

# The Companion

## The Newsletter of The Guild of St George

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[www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk)

### A Letter from the Master

Dear fellow Companions,  
Your copy of *The Companion* is arriving a little earlier this year. We are trying to get back to the original plan of sending it out six months before the papers for the AGM. But there is a lot going on and I hope you will find it as full as last year's issue.

One thing you were promised, alas, is not happening – or not happening this year. Stephen Wildman and I had planned to follow up last year's economic symposium in London with a second event to be called 'Who Pays for the Environment?' But as some of you know, I had a major accident in December – I slipped on the ice and broke my hip – and that made it difficult for me to pursue all my plans. We have therefore decided to postpone the second symposium and are hoping to hold it on 11<sup>th</sup> February – exactly two years after the last one.

Ruskin and his ideas were very much in the news at the time of the first symposium. Articles by Andrew Hill in the *Financial Times* and Jonathan Glancey in the *Guardian* had drawn attention to the contemporary relevance of his social and economic concerns, as had Bernard Richards on More4 News. This year he has more than once come up, in, for instance, Simon Jenkins's *Guardian* column, but I have been more struck by his extensive presence as an artist. The magnificent *Study of a Spray of Dead Oak Leaves* from our Sheffield Collection features in the exhibition *Watercolour* at Tate Britain alongside, *inter alia*, some magnificent Turners. There were Ruskins in *Life, Legend, Landscape: Victorian Drawings and Watercolours* at the Courtauld Institute Gallery, and the drawing of St Mark's in the rain crops up in *The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, a show which also has much to say about Ruskin's cultural importance. Above all, there is a whole section of Ruskin drawings in *The Poetry of Drawing: Pre-Raphaelite Designs, Studies and Watercolours* at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, ranging from a little-known but remarkable early drawing of the ambulatory at Chartres to such accepted masterpieces as the *Cascade de la Folie, Chamonix*.

As usual, there has been a steady flow of Ruskin publications: especially worth mentioning are two outstanding studies of Ruskin the social thinker: Sara Atwood's *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Ashgate) and Stuart Eagles's *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (OUP). Ruskin studies, indeed, continue to grow. Last year I attended the excellent conference, *Ruskin and Cultural Value*, organised by Dinah Birch at Liverpool and Lancaster Universities. I gave one of the two keynote lectures – on 'Ruskin and the Challenge of Modernity'. The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has launched a major new online teaching resource called *The Elements of Drawing* – <http://ruskin.ashmolean.org> – and on 3<sup>rd</sup> June hosted a conference on *Ruskin Collections, Past and Future*. The speakers included Colin Harrison of the Ashmolean, Stephen Wildman, Robert Hewison and our own Curator Louise Pullen, who spoke on the digitisation project and the website at Sheffield.

### The Guild of St George

Master:	Clive Wilmer
Directors:	Janet Barnes, James Dearden, John Iles, Peter Miller, Cedric Quayle, Clive Wilmer, Robert Wilson, Jacqueline Yallop (co-opted)
Secretary to the Board:	Norman Hobbs
Editor of <i>The Companion</i> :	Professor Graham Parry (gp8@york.ac.uk)

The Quatercentenary of the King James Bible, published in 1611, has also drawn attention to Ruskin, because of his deep engagement with it from earliest boyhood. To his mother's teaching of it, he tells us in *Praeterita*, 'I owed ... not only knowledge of the book, which I find occasionally serviceable, but ... the best part of my taste in literature.' Having learnt many passages 'each syllable by heart', he goes on, 'it was not possible for me, even in the foolishness of youth, to write entirely superficial or formal English...' Michael Wheeler has virtually toured the country preaching on this theme. I would draw Companions' attention to his marvellous new essay 'Habitual Music: Ruskin and his Contemporaries Reading the King James Bible' in *The King James Bible after 400 Years*, edited by Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W. Jones (CUP). I myself addressed the Friends of the University Library, Cambridge, on 'The "King James" as Literary Inspiration: John Ruskin and the Bible', a lecture which I hope to repeat at Lancaster and eventually to publish. This year's Guild lecture, in November at our Sheffield AGM, will be on Ruskin and the KJB as well; it will be given by Zoë Bennett of the Cambridge Theological Federation and (appropriately enough) Anglia Ruskin University. As some Companions will already know, Zoë has been studying Ruskin's annotations in the margins of his Bibles.

The work of The Guild of St George has contributed substantially to this steady growth of work on and inspired by Ruskin. Outstandingly, this year has seen the refurbishment of our Gallery in Sheffield and the change of its name to 'The Ruskin Collection'. This is thanks to the generosity of that remarkable charity, the Wolfson Foundation whose grant was matched by one from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Since I became Master I have become more and more aware of how deeply Ruskin's influence has been felt in the city of Sheffield. Something of that bond was dissolved when the Collection left Norfolk Street, but there is statistical evidence that, since the launch of the refurbished Gallery, it has already begun to revive. Elsewhere in this issue I thank a number of those involved – there is no space to thank everyone but I can assure them that the gratitude is felt. I want here and now to commend the new design to Companions. You may think, as I did, that you know the Collection well. I assure you that there is a great deal more for your learning and – a Ruskinian word – admiration.

To provide more intellectual support for the Collection in its new form, the Guild has published a range of new and revised booklets. Janet Barnes's book on the Collection, *Ruskin in Sheffield*, has been revised and reprinted with new illustrations. Our former Master James S. Dearden has written a short history: *John Ruskin's Guild of St George*. Anthony Harris, also a former Master, and Robert Hewison have revised old Guild lectures: Harris's *Why Have our Little Girls Large Shoes? Ruskin and the Guild of St George* and Hewison's *Ruskin and Sheffield: The Museum of the Guild of St George and its Making* (a rewrite of *Art and Society: Ruskin in Sheffield, 1876*). Finally, Marcus Waithe has written *Ruskin at Walkley: An Illustrated Guide to the Online Museum*, which is just what it claims to be. See the website [www.ruskinatwalkley.org](http://www.ruskinatwalkley.org).

The work of Cedric Quayle and John and Linda Iles continues at Bewdley with considerable energy. The restoration of old orchards, Care Farming for those in social distress, sustainable farming of the land and livestock, the production of delicious apple juice – these are all on the menu, all now supported by the educational work of the new Ruskin Studio. Ruskin always wanted there to be something more than the basic agricultural presence in Bewdley and these wider cultural possibilities are now opening up. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July some of us attended a summer event, which began with a visit to Bewdley's town museum, which has borrowed a selection of works from the Ruskin Collection in Sheffield. It was not possible to lend our most valuable pictures because of the insurance costs



Charcoal-burning at Uncllys (photo: Peter Burman)

and the limited funds of a small provincial museum. I was especially impressed by the way Louise Pullen had managed to represent the range of the Collection while keeping the costs down. This was followed by a visit to Uncllys Farm and a talk on the Guild's involvement with Bewdley by Mark Frost. The classic Iles barbecue was a great success and there were tours of the farm and forest, which took in a fascinating demonstration of charcoal burning by resident coppice-worker, Chris Atkins. Companions will be interested to know that John Iles and I have both involved ourselves in the campaign against the privatisation of forests and are currently working on statements to be submitted to the DEFRA panel on the forests' future.

## Relaunching the Ruskin Collection

*[The Ruskin Gallery, which last year was closed for refurbishment, reopened on 17 March. Transformed by those six months of intensive work, and now renamed The Ruskin Collection, it began its new life with a Private View. The avenue of the Millennium Galleries was packed with visitors, most of whom returned from their first tour of the Collection overflowing with enthusiasm. Here was a fitting chest for the treasure Ruskin had given us! Having made the tour myself before our guests could begin theirs, I offered them this speech of thanks and celebration. (The text has been revised for ease of reading.)]*

In the 1870s, the period in which John Ruskin founded his St George's Museum, from which the Guild's Collection descends, he was writing his series of monthly letters 'To the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain'. It was in one of these letters in 1871 that he launched the utopian charity that was to become The Guild of St George. The letters were published under a common title, *Fors Clavigera*, which puzzled Ruskin's readers, and in one of the early ones Ruskin felt bound to explain it. It turns out to have had several meanings for him, one of which was 'Fortune the nail-bearer'. He had been reflecting, as I understand it, on the vital role played in our lives by chance; when 'fortune' offers itself, he believed, we must seize the opportunity and nail it down before it drifts away.

Ruskin's connection with Sheffield began almost by chance, and he promptly nailed it down. It was to prove fortunate for him, fortunate for the Guild, and fortunate for the people of Sheffield. Among the many things he wanted to do through the Guild was to effect 'the purchase of land in healthy districts, and the employment of labourers on the land, under the carefulest supervision, and with every proper means of mental instruction...' His purpose was to show 'in practice the rational organisation of country life, independent of that of cities' and he wished to promote 'the liberal education of the artizan [*sic*]'. That Sheffield was an industrial city was important. Ruskin was agonisingly aware of the deprivation suffered by the poor in industrial cities – conscious that living in polluted slums, working unsocial hours and breathing in the smoke from factory chimneys, working people suffered in body and soul. He believed that fresh air, blue sky and green hills were gifts of a loving God to human beings and that to deprive people of such things was as cruel as depriving them of food or sleep. He believed, too, that beauty in art or design could not be achieved among people who had never had the chance to experience natural beauty. He designed St George's Museum to teach us how to see – to see the world which, day by day, passes before our eyes, but which much of the time we fail to notice.

