regretted it and regretted that architects had adopted any of the views he had expressed in *Stones*.

After the publication of *Stones* Ruskin didn't visit Italy again until 1858. This European journey, saw him copying of Veronese in Turin, and experiencing the 'unconversion' following the visit to the Waldensian chapel there (there is a photograph of the chapel). Although Venice was not visited on this tour, it was not forgotten and it became a key point of reference when the final volume of *Modern Painters* was published in 1860.

Ruskin was in Venice again in 1871 with the Severns, Albert Goodwin and Connie Hilliard and her mother. This was a journey made while the newly-acquired Brantwood was being restored for him. While in Venice he was studying the Carpaccios in the Scuola di S.Giorgio and his copy of St George and the Dragon (on which the Guild's 'logo' is based), was probably made at this time. However this visit was not a happy one, and he left Venice in a hurry, returning to London in record time in the hope of seeing Rose La Touche again.

Also in the 1870s Ruskin returned to Venice intending to work on a new edition of *Stones*. This led to the new two volume 'Travellers' Edition' of the book and to the writing of *St Mark's Rest, a history of Venice* - 'for the few travellers who still care for her monuments'. During the same visit Ruskin also wrote his guide to the pictures in the Accademia, and devoted much time to copying Carpaccio's 'Dream of St Ursula'. During this period he spent time with Bunney, Alessandri and Fairfax Murray, artists working for the Guild, and he collaborated with Count Zorzi in trying to protect St Mark's from destruction at the hands of the restorers.

Hewison makes it very clear in *Ruskin on Venice* that the city had a much greater influence throughout Ruskin's life and work than is generally realised. It influenced his interests and thinking from before his first 1835 visit. On the 1833 tour he saw the Hospice of the Great St Bernard for the first time and his *Chronicles of St Bernard* were written soon afterwards, including as they do, the Venetian story of "Velasquez the Novice". Later, his work in Venice aroused his social awareness, resulting in the chapter in the second volume of *Stones* on "The Nature of Gothic", hailed by William Morris as "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century".

It was in the autumn of 1888, fifty three years after his first visit, that Ruskin visited Venice for the last time. He was accompanied by Detmar Blow, the young architect he had met earlier in the journey. He saw Alessandri and Boni again. Bunney by now had died. Writing from Venice at the time, William Scott, an architectural student, recorded 'Old Ruskin was here a few weeks ago ... Poor man ! He must be very old indeed.' Ruskin was on his final continental tour. Within a year ill-health finally overtook him and he became inactive for the remaining eleven years of his life.

I find it difficult to adequately express the importance - and excellence - of this book. Those who do not buy it will for ever regret the omission.

James S. Dearden

Kevin Jackson, *The Worlds of John Ruskin*. Published by Pallas Athene in collaboration with the Ruskin Foundation. £14.99.

Ruskin can be difficult. There's so much to read and understand, so many facets to his writing and thinking, so many apparent contradictions and complications. Kevin Jackson acknowledges this right at the beginning of his new book, *The Worlds of John Ruskin*, intended as an introduction for general readers. 'Why 'worlds' rather than world? Because Ruskin was one of history's great polymaths', he explains. He then goes on to suggest areas in

which Ruskin excelled: commentary on art and architecture, the natural world and environment, industry and society. He mentions that Ruskin gave away most of his inherited wealth in a crusade to change Britain and its culture of capitalism. He glances at Ruskin's tumultuous inner life and his madness. He traces Ruskin's doctrines in some of the major advances of the last century. He describes Ruskin's prose as 'incomparably rich'. For those who know something of these things already, it's always good to be reminded just how much Ruskin achieved. For those who know nothing, such ambitious diversity could easily seem bewildering and rather daunting. Jackson plumps for inspiring. Taking a deep breath, he launches into the full gamut of Ruskin's life, trying to capture his breadth of interest and to give a sense of the radical nature of many of his ideas and much of his writing. With the help of many beautiful illustrations, he gives us a picture of the man and his time in just 150 very attractive pages.

Primarily this is a life story, but Jackson frames the biographical text with lots of information about the period, putting Ruskin's life and work solidly in context. He attempts to give readers a sense of the remarkable changes happening during the nineteenth century, and their effects on ordinary lives. The opening section, 'An Age of Superlatives', is a particularly useful and wide-ranging introduction to the period for those who think of it as a stolid time of stuffy engineers, smog, Dickens' novels and a dumpy old Queen. What Jackson tries to show instead is a country on the move, both literally and metaphorically. He emphasises the importance of emerging technology - which he describes as 'the conspicuous material fruit of a new way of thinking' - and the sheer rate of change. His facts and figures, of which there are plenty, build up to give a sense of the rapid and startling transformation that came about with the Industrial Revolution, and the increasing wealth and stability of the growing middle classes. All this helps us understand why many writers prospered in such an age, and sets Ruskin's family success in a social and economic context which helps us avoid seeing his life as an isolated phenomenon. It places him, Jackson claims, as both 'a typical product of his age' and also 'its living contradiction.' Jackson also warns against 'the mainly sunny view of Britain under Victoria - a triumphal view' and launches into an examination of the downside of such quick and extensive industrial and social change. Again, this sets the tone for the biographical pages which follow, and Ruskin's increasing concern with deprivation, labour, economic forces and environmental destruction.

Once the scene is set, Ruskin's life is presented in a familiar fashion. After looking at Ruskin's youth, Jackson divides the biographical narrative into sections, each marking a decade. Combining Ruskin's personal and professional progress, the sections have titles like 'Studies and First Love', or 'Architecture and Adultery', creating a rather odd juxtaposition of celebrity sensationalism and scholarship. But the material is handled sensitively and efficiently, and for a book obviously confined by length, it includes enough colourful quotations from letters and journals to bring the relationships to life.

Interspersed with Ruskin's life story are five other sections which pull out aspects of his writing and thinking and look at them in more detail. Subjects like Turner, architecture, society and the natural world are each given a few pages of their own (in a rather fetching blue print) and Jackson neatly summarises these key themes, presenting them as a way in to understanding Ruskin's work as a whole. Each section is necessarily simple, but each acts as a sound introduction to what can be very complex aspects of Ruskin's thinking. Taken together, they add flesh to the bones of biographical information.

As someone who already knows a little about Ruskin, the highlight of the book for me was undoubtedly the fine illustrations, beautifully reproduced and accompanied by illuminating and detailed captions by Stephen Wildman. This is a publication that looks lovely, and even the merest flick through the pages tempts you further. But it is not all gloss and glamour. Many of these pictures have not been published before, and give us a new glimpse of Ruskin. The personal drawings in particular are fascinating: Ruskin's scribbled pictures sent back from Assisi in a letter, sketches from both Ruskin and Millais made during the fateful holiday at Glenfinlas, Arthur Severn's little vignette views from Herne Hill and, my favourite, a self-portrait of Ruskin leading guests on a walk at Brantwood, possibly in 1881. Alongside the more familiar watercolour panoramas, architectural and natural history studies, these lend an appropriate intimacy and immediacy to the biography and invest it with something of a *joie-de-vivre* that can sometimes seem missing from the gloomier discussions of Ruskin's life.

Wildman's commentary is impeccable and the production values for these illustrations are of impressive quality - it's a shame that, in contrast, the text is riddled with shabby errors. From missed or repeated punctuation to unfortunate typographical cock ups to mistakes which make the text simply baffling, it's clear that *The Worlds of John Ruskin* lacked a good copy editor. This is infuriating and disappointing in a publication which otherwise sets out to impress. Ruskin's obsession with Rose la Touche, we learn, 'continued to haunt him after his death' - a remarkable feat - while surely other readers will also be hard pressed to understand sentences which appear to be mashed together or truncated: 'In the middle of March, on one of his stays in Winnington; and wrote to his father that 'Rosie's my only pet'.