So the idea of building a teaching gallery on the rural fringe of an industrial city was fundamental to the Guild's purposes. Ruskin had several cities in mind. He chose Sheffield, which was only to have been the first, for three reasons. Somebody recently said to me that many regard Sheffield as an ugly picture in a magnificent frame. That's a little unfair to some of the city's buildings, but the best of them almost all post-date Ruskin's involvement with the city. It was the frame that interested him and he believed that if more people had the leisure to stand at the top of Meersbrook Park and survey the spectacular view, the centre of Sheffield might soon become like the centres of Florence or Pisa, cities similarly surrounded by hills and notable for craftsmen who became famous as artists. For as a student of craft and design, he had enormous respect for Sheffield as a centre of craftsmanship in the metalwork industry.

So the Peak District and Sheffield cutlery were two of the things that attracted him. The third reason for choosing Sheffield was a gift from Fortune. The first curator of the St George's Museum, Henry Swan, was an artisan whom Ruskin had taught at the Working Men's College in London, where Ruskin gave free drawing

### ***A Letter from The Master continued from previous page***

In recent years at the AGM we have given talks and held discussions under the title 'The Way Forward'. In November I took this issue a stage further and invited three Companions, two of them signing the Roll that day, to talk on their work and its relevance to the Guild. One of these talks – by Catherine Howarth of Fair Pensions – is published in this issue and I hope that the other two will come out in next year's. I intend to pursue this policy for at least a further year and will be asking for some different stories in November. A surprisingly large number of Companions have joined us in the last two or three years: a sign, I hope I am right in thinking, of rude health.

As for my own health, that, I am glad to say, is improving fast. I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking Jim Dearden and Norman Hobbs for keeping the ship afloat during my months of convalescence and for not complaining at autocratic interventions issued from time to time from the sickbed.

*All good wishes,*

*Clive Wilmer*

classes. Swan had moved to Sheffield and kept in touch with the great man. He was attracted by the ideals of the Guild, which Ruskin was laying down in the pages of *Fors Clavigera*. Swan was exactly the curator Ruskin wanted: an independent, intelligent man committed to Ruskin's values – a person who, as a working man himself, was well equipped to communicate with people of his own class. So Ruskin purchased a small stone-built cottage overlooking the unspoilt Rivelin Valley on Bell Hagg Road in Walkley and moved Swan into it. It was a museum for urban people that looked out into the beauty of the countryside.

The later story of the Gallery is a less happy one. The last two decades or so of Ruskin's life were disrupted by attacks of insanity; eventually he sank into a vegetative silence. During this period, the Museum, already bursting at the seams, moved out to Meersbrook, where it became the Ruskin Museum, which was precisely what Ruskin didn't want it to be. It stayed there, steadily declining as Ruskin's reputation steadily declined, until 1950, when it went into store – first in Sheffield, then later at the University of Reading, reserved for academic study and far removed from its original place and purpose. Its removal effectively consigned Ruskin's work to the past and somehow confirmed that his ideas were of interest only to students of Victorian life.

But the last fifty years have seen a steady recovery in Ruskin's reputation. In 1985 the Guild was able to move the Collection back to Sheffield where it found an elegant and charming home right in the city centre in Norfolk Street. In 2000, however, it moved on again and became a segment of the new Millennium Galleries, part of that institution's commitment to craftsmanship and design.

I have known the Collection in both its recent homes. In Norfolk Street it recovered something of its original purpose. The slums had gone, it is true, and the gallery no longer belonged to the countryside, but it was still a place that busy people could drop into and derive refreshment from a range of beauty. In its present home, I feel, it has been less of a presence in the lives of Sheffield people. For one thing the space is small and the great mass of the collection is locked away in the basement. The predominance of glass in this building is unfriendly to work that is mostly in watercolour, since light makes watercolours fade. Its position as one of what looks like a series of shops creates exactly the wrong associations for work that is meant to resist commodification and promote contemplative quiet. At the same time, its proximity to both the wonderful Winter Garden and the Metalwork Gallery generates exactly the sorts of association that Ruskin would have wanted. We have also been very lucky in the people chosen to care for the Collection: in our present Keeper, Kim Streets, and our Curator, Louise Pullen, and in all the people who work with them. They have looked after the Collection and publicised it with (to use a Ruskinian phrase) 'utmost conscience of care', and without them this refurbishment could never have happened.

And now we have had the chance to put right the mistakes that were made at the turn of this century. A grant of £100,000 from the Wolfson Foundation and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport has made a thorough redesign possible, providing a base from which we have been able to apply for further funding. I would very much like to express the deep thanks of the Guild to both of them, as also to Kate Wafer of the consultants Wafer Hadley, whose report 'Seeing Beauty' informed the plan of refurbishment.

To add new focus to the Collection, we have published a number of books and pamphlets, which are on sale in the Millennium Galleries shop and by post from our Secretary, Norman Hobbs. I want particularly to draw your attention to the handsome new edition of *Ruskin in Sheffield* by Janet Barnes, the first Keeper of the Norfolk Street Gallery and now a Director of the Guild. The book has been updated by Louise Pullen, who has also added new and improved illustrations. There is also a new pamphlet on the Walkley Museum by Marcus Waithe, the creator of the 'Ruskin at Walkley' website; his publication is a guide to the online museum, and fascinating it is. Anthony Harris, a former Master of the Guild, and Robert Hewison have revised their lectures about – respectively – the Guild and Ruskin's Sheffield, and my predecessor as Master, James S. Dearden, has written a brief history of the Guild.

Admirers of Ruskin, like myself, find a quality in his work that is sometimes puzzling to people who have not yet got to know it. We find it prophetic. That is to say, though it is very much of the Victorian age, it also speaks – uncannily sometimes – to our time as well. When the Credit Crunch hit three years ago, a number of commentators could be heard to argue that Ruskin's social and economic ideas were peculiarly applicable to the situation – that he had identified the evils of contemporary markets and proposed a change of attitudes. The same can be true of Ruskin's educational principles, for importantly The Ruskin Collection – to give it its new name – is an educational collection, not just an art gallery. Ruskin liked to quote a line of Wordsworth's: 'We live by admiration, love and hope.' Hope and love are not difficult to grasp; they are, after all, two of St Paul's three cardinal virtues, the other being faith. But admiration? To look out over the grandeur of the Peak District from an ordinary cottage; to sit in the presence of a beautiful mineral or an illuminated manuscript; to feel awe at the wonders that surround us in nature or the skills of hand and mind in the creation of art; to feel that these things are not alien or remote but belong to us as humans and are capable of bringing peace to our lives. These are

the sources of wealth. Not wealth in the sense of money in the bank, but wealth in the sense of well-being and the value of a richly conscious life. These are the things that Ruskin's Collection offers us. The gloom of industrial Sheffield has gone, but we still know about the ills of a competitive system, as a time of recession and cutbacks makes us aware – acutely so in the context of Sheffield itself. There is still enough anxiety, privation and sheer ugliness in our world today that we might wish to be freed from them.

*Clive Wilmer*

### **The Reopening of the Ruskin Gallery in Sheffield**

There was a very large turn-out at the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield on the 17<sup>th</sup> March to mark the reopening of the Ruskin Collection there, after six months of closure. Plenty of Companions were in evidence, along with many civic figures, and a crowd of friends of the Gallery. Clive Wilmer, the Master, gave a succinct account of the Guild and its collections, coupled with a forceful vindication of Ruskin's relevance to today's society.

The exhibition has been completely remodelled. One is lured in via a curved wall covered in specially designed wallpaper that incorporates motifs expressive of Ruskin's extensive interests. Once inside, the viewer is confronted by a vast montage of Tintoretto's 'Paradiso' from the Doges' Palace that extends across the top width of the rear wall, presiding over a display of paintings and watercolours that documents Ruskin's long involvement with Venice. The Guild's painting of the façade of St Mark's by John Bunney, an artist who worked for Ruskin, is now shown to advantage in this setting, having been cleaned and given a new frame. Complementing it nearby hangs Bunney's painting of a corner of the Doges' Palace, which was bought by the Directors at auction last year. Watercolours by Ruskin confirm him to be one of the finest exponents of that medium in Victorian times: his sensitivity to light and colour, and the incomparable atmosphere of his landscapes make him a genuine rival to Turner.

There are well lit displays of gemstones and minerals that Ruskin gave to The Guild, the brilliance of the lighting bringing out the colour and lustrousness of the stones, and clarifying their crystalline structures. Similarly jewel-like are several of the illuminated medieval manuscripts that Ruskin loved to spend his money on. In an adjoining case are some specimens of fine Victorian printing, most notably several books produced by the Kelmscott Press. I was especially taken by a superb binding by Cobden Sanderson of a copy of *Unto This Last*, given by the binder to Ruskin; the gilt tooling on the red morocco is quite exquisite.

A poignant reminder of a lost treasure of the Guild collection is an excellent copy of Verocchio's 'Virgin and Child' by Philippa Abrahams, made in 2000. The Directors of the Guild decided to sell this painting in 1975, to raise money for practical projects, and because of the cost of its insurance.

The renewal of the gallery, the choice of items and their overall display, have been supervised by Louise Pullen, the Curator of the Collection, who should be congratulated on a highly successful presentation. One long-standing problem that she has solved is the lighting level, which is now adjustable so that Ruskin's watercolours can be properly exhibited. She has also ensured that the very fine slate slab that used to mark the entrance to the Ruskin gallery at its old location has been preserved here. It is superbly carved by David Kindersley, the finest of modern letter-cutters, who was trained by Eric Gill. It is most appropriate that work of this quality should have been made in honour of John Ruskin, who did so much to articulate the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Ruskin wished that the collections of The Guild of St George should be displayed for the benefit of the people of Sheffield, to offer them an experience of the elevating forms of art and nature that would enhance their lives in an industrial city. In a greatly changed Sheffield, the collections can still perform that role.

*Graham Parry*



*The Ruskin Collection (photo: Museums Sheffield)*

## A Review of 'Ruskin and Tolstoy'

### The Ruskin Lecture given by Stuart Eagles at The Bar Convent, York, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Most Ruskin readers will be aware to some degree of links between John Ruskin and Count Leo Tolstoy, and have a sense of their common commitment to social justice, their recommendation of the virtues of agrarian life, and their reliance on Christian spirituality. Scholarship on this subject has, though, been rather patchy and piecemeal, particularly in recent years, so the work of Stuart Eagles in delving more deeply into the relationship between two of the most significant thinkers of the nineteenth century is not just timely, but overdue. For those who gathered for the 2010 Ruskin Lecture in the Bar Convent in York, Stuart's presentation was a highlight of an excellent day. As Guild members, Ruskin enthusiasts, or scholars – we are particularly indebted to Stuart because he brought his customary diligence and attention to detail to bear on an important and largely-neglected topic. The paper that Stuart presented, available through the Guild as a printed lecture, demonstrated the extraordinary range of sources – Russian and English – on which Stuart has drawn, and the skill with which he brought these together during an informative and entertaining hour. One must commend Stuart for the aplomb and dedication with which he has learnt Russian and travelled through western Russia in the pursuit of this study. Stuart is perhaps most familiar to Guild Companions and the wider Ruskinian community through his work on Ruskin's legacy in the United Kingdom, a focus that this year has led to the publication of the excellent *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford University Press). The 2010 annual lecture drew upon and related to this work, but also represented another neglected area of study (Ruskin's reception abroad) that Stuart is already turning into a series of articles in leading journals. A new monograph is no doubt not too far behind.

Stuart began the lecture with a broad overview, noting that during their overlapping careers Ruskin and Tolstoy assumed similar roles within their very different societies – as prophetic figures, as 'outsspoken, controversial, relentless, and influential critics of their respective social and political systems', and as moral authorities who were at once rooted in and distinct from their surrounding societies. Both men drew upon spiritual traditions and religious teachings – in Ruskin's case from western Christianity and Greek Mythology; in Tolstoy's, from Orthodox Christianity and Eastern religions. Both men became revered, and their houses – Ruskin's Brantwood and Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaya Polyana – became 'sites of pilgrimage for their disciples and followers' in a way that marked the men out as 'sages to be revered'. Stuart pointed out their shared conviction that established governments in their countries were 'the cause of great misery for the vast majority of the population', and their shared commitment to an ideal society founded in agricultural values and non-mechanised production. But while the lecture ably demonstrated the manner in which their ideas overlapped, it was also keen to acknowledge and explore 'very real differences in the detail of their philosophies'. Not least of these are the degree to which Tolstoy's commitment to anarchism was inimical to the strands of Ruskin's thought that stressed hierarchy, authority, and obedience. On another level, Ruskin's celebration of the richness and materiality of beauty was in many ways at odds with Tolstoy's stated commitment to an ascetic lifestyle. Despite these important differences, what shone through in this lecture was the manner in which both men sought to connect their moral positions to the realities of life, and strove for the betterment of their fellow citizens.

The lecture covered three main areas, which can be dealt with in turn. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Stuart's work is the manner in which he has uncovered the role of Lev Pavlovich Nikiforov as the principal translator and transmitter of Ruskin's work in pre-revolutionary Russia. Tracing Nikiforov's close relationship with his mentor, Tolstoy, and his involvement in a complex series of anti-Tsarist networks of activists and thinkers, the lecture revealed a fascinating and hitherto unknown aspect of Ruskin's movement into Russian intellectual life. After a period of political exile, Nikiforov worked with Tolstoy in the production of 'a sort of Peasants' library' that sounds rather reminiscent of Ruskin's projected but uncompleted *Bibliotheca Pastorum* as a collection of volumes for early Guild Companions. Another collaborator and Tolstoyan, Vladimir Chertkov established the publishing house *Posrednik* (Intermediary or Mediator) through which Nikiforov and others would attempt 'to make the best of the world's literature available as cheaply as possible' to a working class or peasant population. It is unclear whether, at a time of low literacy levels, these works reached their target audiences or were received primarily by the Russian intelligentsia. Like *Fors Clavigera*, there was probably a gap between intended and actual readerships. Nonetheless, *Posrednik* issued 600 titles, including seven volumes of Ruskin's works. Through this project and others, Nikiforov 'was responsible for translating a total of three books about Ruskin, four selections from Ruskin, and twelve books by Ruskin, as well as writing his own biography'. Given that this 'represents about half of the Ruskin-related titles published in pre-revolutionary Russia', Stuart's discovery of the role of Nikiforov is particularly valuable to those interested in Ruskin's reception abroad in the period prior to 1914.

Turning to the issue of how Ruskin and Tolstoy regarded one another, Stuart showed that while Ruskin was clearly aware of Tolstoy, it seems unlikely that he read any of his works. In sharp contrast, Tolstoy appears to have been an avid consumer of Ruskin's writings, which he read in English. In the late 1880s, Ruskin had been made aware of the social aspects of Tolstoy's work, and was clearly impressed by his commitment to rural values and the renunciation of personal wealth. According to Alice Meynell, Ruskin 'reproached himself that he had not the courage to live in a garret or make shoes like Tolstoi (whom he had not read, but heard of with sympathetic envy)'. Tolstoy's immersion in Ruskinian ideas, on the other hand, was much greater, and took place over a longer period. Initially, Tolstoy does not appear to have been particularly impressed by Ruskin's work, criticising the influence of Evangelicalism on Ruskin, and taking his 'artificial' prose to task. Later, he became increasingly indebted to Ruskinian ideas, eventually using them extensively in his collection of sage pronouncements (or 'Epigraphs of striking force') from writers and thinkers of all ages and places in *A Calendar of Wisdom* (1903-10) and *Life's Way* (1905). Painstakingly attempting to recreate Tolstoy's reading of Ruskin, Stuart alerted us to the way in which the Russian was appreciative not merely of Ruskin's social thought (although it was this that attracted most praise) but also his work on art and architecture. Tolstoy saw Ruskin as an ally and guide in his own battles against 'cultural barbarity'. In an 1898 quotation perhaps familiar to many readers, Tolstoy would describe Ruskin as 'one of the most remarkable men not only of England and of our generation, but of all countries and times' and complained that he was not recognised in England 'as a philosopher, political economist, and Christian moralist', while at the same time insisting that 'his fame grows and his thoughts penetrate among the public'. Six years earlier, *The Pall Mall Gazette* had reported his fears that Ruskin was not sufficiently recognised in his homeland: 'I am not astonished that people speak so little of Ruskin in comparison with Gladstone', Tolstoy told the *Gazette's* correspondent, complaining that 'when the latter makes a speech, the papers are loud with their praises, but when Ruskin, whom I believe to be the greater man, talks, they say nothing'.

In the final section of the lecture, and the part most closely related to Stuart's monograph, we were treated to insights in relation to an English writer and activist, John Coleman Kenworthy, who attempted to encapsulate Ruskinian, Tolstoyan, and other radical brands of thought through numerous works and his short-lived Purleigh Colony. For a brief period a Guild Companion, Kenworthy spent the early 1890s in the United States where he discovered Tolstoy's works. Linked to the co-operative movement and the Croydon Brotherhood Church, Kenworthy wrote extensively on social, moral, and religious questions. Stuart revealed that Kenworthy travelled to Russia where he met Tolstoy, and that the two men were on very good terms, Tolstoy going as far as to collect and praise Kenworthy's works. While the Purleigh Colony, like so many others, was short-lived, Stuart argued that Kenworthy sought to implement a mixture of Tolstoyan and Ruskinian ideas in his life and practice, and that he shared their commitment to an agricultural idyll.