I also had the occasional moment of concern that Jackson's text sometimes forgot its readership. The book positions itself as an introduction, for students and general readers, and mostly it fills this niche nicely, setting Ruskin's ideas out clearly, emphasising the key points of his writings and leading the reader succinctly through the ups and downs of his life. The writing is often lively and usually accessible. Phrases such as 'Meanwhile, another member of his extended family was having romantic problems with the Irish folk', for example, are clearly intended to give the impression of an easy-going, almost pally, author. But the tone can be uneven in places. Jackson begins his paragraph on Ruskin's Hinksey road mending scheme, with 'It was perhaps with a private hunch that a *mens sana* might be arrived at by contriving to be *in corpore sano*...'; a phrase of complicated construction and vocabulary that assumes much from the reader, not least an understanding of Latin. Very few students I know would be up to unravelling this. There are not enough of these cases to put anyone off the book, I'm sure, but it did suggest that at times Jackson forgot for whom he was writing.

What can not be faulted in any way, is Jackson's obvious enthusiasm for, and devotion to, Ruskin. This runs clearly throughout the text from beginning to end and gives the book a beguiling warmth and passion. He charges much of the biographical text with sympathy, describing early 1863 as 'poisoned by gloom', summing up Ruskin's relationship with Rose as 'a nagging bass of misery behind all the public triumph' and noting that towards the end of 1883 Ruskin's 'depression and anxiety deepened with the darkening of the days'. And in a wider context, he puts substantial emphasis on the way in which Ruskin's writings, particularly *Unto This Last*, continued to influence international thinkers and politicians long after his death. Jackson rounds off the story with a look at the many 'Pilgrims and Disciples' who took up the Ruskin message, from Tolstoy and Ghandi to Proust and Le Corbusier. He describes *Unto This Last* unequivocally as 'simply one of the books which has shaped our world' and claims that Ruskin's doctrines 'were among the most potent forces at work in the national culture'. Elsewhere throughout the text, he refers admiringly to Ruskin's 'masterpieces', to 'his legacy' and to the 'deeper lessons' that he teaches. He notes that Ruskin's insights 'would inspire later generations of architects in strange and wonderful ways' and that his writing 'shines with ardent life and quicksilver intelligence'. The last paragraph of the main text is a particularly moving and emotional paean to Ruskin's body of work and a rallying cry to Ruskin enthusiasts. It leaves you in no doubt where Jackson's loyalties lie and it unashamedly throws off scholarly objectivity. Such enthusiasm is hard to resist.

Jacqueline Yallop

[Jacqueline Yallop's novel *Kissing Alice* has recently been published by Atlantic Books at £12.99. It is a novel of family, love and loss set against the unfolding of 20th century English life; it tells the story of the theft of a copy of William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' and its disturbing repercussions.]

James S. Dearden, *Further Facets of Ruskin: Some Bibliographical Studies* (Bembridge: Dearden, 2009), available from the author for £12.00.

This volume's celebrated predecessor, *Facets of Ruskin: Some Sesquicentennial Studies* (London: Skilton, 1970), was both biographical and bibliographical. The absorbing new book brings together thirteen essays, primarily bibliographical in nature. All but two have been published before, mostly in *The Book Collector*, though all are updated here. One appeared earlier in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands* and one in the *Transactions* of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. They cover dates from 1971 to the present. Two essays—'Ruskin and Me', and 'On the employment of the destitute and criminal classes'—are hitherto unpublished. This volume, then, unites James Dearden's important work on Ruskin's texts, editions, libraries, forgeries, and the printing history at Brantwood into a single volume, which anyone with an interest in Ruskin and book history, Ruskin collecting, or simply Ruskin himself will find important.