During the Guild AGM at York we had earlier been treated to the fascinating and inspiring experiences of three Companions – a horticulturalist, a furniture maker, and an advocate for ethical pensions – who were daily implementing social ideas and ideals which they traced in various ways to their experiences of Ruskin and his work. Having heard their stories and Stuart's paper, it later struck me that these Companions exemplified and lived exactly the combination of thought and action, of theory and praxis, that the two giant figures of Stuart's lecture tried in various ways to foster and support. Whatever their differences, both Ruskin and Tolstoy strove (with various degrees of success) for a lived experience of social struggle, for the actual exercise of moral principles in daily activities, and for the personal and cultural transformations that might arise from such activities. It was pleasing to see that this spirit – so difficult to pin down, but so central to the tradition of activism in which we might place the sages of Brantwood and Yasnaya Polyana – still thriving in the gardens at Ruskin's Brantwood home in the Lake District, in a small London furniture company, and in the work undertaken amongst the board rooms, shop floors, and offices of the commercial and education sectors. Without this spirit, the Guild would have no reason to exist. With it, demonstrated through so many activities within the Guild and amongst its members, there is a fine future ahead.

In closing an excellent lecture, full of insight and measured commentary, Stuart left the audience to consider what can be achieved by a combination of detailed and persistent archival research and incisive critical analysis. Stuart certainly deserves to join the illustrious list of annual Ruskin lecturers, and the audience showed their warm appreciation for a wonderful talk. Having shone a light into a little-explored area of Ruskin's work and influence, he left me, for one, hoping for more in future – to hear, perhaps, more of the impact of the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period on Ruskin's reception in the USSR – and, above all, thankful for the mental connections to which his words had led me.

Mark Frost

## A New Guild Roll

In March 1876 John Ruskin wrote the names of the thirty two Companions accepted into the Guild of St George up to that date on to a blank leaf of vellum in his 11<sup>th</sup> century Greek *Gospel Lectionary*. This was the first Roll of Companions and the manuscript is now in the British Library (Egerton 3046). The second Roll really *is* a roll. It was prepared in 1884 and it lists, alphabetically, all those admitted as Companions up to 4 December 1884.

This second Roll is made from vellum skins, and periodically new membranes were added to the Roll when necessary. Eventually, by 1986, at the end of the eighth membrane, the Roll had reached the length of 12' 4" and had become a little unmanageable ! It was decided to replace it with a folio volume of a more manageable size and shape. This volume is still in use and will be filled during the next couple of years. The directors have decided that the time has come when another new "Roll" should be prepared.

This fourth Roll also takes the form of a volume. It has been bound by the firm of George Bayntun of Bath. Bayntun's, established in 1894, incorporates the early Victorian firm of Robert Riviere & Sons, established in 1829. They are one of the country's foremost and most respected firms of bookbinders. The volume is bound in an "arts and crafts" style. Taking the advice of the scribe who annually adds names and locations to our current Roll, we are using a heavy hand-made paper made by Saunders Waterfield; there will be about fifty pages, 370 x 300mm.

The spine is not too rounded, and the volume will easily stay open to facilitate signing. The binding will be of quarter goat-skin and oak boards, that is to say the spine will be of leather and at the front and back of the volume it will be recessed into the plain wooden boards. The volume is lettered on the spine "The Guild of St George. Roll of Companions", and there is discreet blind decoration on the quarter calf.

A blue goat-skin has been selected, to tone with Ruskin's preferred Oxford blue. The end-papers will be of Cockerell paper, chosen to tone with the goat-skin. The oak boards have kindly been donated by Cedric Quayle and come from his own woods in the Wyre Forest at Bewdley. A case has been made to protect the Roll, fitted with a carrying handle to make it easier to transport it to annual general meetings.

Depending on the numbers of new Companions enrolled, the new Roll will probably come into use in 2012.

*James S. Dearden*



*Guild Directors James Dearden, Clive Wilmer, Peter Miller and Cedric Quayle examine the new Guild Roll (photos: John Iles)*



## A Note Regarding Van Akin Burd

Van Akin Burd, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at The State University of New York at Cortland, is the author of many Ruskin "classics" as all readers of this journal know. Over the course of a "Ruskin career" spanning more than seven decades he has written a score and more of scholarly articles on the great Victorian who is the subject of these pages and is author of no fewer than four acclaimed books: *The Winnington Letters of John Ruskin*, *The Ruskin Family Letters* (two volumes), *John Ruskin and Rose La Touche* and *Christmas Story: John Ruskin's Venetian Letters of 1876-77*, not to mention the subject of the festschrift, *Studies in Ruskin: Essays in Honor of Van Akin Burd*. Support for his Ruskin research has come from various scholarly organizations including the American Philosophical Society, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Delmas Foundation for Venetian Studies and the Research Foundation of the State University of New York. Now in his 97th year, he continues to work on Ruskin, having published four articles in the last two years. For all these reasons there can be no doubt that he is the living "dean" of Ruskin studies. For all his work on Ruskin's behalf, we would like to take this moment to wish him "Happy Birthday!"

*Jim Spates*

*Addendum:* At the request of the editor of this publication, Professor Jim Spates of Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York, has recently conducted a series of interviews with Professor Burd concerning how his interest in Ruskin began and developed. It is hoped that a version of these interviews will appear in a later number of this journal.



## Howgate Wonder at Unclyls

I am, I suppose, no more interested in apples than the average Companion - if indeed there *is* an average Companion! However, at John and Linda Iles's open day at Unclyls Farm on 2 July, I *was* intrigued to see that one of the many sorts of apple juice offered before and during lunch was one prepared from an apple called "Howgate Wonder". John tells me that he planted several Howgate Wonder trees at Unclyls about four years ago.

It just so happens that Howgate is the name of a road in Bembridge, and I have driven or walked along Howgate Lane (I believe it is now called "Road") countless times.

A little way from the top of Howgate Lane is a little row of cottages, and it was here, at 4 Hope Cottage, that George Wratten lived. Wratten had been a policeman before becoming a gardener on a large estate in Molesey, Surrey. He moved to the Isle of Wight in the early 1900s.

In his Howgate Lane garden in 1915-16 he grafted a Blenheim Orange and a Newton Wonder to produce one of the largest cooking apples still in cultivation today. It was officially registered with the Royal Horticultural Society in 1932. The original tree was cut down in the 1960s, having been neglected for many years. A Howgate Wonder apple grown in Kent in 1997 set a new record for apple size. It weighed 3 lbs 11 oz and measured 7 inches across, with a circumference of 21 inches (roughly the size of a child's head).



*George Wratten*  
(photo: Isle of Wight County Press)



I read that the fruits have a finely-textured juicy flesh which is quite sweet with a faintly aromatic flavour. It certainly makes a drinkable juice.

[I am indebted to John Woodford, the Bembridge local historian, for some of the information in this piece.]

*James S. Dearden*

## A New Creswick Bust of John Ruskin

Sheffield-born Benjamin Creswick (1853-1946) was a knife-grinder who, by 1871, lived in Walkley. The Guild's first museum opened there in 1876 and Creswick was an early visitor. He was a keen and accomplished amateur modeller and he showed examples of his work to the Guild's curator, Henry Swan. Swan gave Creswick a photograph of Ruskin and from this Creswick modelled a bust. This was included with four other busts of local worthies in the Sheffield Society of Artists Exhibition in June 1877.

Swan showed the bust to Ruskin. Spotting Creswick's genius, Ruskin offered to sit for him, and Creswick went to Coniston to sculpt a new bust. This second bust was exhibited in Sheffield in 1878. A mould was made and casts were offered for sale. They are incised on the back, "B.Creswick Sculpt. AD 1877". The original bust must have remained in Ruskin's possession and it was presented to Prince Leopold in October 1879 when he visited the Guild's museum at Walkley. Ruskin had become friendly with the prince when the latter was an undergraduate at Oxford and Ruskin was Slade Professor. The prince died in 1884 and the bust was then returned to Brantwood. It was bought by J. Howard Whitehouse at the Brantwood dispersal sales in 1931 and is now in the Whitehouse Collection at Lancaster University.



*Busts of Ruskin by Creswick. Right, the 1877 version; left, the 1887 bust (photo: Museums Sheffield)*

The casts must have continued to sell for more were made ten years later. Not only are the 1887 casts slightly smaller than the earlier version - 305mm as opposed to 325mm - the expression on the face is subtly different. Perhaps the original mould had been lost or damaged and it was necessary to create a new original in order to make a new mould. The 1887 bust is incised across the shoulders "B.Creswick Sc." and below is the date "1887".

Companion Peter Wardle had inherited copies of both versions of the bust. Some years ago he gave his cast of the 1877 bust to Cedric Quayle, in whose collection it remains. The 1887 terracotta version, illustrated here, has recently been acquired from Peter Wardle by the Guild. It now joins our cast of the 1877 bust.

*James S. Dearden*

## An Interview with Robert Hewison

I read Robert Hewison's immensely stimulating book *Ruskin on Venice*, which was published in 2009 by Yale, and it was clear to me that this was the culmination of a long engagement with Ruskin, going back to *The Argument of the Eye* in 1976. Curious to know how this involvement had begun and developed, I arranged a meeting to find out about the origin and progress of Hewison's relations with Ruskin. They began, he told me, in his days at Bedford School, where his discovery of William Gaunt's *The Aesthetic Adventure* led him out of the dullness of school life into the exotic bohemianism of the late Victorian art scene, and made him aware of the inspiring influence of Ruskin's writings on imaginatively-minded people. The presence in Bedford of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, which has an unusual selection of Pre-Raphaelite and late Victorian paintings on display, meant that some eye-opening illustrations to Gaunt's book were immediately available.

Hewison went on to Oxford, to Brasenose College, where Walter Pater had been a Fellow for many years, spreading the insidious gospel of Aestheticism among susceptible undergraduates. There he read History in a desultory way, spending more time with the University Dramatic Society than with The Experimental Theatre Club. The fact that Michael Palin was his tutorial partner helped to tilt his interests towards the stage, with consequences that have lasted for the whole of his career. On leaving Oxford in 1965 he went to Southern Television as a trainee researcher, before spending 1966-67 at Ravensbourne College of Art, learning to be a television director. This he never became, but began to work as a freelance writer and presenter for the BBC. He was asked, one day, if he could come up with a subject and a script, at short notice, for an arts slot that suddenly needed to be filled, with the result that he remembered the Ruskin-Whistler case as described in *The Aesthetic Adventure*, and realised that it would make compelling television – which it did. That exercise helped to put Ruskin back in his thoughts. Then as he was following up his resurgent interest in Ruskin, with the versatility that seems second nature when one is young, he unexpectedly became the presenter of the overseas service radio programme 'Focus on Africa', which gave him a steady income even if it didn't represent his enduring interests.

The pivotal event for Robert Hewison was the Ruskin conference at Brantwood, organised by Jim Dearden at Easter, 1969. This gathering lasted for the best part of a week, and as far as Hewison was concerned, it marked the renewal of Ruskin studies after a long period of neglect. Here was a sustained and variegated investigation into Ruskin's works and ideas conducted by a group of knowledgeable and enthusiastic people who could see how to give them a new relevance and appeal at a time when radical ideas were back in vogue. Fired by what he had heard at this conference, Hewison decided to return to Oxford as a graduate student, this time with a distinct sense of purpose, to write about Ruskin. He chose to do research into *Unto This Last*, *Sesame and Lilies*, and *The Queen of the Air*, tracing the development of Ruskin's economic and social ideas alongside his changing attitudes to the place of beauty in everyday life. From this research eventually emerged his book *The Argument of the Eye*, a milestone in Ruskin studies.

Thereafter, Hewison has made a mixed career out of journalism and university teaching. Many readers will be familiar with him as a long-standing theatre critic for *The Sunday Times*. He has held various academic posts, most pertinently as part-time Professor at Lancaster University, where he has been a regular contributor to the Ruskin Seminar, and an admirer and supporter of what Lancaster has achieved with the Ruskin Library and The Centre for Ruskin Studies. He was Slade Professor at Oxford, occupying the post that Ruskin himself held, in the centenary year 2000-1. Engagement with the larger world beyond academia, after the fashion of Ruskin, was a vocation he has not been able to resist. He co-curated the exhibition at Tate Britain in 2000, with Stephen Wildman and Ian Warrell, and has attempted to nudge social policy in this country towards ethical ends through his involvement in the think-tank Demos. In recent years he has been Professor of Cultural Policy and Leadership Studies at City University, London. If this title sounds managerially modern, his enactment of the role has been done with a strong sense of conscience and in the afterglow of Ruskinian ideals.

His most recent contribution to our understanding of our common interest has been *Ruskin on Venice*, a book that traces the interweaving of Ruskin's private life with the city that meant more to him than any other place on earth. It is an intensely illuminating study, moving from Ruskin's first awareness of Venice, through Byron's poetry and Rogers's poems with their illustrations by Turner, to his late, tormented relationship with the city as expressed in *St Mark's Rest*. His long association with the city, which he first saw with his parents, and later chose as the setting for his honeymoon, and returned to time and again, in health and in mental sickness, means that his whole life was channelled through Venice. Here he evolved his distinctive way of seeing and interpreting architecture, and learnt how to read a nation's condition in its buildings. Here he lived amongst scenes made magical by Turner, and was inspired to produce many of his own finest drawings; here he experienced that life-altering experience of the power of Tintoretto with its affirmation of the glory and sensuousness of this world,

and here he discovered the work of Carpaccio, which became the consolation of his later years. Amid the remains of the ancient Guilds of Venice, he formed his idea for The Guild of St George that would, in his imagination, do so much to redeem England from the damage inflicted by the Nineteenth Century. Nowhere else was he so stimulated, stirred and dismayed as he was by Venice. His thoughts about gothic and pagan architecture came to a shattering climax here. In Venice he came to understand the relationship between a nation's economic success and its self-expression in painting and architecture. The essential nature of work became evident to him here. Among the buildings and canals of Venice, Ruskin knew his greatest exaltations, and his worst desolations. It was indeed the paradise of cities, but it was also the microcosm of a fallen world. Hewison takes all this in, and writes with an absolutely sure touch about the centrality of Venice to all that Ruskin was and did. His book is superbly illustrated, with many fine colour plates. Along with Timothy Hilton's biography, this book brings Ruskin studies to new heights. Buy it now, while it's still in print! I congratulated Robert Hewison on his achievement, but he replied that it was only a modest repayment for all the pleasure and purpose he had received from Ruskin's writings and drawings.

Graham Parry

[*Ruskin on Venice* is published by Yale University Press, 2009, at £45]

## A Journal of a Research Trip to France

*Louise Pullen, Curator of the Ruskin Collection, Museums Sheffield, made a research trip to France, 29<sup>th</sup> March-4<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The following account details some of her thoughts and findings made on the trip.*

Ruskin, writing home in 1880 described the railways of north-eastern France as 'beastly, blockheady, loggerheady, doggish, loggish, hoggish-poggish, filthy, fool-begotten, swindler-swallowed abominations of modern existence'. As I was about to travel those same railways over the following week, I sincerely hoped things would have improved in the subsequent 130 years.

I was travelling in France to look at cathedrals and landscapes that formed the French element of the Collection of The Guild of St George. It would be a whistle-stop tour, but my aims were twofold. Firstly, I wanted to find out the exact locations, current appearances and wider architectural contexts of French works within the collection. Secondly, as Ruskin wrote often to his assistants entreating them to capture the character as well as the appearance of these places, I wanted to see if it was still possible to absorb some of this character, thereby gaining a greater understanding of Ruskin's thought. Never having been to northern France previously, I felt that such a study visit would be of huge benefit to my interpretation of the collection. Therefore the places I planned to visit were not necessarily those most written about by Ruskin, but those represented most frequently within the collection: Rouen, Amiens, Chartres, Avallon, Laon and, further south, Poitiers. In the limited space of this report, I have not detailed all of the buildings and locations I examined, preferring to write my findings in individual catalogue entries for the objects concerned. Instead, I have tried to give a flavour of my trip and a few particular thoughts.

Having travelled by an efficient train along the meandering route of the Seine to Rouen, I armed myself with a folder containing photographs of collection works and extracts from Ruskin's writing pertaining to Rouen; a folder which also contained images and Ruskin texts for each place I would visit on the trip, and which I carried throughout my time in France. Never being one to follow maps, I followed my nose to the cathedral. Having walked along a narrow road flanked by wooden façades on one side and fortified walls on the other, I glanced through one particular doorway, and stumbled across the north transept portal of the cathedral. It was rather a surprise, as I hadn't realised that the cathedral was the other side of those high walls, or that the transept portal would be enclosed so completely by the Archbishop's Palace. It was discoveries such as these that made my trip so useful; for me this was important contextual information that would add to my interpretation of the collection and understanding of Ruskin's thought.

The main beauty of this particular portal, the *Portail des Libraires*, is a series of over 200 quatrefoil-shaped reliefs that flank the doorways and the trumeau at its centre. Each of the reliefs contains an energetic biblical, liturgical or secular scene. Four fanciful creatures surround the corners of each quatrefoil. This architectural sculpture is represented in the collection by Ruskin's finished drawing for Plate XIV of *Seven Lamps*, and several drawings of a similar nature by Arthur Burgess, one of Ruskin's assistants. At Ruskin's request, Burgess also carried out plaster casts of a number of the quatrefoils and the frieze panels below them, and I spent time looking for each of the quatrefoils and the grotesques represented in the collection. Ruskin's drawings I knew beforehand were reversed studies of the carvings. Burgess's were not.

One of the tiny details drawn by Burgess was on the highest layer, several metres above head-height, and while I could appreciate that he would have drawn it from an elevated position – he would have needed scaffolding too for the cast-making process – the average person does not look to see tiny but high details such as these, or even stop for long to look at the general scheme. This is of course a universal behaviour, but what appealed to me about the portal's sculpture, even looking at it very generally, was that there was so much skill and imagination lavished upon it; a trend that continued with each city I visited. I had always thought Ruskin rather churlish for his somewhat slighting comments regarding the meagre nature of decoration on British cathedrals but, standing in front of this portal, I began to understand his remarks more fully, and his thoughts on the 'Mental Expression' of medieval craftsmen and the 'Material Form'<sup>1</sup> of their work came vividly to mind.