All the essays have matters of significance to report. Writing originally in 1998 on the 'Keswick Sketching Club', Dearden reveals a new dimension of Ruskin's direct influence, his reach as a practical teacher of drawing. Dearden's essay on the 'Guild of St George Library' is a wide-ranging description of some of the features of Ruskin's Sheffield collection, richly illustrated with historical and more recent photographs, taken when the Museum was still in Norfolk Street. 'Printing at Brantwood' is a fine analysis of the work of W.J. Linton at Brantwood—Ruskin's predecessor in the house—including a meticulous account of the conjectural disposition of the printing room, with its presses, typefaces, and storage. Dearden's knowledge of the configuration of Victorian press rooms enables him to determine even where the top of the press may have rested on the attic beams of Linton's printing house. A glimpse of Brantwood before Ruskin bought it, and something of its cultural history and of the business of printing remote from a city in the middle of the nineteenth century, is amply provided.

The majority of essays are focused on the material history of Ruskin's publications, though, of course, material history, central to all history, has many implications for Ruskin's biography, the study of his ideas, and his reception. By far the most ample of the essays is that on Thomas J. Wise, originally published across three editions of *The Book Collector* (1969). Wise was a thorough and expert bibliographer, whose empirical work, primarily intended for the book collector, remains of service. But he was also tempted by what he knew to make up what he thought others did not. Into lists of authentic variant editions and unknown editions, he slipped items of his own invention: *Leoni: A Legend of Italy* (1868), *Samuel Prout* (1870), *The Nature and Authority of Miracle* (1873). His inventions included binary editions (copies almost indistinguishable from the originals by normal bibliographical description), among them *The Future of England* (1870) and the *Catalogue of the Turner Sketches in the National Gallery* (1857). That Dearden's penetrating discussion originally took three long essays to cover is tribute both to his exceptional knowledge and the deviousness of Mr Wise. The real knowledge that Wise required to produce these fakes, the bibliographical integrity needed for such lack of integrity, makes one wonder exactly how much he made from these forgeries. Was, in his mind, the moral failure in any way worth the financial profit?

The scholarship of E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, editors of the *Library Edition* (1903-12), is always acknowledged in Dearden's study. But there is a hint of how Wedderburn was perceived in the essay on the 'Library Edition of Ruskin's Works'. Dearden reminds his reader how little of the work was actually Wedderburn's, and also that others thought he had instigated the *Library Edition* as an unedifying money-making scheme (Wedderburn was entitled to a third share of Ruskin's profits under the will). Joan Severn, writing to Charles Eliot Norton in 1902, remarked frankly that George Allen was 'to me grasping as usually. Between him and Wedderburn not much, I fear, will be left for you ... A strong and efficient man is needed to deal with two such hard and gripe-all-characters'. Whether that was fair or not, it is a pity to think of Cook working so industriously behind all this: Cook was given £1500 and a gold ink well. His spirit must have sighed indeed when subsequent biographers thought more of his errors than his success.

Dearden's hitherto unpublished account of his own book collecting—'Ruskin and me'—is a valuable addition to this volume, giving an outline of the origins of Dearden's collection, his acquaintance with F.J. Sharp, so important a figure in Ruskin collecting, and Whitehouse himself. There is a nice vignette of Dearden introducing those two rival collectors to each other. This is the story of a life-time's work, and the foundations of Dearden's unique knowledge of Ruskin bibliography. Like a number of other essays, it reads a little like a detective story. The forensic investigations of book history are sometimes a bibliographical whodunit. Sweeping the floor in Linton's old press room to try to determine its layout; comparing an original with a binary edition to expose Wise's inventive fakes; tracking the provenance of the c.53 copies of *Poems* (1850) from original owner to present, through inscriptions and the history of sales; examining great book and ms collections as well as waiting for a serendipitous discovery in an art gallery or second hand bookshop, Dearden has been a literary detective of exceptional patience and exceptional gifts for over half a century. And what hard work that sometimes is! 'Negative research', the research that doesn't produce any knowledge, is usually hidden in scholarly writing, much to the chagrin of the author who alone must know what labours went into such silence, what work lies behind phrases in footnotes such as 'origin unknown', 'quotation undiscovered', 'identity uncertain'. It is an emblem of the researches that bear only 'negative' knowledge that Dearden aptly includes in describing his efforts, and those of friends, to track down the origins of the bibliographical oddity, the pamphlet, *Ruskin's Romance* (1889). A copy in the Lancaster collection contains a newspaper cutting from a Boston newspaper in May 1888. 'It has not yet been possible to discover from which Boston paper the extract was taken', Dearden writes: 'I am indebted to Dr Van A. Burd for the efforts he has gone to on my behalf to discover that it did not appear in the Boston Journal, Boston Daily Journal, Boston Globe, Boston Courier and Hotel News, Boston Daily Advertiser, Boston Herald, Boston Post or Boston Evening Traveller. Five papers remain to be checked. But there is no reason to doubt Morgan's caption' (p.169).