I studied also what I could of the western façade (the central area being in scaffolding), and found that several of Burgess' casts in the collection had been attributed to the incorrect portal, a useful discovery that happened several times on the trip. Looking at the façade with its highly-decorative central portal and simpler flanking portals it occurred to me how much of Ruskin's taste has rubbed-off on me, and later, in looking at St Ouen's tower, I found myself in complete agreement about its pierced buttresses<sup>2</sup>. I was also glad to see that the cathedral's current restoration seems to include the substitution of carved stonework as a last resort, though the cleanliness of the conserved stone was somewhat dazzling. In comparison, the portal of St Maclou is black with dirt, and owing to the deep porch, the tympanum upon which Ruskin briefly commented is quite difficult to study.

At Amiens, I dutifully followed Ruskin's instructions to approach the cathedral first via the southern transept, regretfully omitting his suggestion of a visit to a patisserie, and taking his shorter suggested route<sup>3</sup>. The weather, as Ruskin suggested it might be, was 'dismal'. It was in fact, raining heavily and not the best day for looking at the façades of buildings, however I wanted to examine in particular Amiens' own quatrefoil decoration, as represented in Ruskin's *Bible of Amiens*, the 'sulky' St Honoré<sup>4</sup>, and particular aspects of the interior, which are recorded in the collection by Frank Randal. The lavishly carved choir stalls, which are the subject of many of his drawings, were unfortunately closed and the only guided tour of them that day cancelled, but cathedral staff allowed me onto the altar dais so that I could study them through the railings. Even from this vantage point the carving appeared extraordinary and hugely tactile.

The highlight of Amiens was, however, simply touring the cathedral with Ruskin's *Bible of Amiens* as my guide. As I've previously discovered in Italy, Ruskin's interpretation of a building or place comes alive when one is looking at the real thing rather than an image, and one notices so much more than one is likely to see when following the run-of-the-mill guidebook.

I finished my visit to Amiens by taking, as far as possible, the long route to the cathedral as suggested by Ruskin. Amiens was, of course, heavily bombed during World War II, and many of the streets and buildings drawn for the collection by Randal and William Hackstoun are no longer extant. But in walking to the east end of the cathedral and down to the river, it is noticeable that some streets have survived; one small square appearing, in fact, almost identical to Hackstoun's 130 year old drawing of it. I was glad to see something of these artists' exploration of Amiens' ancient streets before I left.

My visit to Chartres was unfortunately slightly disappointing, because the west end, externally and internally, was under scaffolding and netting, and the interior of the choir was also under coverings, meaning that I couldn't examine the portals (depicted several times in the collection by T.M. Rooke) and a number of the windows. In the limited light of another rainy day, the cathedral interior too was exceptionally dark. Despite this, the magnificence and colour of the windows were still astounding, and it was easy to pick out the details depicted in the collection, notably by Rooke and Randal, and to seek out some of the humorous creatures described by Ruskin: the demon with 'so neat a pair of legs' and the legend of St Hubert with 'hounds in leash, galloping horses, and a stag of the size of a mouse'<sup>5</sup>.

Randal's drawings at Chartres depict clerestory windows. In looking at these high windows, not for the first time on the trip, I felt a certain smugness that a pair of binoculars had been my constant companion. Yet looking up through them to these high windows, I wondered about Randal's methods. Did he study these windows, as I was through binoculars, before skilfully correcting the perspective in his drawings, or was he allowed up into the

1 See *Works*, 10.183 and throughout the chapter (*The Nature of Gothic*)

2 See *Works*, 8.64

3 See *Works*, 33.128

4 See *Works*, 16.356

5 See *Works*, 12.437 and 439

triforium to study the windows from a high viewpoint? We know from records that other artists in the collection, Arthur Burgess and H.R. Newman for example, had been given licence to erect scaffolding to carry out Ruskin's wishes, but in the case of Randal, so little is known about him or his methods.

One element that I did find peculiarly satisfying was a walk down to the Rive Eure. Rooke had several times depicted the tannery or washing sheds that line the river to the east of the cathedral. Again, many of the ancient houses were still extant, as too were some of the washing sheds, even if a number now, no longer places of labour, had been prettified into brasserie terraces. There was enough about this walk, however, to give a sense of the picturesque character that Rooke was trying to capture in his watercolours.

I again experienced character, if not a sense of time standing still, at Avallon, a small town in Burgundy. I purposely went on market day, but in the backstreets and on the ramparts that I was examining, all seemed completely quiet. Several elderly gentlemen were playing chess under the eaves of an ancient house and caged birds hung outside the shuttered windows of several buildings.



I was in Avallon principally to examine the portals of St Lazare, which Ruskin, Randal and W. G. Collingwood had all studied together, but also to look at the surrounding landscape which had been captured in watercolour by Rooke. The planted terraces and rocky walls that lead down from the ramparts to the valley floor were still much as Rooke had depicted them, to the extent that, had I climbed one wall, I could have stood where Rooke painted from and still seen the same buildings and wall structures. The rain had also cleared, and the day had a bright golden sunlight that almost matched Rooke's views.

*Avallon (above) as T. M. Rooke saw it in 1886 ... (photo: Museums Sheffield)*

*... and (right) as Louise Pullen photographed it in 2011 (photo: Louise Pullen)*



Rooke had not only painted in the town itself, but travelled to several outlying hamlets, so I walked the old road to Annéot three miles away, to search out his vantage points. Once more, little seemed to have changed, and I found them with no problem. I had anticipated that I would then have to walk to Annay-la-Côte, a hilltop town several miles further on, to look out locations for Rooke's other watercolours. However, it seemed from the landscape that Rooke could only have painted his views from the road between Annéot and Avallon. From the roadside, one could see that this town, probably due to the railway, had expanded, yet an old dry-stone wall, apparent in Rooke's watercolour, still snaked its way down to the road below.

Ruskin had described Avallon's valley as 'the sweetest ever made by heaven'<sup>6</sup> and there was certainly a quiet beauty about it. I was content to turn down several offers of lifts from farmers returning from market, but a butterfly hitched a lift on my shoulder as I walked back to Avallon, and sat there for some time, until it flew off into the primroses which banked on the side of the road.

As I had not needed to get to Annay-la-Côte, I had time to return to St Lazare, where I sketched some of the architectural details. I had not tried to draw battered carved stonework in detail before, and this again helped me to get a clearer sense of the collection artists' workmanship. Randal, for example, managed to give a sense of the smoothness and clarity of carving, even when the stonework was pitted and weathered.

At Amiens, Ruskin had sent his readers to view the cathedral from the river to get a sense of the city's height. The height of Laon, however, far eclipsed Amiens, and finding the locations of Rooke's drawings of the distant cathedral on its hill from the north and south of the city involved some steep and muddy climbing. Whilst the suburbs below had grown up since Rooke's time, and one of his viewpoints would now have been blocked by a fly-over, his and Collingwood's watercolours of buildings within the walled city itself were still directly comparable with the original buildings. Some had signs of heavy restoration, and others seemed now to be about to crumble. There are of course many little changes, but I was amused, and rather charmed, to see that a Romanesque well in the gardens of the Templar's Chapel, depicted by Rooke as a giant plant pot is still used for such a purpose, rather than being carefully preserved in the museum grounds. Rooke's drawings nevertheless show a bustling, if decaying city and it was sad to see that, at Laon, the current financial crisis seemed to be hitting exceptionally hard.

My last day was spent in Poitiers, where I was particularly excited about seeing the Romanesque church of Notre-Dame-la-Grande. Randal's drawings of details from its elaborately carved façade had always made me eager to see the workmanship *en masse*. What his pencil drawings could not show me however was that, despite some sensitive restoration, enough of the polychrome paint survives to give a sense of how opulent that façade really would have been: Ruskin's description of 'redundance' (*Nature of Gothic*) came immediately to mind.

Elsewhere in Poitiers I was on the track of Randal's drawings for which we have little information, and I was able to track down a drawing of a battered capital to the baptistery and others to various apses of St Hilaire. For me, St Hilaire, and indeed the cathedral were uplifting for the purity and dignity of their Romanesque decorative schemes. After the resplendent beauty of some of the Gothic cathedrals, the quietness of these schemes was refreshing.

It was certainly a research trip taken at high speed, with my evenings being taken up with writing my catalogue notes and referencing photographs. I also attended an evening opening at the Louvre to study various paintings which Randal had copied for the collection (which, sharing the same room as the *Mona Lisa*, made their study a little difficult), and also to view some of the other works with Ruskin's Louvre notes to hand. During the trip I took many photographs of the various architectural details and landscapes, matching up where possible the viewpoints of the drawings, and wider versions to show how the details fitted into the schemes. Today, it is easy to find numerous photographs on the internet of the places and buildings I visited, but I hope this more targeted bank of images will be useful for curators and researchers of the collection in the future.

I am exceptionally grateful to The Guild of St George for part-funding this trip through the provision of several days travel and hotel expenses. I know that it benefited my understanding of the collection greatly, and hope that this knowledge will be passed on to visitors to the collection through my renewed interpretation of the objects within it.