Few writers on Ruskin will fail to recognize the kind of feelings that lie behind that account of bibliographical labour. ('*Ruskin's Romance*: Reprinted from a New England Newspaper, 1889', incidentally, is currently listed for sale on, of all places, Amazon.com, but attempts to purchase it produce the **default statement, somewhat ironic for so rare a creature as this pamphlet**: 'We don't know when or if this item will be back in stock'. Indeed so.

James Dearden's collection makes for fascinating reading, and there is matter to learn on every page. Its appearance is, as an artefact itself, testimony to Dr Dearden's skill. The book is published by his own hand, and a beautifully produced, robust, professional volume it is too, which would do credit to a well-established commercial or academic press. It is available from the author at 4 Woodlands, Foreland Road, Bembridge, Isle of Wight, PO35 5RX, for £12, post free.

Francis O'Gorman

Cynthia Gamble, *John Ruskin, Henry James, and the Shropshire Lads* (London: New European Publications, 2008) 328pp., ppb, ISBN-978-1-872410-68-5.

Part-review, part-'reaction', the present response is testament to the inspirational qualities of Cynthia Gamble's *John Ruskin, Henry James and the Shropshire Lads*. In the final paragraph of the book, Dr Gamble writes, 'Vast tracts of land upon which Henry James trod and which he admired are also protected for generations to come through bodies such as The National Trust, one of whose founders was John Ruskin' (p. 259). Certainly, Ruskin was an inspiration behind the organisation, and his constant refrain, - 'to do' - resonates with Dr Gamble's implicit invitation to her readers to go out and tread the same ground as the personalities who populate her meticulously-researched study.

Last year, in an article for the Friends of Brantwood *Newsletter*, I encouraged fellow Ruskin enthusiasts to go out into their neighbouring towns and villages to seek out Ruskinian associations. I had found two in the villages of South Stoke, Oxfordshire, and Finchampstead, Berkshire, near to my home, and native town, in Reading (Reading gets a mention in Dr Gamble's book, p. 166!), where Sir Edward Cook and the Manchester philanthropist, Thomas Horsfall, spent their final years. I had not realised then that Ruskin's former Christ Church tutor and life-long friend, Osborne Gordon (1813-1883), a key focus of the book, served for 23 years as rector of St Michael and St Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead, very near to Horsfall's final resting place. It gave me an excuse for another pleasant Sunday afternoon out, where I was able to see for myself the memorial inside the church written to Gordon by Ruskin, bathed in the 'painted light' of some splendid Burne-Jones windows.

The heart of the book, however, as the title suggests, is to be found in the towns, villages and surrounding countryside of Shropshire, and particularly Bridgnorth, home town of Osborne Gordon, and Dr Gamble. I have little knowledge of the area, save for a journey taken on the Severn Valley Railway, followed by a lift courtesy of the Bridgnorth Cliff Railway, which left me free to explore the undoubtedly attractive town, in what turned out to be the torrential rains of 2007 which led to widespread flooding. Such an experience does not, however, lead me to question Dr Gamble's understandable and heartfelt affection for the area. Her obvious enthusiasm, and intimate knowledge, elevate the book by inspiring the reader, and it probably helped to motivate her detailed research which colours almost every page of the narrative.