Louise Pullen

## The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy

This exhibition in the new galleries at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford brought together a great variety of paintings and drawings on Italian subjects, many of them quite unfamiliar. When the PRB was formed in 1848, none of its members had been to Italy. Their denunciations of the Grand Style that first emerged in Raphael's late paintings and their acclaim of the virtues of Quattrocento painting were based on what they could see in London and in English country houses. From the beginning, however, Italian themes had a prominence in the work of the young artists, with subjects usually taken from Keats or Shakespeare, Byron or Boccaccio. Rossetti was busy with his introspective depictions of Dante's life and writings, especially as he developed an obsessive sense of Dante as his *alter ego* through his reading of the *Vita Nuova*. The real contact with Italy for the PRB was Ruskin, after 1851, when he began to patronise the group, and who encouraged painters to go out there to experience the light and colour of Italian scenery. By that time he had been engaged for several years in producing watercolours of landscapes and buildings in northern Italy.

Ruskin featured prominently in the exhibition, with about twenty items on display. Among all the laboured and painstaking works of the young pre-Raphaelites, he came across as an artist with a natural, easy style, whose watercolours have an outstanding quality. In composition, colour and atmosphere they place him in the highest ranks of Victorian watercolourists. In intention, however, his works are entirely different from those of the PRB. Whereas they were inspired by a literary dream of Italy and by the intensity of emotion that the country seemed to encourage – a feature also in evidence in contemporary opera – Ruskin was concerned with the preservation of Italian art and architecture. Venice was at the centre of his attention, for he believed that the city was in a state of terminal decay, and his mission was to preserve what he could by way of detailed documentation through drawing and, as the exhibition makes clear, through the use of the daguerreotype. His numerous architectural drawings are both factual record and imaginative elegy for the crumbling stones of Venice. The large drawing of the south-west corner of St Mark's basilica, for example, illustrates this tendency to perfection: full of precise detail, yet magical in its delicacy and sensitive colours.

The exhibition showed many aspects of Ruskin's documentary activities. His drawings of churches in Lucca show a remarkably sympathy with and understanding of Tuscan Romanesque, and give enormous pleasure to the viewer. There are several examples of highly accomplished large drawings of the out-door tombs in Verona, such as those of Mastino della Scala and Can Grande della Scala. So numerous and detailed are these that one suspects that he had some plan for a serious work on Veronese architecture in the 1850s.

Ruskin's fascination with the sleeping figure of St Ursula in Carpaccio's painting in the Accademia was recalled by the display of one of his drawings of her from 1876 (which he later gave to the Drawing School at Oxford) and by a large watercolour close-up of her head. Two watercolours of the monument of Ilaria del Carretto in Lucca, and a third by W.G. Collingood, all from the 1870s, seem to complement his obsession with the figure of St Ursula. Both are beautiful young women lying passively: one a memorial effigy, the other a dreaming virgin. Having recently seen Carpaccio's St Ursula, I was struck by how much the painting has been changed by its 1983-5 'restoration' since Ruskin drew it. Even when he was preoccupied with his private obsessions, he managed to leave a valuable record of a work of art that has now suffered serious damage.

There were many examples of work by artists working for Ruskin in the mission of recording the buildings of Italy: several fine watercolours of Venice and Verona by G.P. Boyce and Frank Randal, and very fine watercolours of mosaics in Ravenna by Randal and Thomas Rooke, who were among the earliest artists to make studies of these Byzantine marvels. Ruskin also employed the American expatriate artist Henry Newman to paint a number of watercolours of Florence for The Guild of St George. His excellent paintings are much enlivened by having figures in contemporary dress in the streets, and his view of the Duomo was a pleasure to inspect.

It was Burne-Jones who alerted Ruskin to the appeal of Carpaccio, thereby moving his attention on to a different plane from Tintoretto. A number of unfamiliar works by Burne-Jones were on display, and for me, one of the high points of the exhibition was the display of his designs for the mosaics for the American church in Rome that had been built by G.E. Street. These are extremely bold, powerful images, aptly conceived for the medium of mosaic. Perhaps the finest is *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, a torrent of dark figures cascading towards perdition; in a way it is a demonic version of his *Golden Staircase*. Unfortunately it was the only one of all these designs that was not executed.

Unexpected pleasures lay on all sides. I was particularly taken with the intensely high-focus panorama of Florence from *Bellosguardo* (1867) by John Brett: such clarity of light, such harmony of terra-cotta roofs, such warmth of Tuscan sunlight. Noel Paton's remarkable picture of Dante musing of Paolo and Francesca, who are



seen in mid-air, as in a vision. Edward Lear's enchanting view of Florence, looking down to the river past a line of trees. It was an outstanding exhibition, curated by Colin Harrison and Chris Newall. My only criticisms concerned the extremely low light levels, the lighting that cast one's shadow onto the work one was looking at, and the irritatingly low positioning of the information cards.

Graham Parry

## 'Objects of Curious Virtue: Echoes of John Ruskin'

### An Exhibition by David Walker Barker

David Walker Barker is an artist, and a collector of minerals. He is also a Companion of the Guild. His long interest in Ruskin and his mineral collections, and his fascination with the complex geological systems of the north of England come together in this exhibition at the Ruskin Library at the University of Lancaster. David was the first artist to mount a show in the then new Ruskin Museum in Sheffield in 1987, after the Guild's collection of geological specimens had been returned from Reading University. In recent years he has been engaged in an extended project linked to quarries and lead mines in Weardale, from which a series of remarkable paintings have emerged, explorations of landscape and geological formations, in over-view and close-up, which bring out the beauty of rock and crystal and trace the ways in which the forces which shaped them also contoured the landscape. These paintings have a power of colour and composition that is truly striking, and when displayed in a setting of appropriate minerals they offer an experience of Ruskinian exaltation at the beauty and mystery of the mineral world. The hanging of the exhibition is very effective, with lighting that allows one to view the contents with an intensity of delight that Ruskin would have approved of.

Some of the paintings are striking stylised landscapes, others abstract yet obviously derived from patterns in rocks and in the semi-precious stones that gleam throughout the exhibition. The paintings are hung in conjunction with Victorian cabinets filled with objects from the artist's own collections, and with specimens of minerals and crystals from Ruskin's collections from Sheffield. The cabinets and the stones are the 'objects of curious virtue' of the exhibition's title. Some contain shelves of vials and small bottles reminiscent of a Victorian chemist's shop; in some, the bottles have been encrusted over by mineral salts – petrified, in fact. Other cabinets contain a miscellany of small objects chosen for their inexplicable compatibility: pocket watches, perfume bottles, shells, agates, and even what appeared to be a fossilised golf-ball. Phials of the variegated sands of Alum Bay stand in ranks, providing undulating lines of colour that run through the displays and complement the minerals. The cabinets that David Walker Barker has constructed echo the cabinet of geological specimens that Ruskin's father bought for John in the late 1820s from Mr Peter Crosthwaite of Keswick, a present that laid the foundation for John's lifelong addiction to geology and to the noble family of quartz.

The semi-precious stones from Ruskin's collections have been selected and presented by Louise Pullen. Now they have been cleaned and polished, they make a bewitching display, and they are lit so that one may gaze deep, deep, into these peerless gems, seeing the rich veins of colour within the dull shell of the exterior stone. One can see here indisputably how splendid Ruskin's collection was, and one yearns for it to be better known. The specimens shown here match with the specimens from the artist's collection, and merge easily into the multi-coloured cabinets of curiosity on the walls. All are subsumed into the paintings of rocks and soils and landscapes that are interspersed among the cabinets. There is a wonderful sense of unity to this exhibition.

The catalogue that accompanies the display serves as a fine memento of the event, with very satisfactory photographs. I would also say that the eloquent text can act as an illuminating introduction to Ruskin's ideas and feelings about geology and the crystal world. It can be difficult to understand why he was so drawn to this area of study, but the essays gathered together here explain clearly why it was so important to him. David Walker Barker shares the same way of looking and responding as Ruskin, which is the reason why the subtitle of the exhibition is 'echoes of Ruskin' and why this conjunction of sight and insight works so well.

Graham Parry

*The catalogue is available from the Ruskin Library at the University of Lancaster, LA1 4YH. The price is £10 plus p&p. ISBN 978-0-9558690-1-3*

## Pure and Uncontending Natural Worth

*A Talk for the May Festival at Whitelands College, University of Roehampton 21 May 2011*

*[As most of you know, for twenty-six years Jim Dearden represented the Guild at the May Festival at Whitelands College and gave out the Ruskin books. I took over from him six years ago and each year try to think of something new to say. It isn't easy. You speak at the end of what is often a long and rather moving event, and previous speakers – notably the Bishop who gives the main address – will also have drawn a few laughs. I am not averse to doing a spot of stand-up, but I feel that my main task is to put across something of Ruskin's teaching. So I try to make the talk as incisive as possible. This year, in light of the cuts and the issue of student fees, I felt I would be failing in my duty if I didn't nail my colours to the mast. Ruskin would have spoken out with all the vehemence he had at his disposal. I didn't think I could quite manage a lecture like 'Traffic', but I could nevertheless speak my mind. Here is the talk I gave.]*

This is the sixth time I've given one of these talks. Each time I give them I am conscious of talking to people for whom, in most cases, the name John Ruskin meant little or nothing before they became involved with Whitelands College. You had probably seen or heard him mentioned – on TV, in a book about something else, perhaps in an art gallery – and you will almost certainly have come across his name as part of another name: Ruskin House, Ruskin Park, the Ruskin School, Ruskin College and so on. The frequency of the name suggests a person of massive influence who has somewhat disappeared from public view: which is indeed the case. One of the things my colleagues and I in The Guild of St George want to do is bring Ruskin back into public notice, and we try to do that as he would have wanted it done – by carrying out his work in a modern context.