As a keen family and local historian, I understand the twin delights and frustrations afforded by hours spent pouring over manuscript letters and diaries, published directories, maps and other documents in local studies libraries and county record offices. I appreciate the way Dr Gamble intricately weaves the facts she has unearthed into an accessible and lively account which always retains a keen sense of place, rooting the story in the homes, meeting-places and journeys to and fro of the central characters, many of whom are explored, in relation to Ruskin and James, for the first time in anything approaching a comprehensive manner.

Centre-stage with Gordon are John Pritchard (1797-1891), MP for Bridgnorth, and Edward Cheney (1803-1884), the art collector of Badger Hall. Their public lives and private personalities provide the substance of a study which finds its glue in friendships and family relationships, and Dr Gamble's mission to tease out the associational culture of people and places allows her to present Ruskin and James in an unfamiliar light, or at least to get her readers to see them from an unconventional perspective. And I'm sure it works equally well the other way about, because it claims for Shropshire a role in Victorian culture which I presume is little known to local historians.

Plainly but not inelegantly written, this book should appeal to a wide readership. Its short chapters, split into easily digestible sub-sections, make it a joy to read in bursts, and each time you pick the book up you can appreciate another link you hadn't been aware of before: Ruskin's connection to John Derby Allcroft through the school on London's Newgate Street, for instance; it is useful and instructive to be reminded of the number of friends and acquaintances Ruskin and James shared in common.

Dr Gamble writes about 'the echoes of Shropshire' to be found in the pages of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (p. 77), but it is in her own work that the complex network of associations between the constituents of her title emerges for all to see. Her book, an exemplary combination of the nationally significant and the locally specific, should be read, in my opinion, as a challenge and an invitation for us to write on what we most intimately know and care about.

Stuart Eagles

Matthew Townend, *The Vikings and Victorian Lakeland: The Norse Medievalism of W.G. Collingwood and his Contemporaries*. Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society, 2009. £35.

W.G. Collingwood is well known to Ruskinians as an intimate member of the Brantwood circle during the last two decades of Ruskin's life. He was effectively Ruskin's private secretary during this time, a role in which he was able to blend the characters of disciple and friend. He memorably caught the atmosphere of Brantwood life in his well-known watercolour of Ruskin in his study, painted in 1882 and now in the Coniston Museum. His two-volume *Life and Work of John Ruskin*, published in 1893, was in effect an authorised biography which established him as one of the foremost presenters and interpreters of Ruskin's thoughts and writings. Now Collingwood himself is the subject of a biography – not a biography in the full sense of the word, but an account of his career that traces his interest in the Scandinavian presence in the Lakeland, and describes his investigations into the material remains of the Viking settlement of that region. Collingwood played an important part in the rise of Nordic studies in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as this book makes clear, and it is perhaps not surprising that, given his closeness to Ruskin, some of his discoveries made an impression on his mentor.

Collingwood fell under Ruskin's spell in 1872 while he was an undergraduate at Oxford, when Ruskin was Slade Professor of Fine Art. He attended Ruskin's drawing classes, participated in discussions in Ruskin's rooms, and served his time on the Hinksey diggings. In 1873, together with his father, a watercolourist, and his fellow student Alexander Wedderburn, he visited Ruskin at Brantwood, from which time onwards he was gradually wound into the Master's affairs. He trained as an artist at the Slade in London, but his style as a watercolour painter owed more to Ruskin than to any other influence. In 1882 he was Ruskin's travelling companion on a tour through France, Italy and the Alps, during which time he came to share Ruskin's fascination with geology. After his marriage in 1883, he moved into a cottage at Gillhead, on Windermere, within easy reach of Brantwood. He began to spend more time writing than painting, producing works on Ruskinian subjects: political economy, the geology of mountains, mineralogy, the decorative arts and mythology. Slowly, antiquarian studies came to dominate his imagination, as he came to appreciate the extent of the Viking presence in the north-west of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Spreading out from their base in the Isle of Man, they had settled in the Lakeland and northern Cumbria, remaining long enough to leave their mark on the place-names and language of the region, and leaving too a legacy of their characteristically vigorous sculpture, full of knots and interlace, in which pagan and Christian imagery was indiscriminately mixed.

Readers of this journal will be curious to know how this increasing attention to Norse culture affected Ruskin. Matthew Townend is very helpful in this matter. He shows that Ruskin had already responded with approval to Carlyle's praise of Norse mythology in the first chapter of *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, and his *Early Kings of Norway* of 1875. With his belief that the art of a nation or a race was an index of its character, Ruskin recognised that there was something unusually vigorous and bold in the Scandinavian carvings that Collingwood introduced him to. Perhaps he had overlooked these Nordic energies that had shaped the emerging identity of the English in his preoccupation with Italy and France. Late in his life he began to be aware of this omission. The admiration for Anglo-Saxon figures expressed in the disordered lectures on 'The Pleasures of England' in 1884-5 was part of that process. He was intrigued by *Igdrasil*, the world-tree of Norse mythology (described by Carlyle as 'the Tree of Existence, ever-growing, ever-dying; mounting out of deep Death-Kingdoms, and deciduous returning thither'), which he introduced into the closing peroration of *The Laws of Fesole*, and which became the title for the journal of the Ruskin Reading Guild in 1890. In the mid-1880s he became interested in drawings of the carvings on the crosses at Gosforth and Bewcastle. But it was all too late: 'I have never yet been able in the least to decipher the meanings of these northern sculptures', he admitted to a friend in 1886.

Collingwood's relationship with Ruskin is of course only one strand in a broad narrative. Dr Townend's book documents the awareness of a Norse presence in the Lakeland in authors from Thomas de Quincey to Arthur Ransome. Historically minded Victorians became increasingly conscious of this exotic element in the northern landscape, sometimes employing it to reinforce racial myths about the hardy, fearless, adventurous spirit that went into the making of modern Englishmen. Collingwood himself produced a notable historical fiction, aimed at both children and adults, about the Vikings in the Lakeland, entitled *Thorstein of the Mere*, published in 1895. It is in effect a Lake District saga, which traces the origins of Thorstein's family in Norway, then in the Isle of Man, before moving to Cumbria. Thorstein participates in a few Viking raiding expeditions – pillage only, no rape, for this is a Victorian story – before marrying a slave-girl and settling happily on Peel Island in Coniston Water; not far from Brantwood, in fact. He dies nobly in an heroic battle, but his children live on, ancestors of the Victorian inhabitants of the Lake District. Townend remarks that 'the work ends with a Ruskinian vision of love and labour in the area of Coniston, in a manner that seems careful not to distinguish between the tenth century and the nineteenth'.

That book gave Collingwood many opportunities to indulge his passion for place-names and their origin, and it also marked his move into serious archaeological investigation of Viking remains in Cumbria, a subject that Dr Townend explores in some detail. He became particularly interested in early Christian crosses and their Scandinavian motifs, and his many publications in this area helped to popularise the use of what is loosely called a 'Celtic cross', with interlace, knotwork and sculptural decoration, for memorials from the end of the nineteenth century until after the Great War. Ruskin's memorial cross in Coniston churchyard, familiar to most readers of this journal, was designed by Collingwood. Matthew Townend's book helps us to understand how Collingwood's life was initially drawn into Ruskin's, yet ultimately Collingwood imposed his own cultural values on Ruskin. It is no gothic monument that stands at Coniston, but a memorial that is half Celtic, half Norse.

Do read this book. It is both scholarly and highly readable. It throws a lot of light on Ruskin's later years, and offers a fascinating account of the antiquarian activity that was going forward in the Lake District in the time of Ruskin's residence there. Collingwood was a man of many talents and much influence, who deserves greater recognition than he currently enjoys: this volume does him justice.

Graham Parry

The Editor draws attention to the Ruskin Review and Bulletin, which is published twice yearly, in Spring and Autumn, at Lancaster University. It is available from Lauren Proctor, Administrator of the Research Centre, The Ruskin Library, County Main B190, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YD. A year's subscription costs £10. Cheques payable to Lancaster University.

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