It really *is* a question of just noticing him. Once you've heard about Ruskin, you notice him everywhere, for few people in the past two hundred years have made such an impact on our country. A friend of mine who belongs to the Guild, a man named Stuart Eagles, has recently published a book called *After Ruskin*, which charts the role Ruskin played in the public sphere in the decades after his death. The book deals mainly with the late nineteenth/ early twentieth century, but it also shows that public figures who grew up in that period – and were therefore to come to power in the mid-twentieth century – were intensely conscious of Ruskin's ideas and often deeply indebted to them. He effectively proves that Ruskin was the key influence on the 1945 government and to some extent on governments that followed it. It is often said that what we still call the Welfare State was created by three people: the Prime Minister Clement Attlee; the great economist John Maynard Keynes; and the civil servant William Beveridge, author of the great report on social insurance, which led to the creation of the

National Health Service and our systems of Social Security. Both Beveridge and Attlee – men from different parties incidentally – acknowledged that their lives had been fundamentally changed when as young men they discovered the works of Ruskin, something that was also the case on the other side of the world with Mahatma Gandhi. Keynes was not a Ruskinian at all, but he had been influenced by other economists who undoubtedly were, notably a man named J. A. Hobson, who wrote a book on Ruskin. Of course, this is to think of Ruskin only in terms of social provision – health, social security, education and economic justice – but he was also a key figure in the development of art and architecture and the conservation of nature. He inspired the foundation of the National Trust, for instance, and the creation of national parks like the Lake District.

I could go on – for several hours in fact! – but what I want to say is really rather simple and easy to put briefly, and it will mean sticking my neck out. I feel I have to do that because that is what Ruskin himself would have done. I myself am a beneficiary of that post-war period. I was born in the year Attlee came to power. I grew up in a world in which slums and illiteracy and the sort



*Natasha Jackson and Tanya Aumeer – 2010 and 2011 May Queens  
(photo: Whitelands College)*

of ill-health that comes about through poverty were in retreat and seemed likely to disappear forever. But to my horror I find, as I grow older, that governments of all parties have begun to dismiss these principles. We are told that somehow we can't afford them, though no one said that when Britain was broken by six years of war. The betrayal has been going on for thirty years, and this year we have come to a point where those of you who are students have been told that the cost of your studies is no longer the responsibility of those who have already benefited from free education but something that you'll have to pay yourselves; that it is not enough for medical treatment to be free at the point of delivery but that hospitals must be as competitive as profit-making businesses; that the arts are a sort of luxury for which government cannot afford to pay and that the humane dimension of education can no longer be supported by the state because it makes no profit.

What would Ruskin have thought of all this? His involvement with Whitelands College belongs to the period when government had begun to recognise its responsibility for general education. The great Education Act of 1870 had made elementary schooling compulsory and free. The young women who studied at Whitelands in the late nineteenth century were girls from poor families who had found an opportunity in life: the chance to improve their lot by teaching the huge new intake of schoolchildren. It was those girls Ruskin chose to give his support to, and oddly enough, though he thought good food and good health for the poor as important as anything, he gave Whitelands things that would now be thought luxuries. He gave the College valuable books and pictures, he urged artists like William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones to produce beautiful stained-glass windows for the chapel, he encouraged the students to imagine, and perhaps one day visit, Swiss mountains and Italian cathedrals. 'What frivolity!' some wise and earnest people must have thought. Most frivolous of all, he set up this festival as the one day of the year on which these hard-working young women, who had never seen much of the world or had much pleasure anyway, could simply relax and have fun – could put on pretty dresses and adorn themselves with flowers and dance round the Maypole in the sunshine. At the centre of the occasion he set a Queen. Strangely for a Queen, she had never had privileges. She did not have to be clever or beautiful, though no doubt sometimes she was. Even with the slight advantage in life that a College place then conferred, she had not yet acquired the competitive instinct – which is something that even those who care for the sick are now supposed to exhibit. But there she was: a person 'full of pure and uncontending natural worth', as Ruskin says, chosen because her fellow students *liked* her. It is a great comfort to me that you, the students of Whitelands College, in these changed times, still think that to choose such a person, now male or female, is something worth doing, even if we can now put a price on virtually everything else.

Clive Wilmer

## Ethical Pensions

### A Talk given by Catherine Howarth at the 2010 AGM of The Guild of St George

It is a very great pleasure for our little family to be joining the roll call of Companions and an honour to be asked to speak about my work and its relevance to the ideas and ideals of John Ruskin.

Ruskin's name I knew from Ruskin College, Oxford, but I had not heard of *Unto This Last* until I met Olivier, my husband, and visited his workshop by that name in which hangs a magnificent 4ft by 3ft engraved wooden image of Ruskin, based on a photograph by Frederick Hollyer.

It was only in February of this year, when Olivier and I attended the superb symposium in London to celebrate 150 years since the publication of *Unto This Last*, that I understood the many ways in which Ruskin's concerns in the area of political economy touch the work of FairPensions, the charity where I work.

The origins of FairPensions lie in an energetic and impressive campaign in the late 1990s, organised by students and university staff who wanted to see the University Superannuation Scheme (USS), a vast £40bn pension fund serving almost the whole of the UK university system, adopt a policy of Responsible Investment. The membership of USS is a little different to any other pension fund in this country, comprising as it does people with great expertise, sometime world-leading expertise, in every academic discipline and region of the world. Whilst members of USS generally know less about investment than the financial professionals who run their scheme, many know a great deal more about particular issues which have a bearing upon investment returns, whether it be climate science, the engineering of deep sea drilling, political stability in the industrial heartlands of China or labour practices in the supply chains of multinational retailers. It was Ruskin's observation that absent either direct proximity to the process of economic production or a knowledge of the process derived, as in the



Students protest against fees and cuts – notice the second placard from the left

case of committed members of the USS fund, from a close study of the circumstances of economic production, it would be a challenge to acquire the ethic of responsibility which he so eloquently advocates in *Unto This Last*.

It was perhaps not surprising then, of all large pension schemes in the UK economy, USS was the first to see members ask questions about the ethics of the investment process upon which their incomes in retirement depend. I am pleased to say that the efforts of these members to demand that social and environmental considerations be given greater weight in investment decisions paid off. Today, USS is at the forefront of Responsible Investment practices in the UK and Europe.

FairPensions, then, emerged out of that original effort to reform USS. Our mission is to reconnect people across the UK with their savings, inviting them to consider both the responsibilities attendant on owning assets in the capital markets and the positive opportunities for advancing what Ruskin called the good of the nation.

Ruskin believed, and at FairPensions we agree, that an understanding of the dynamics of economic relations, and the ethical considerations arising from them, is everyone's business - a matter for the general citizen and not exclusively for specialists of economics or, as Ruskin called that discipline, 'the science of getting rich'.

Ruskin's suspicion of, indeed outright hostility to, economic theory which purports to take a purely rational view of profit maximisation is highly relevant to the weaknesses evident today in the system which has evolved to take charge of UK pension savings and endowed assets. Ruskin's primary criticism of what today is called an efficient market hypothesis view of economic motivations, a view which treats people as atomised economic units seeking maximum personal advantage, was not that such an approach is immoral (although he believed it to be so) but that it is distinctly inefficient and, ultimately, self-defeating. The last 20 years has witnessed the rise of a free-market orthodoxy in the investment strategy of large pension providers. Frenetic trading of shares, supposedly to outperform other market participants, is all too often a self-defeating zero-sum game. Pension fund equity returns over the last decade have been derisory. Ruskin would not, I suspect, have been surprised. A system of investment shorn of all intelligent understanding of real human motivations, or soul to use Ruskin's favoured term, is not likely to deliver the goods.

Ruskin saved some of his most colourful and scathing imagery for the agent who superintends the transference of commodities from one party to another. Here we have a fitting description of the agents in the investment industry who intermediate between ordinary savers whose surplus earnings are put aside in the hope of having something to retire on and companies in need of capital to grow and develop. Of this type of agent Ruskin said in *Unto This Last*, 'it is easy to see that by ingeniously watching his opportunities, he might possess himself regularly of the greater part of the superfluous produce...maintain[ing] former proprietors thenceforth as his labourers or servants'. Indeed, the vastly increased level of fees charged by financial agents (fund managers

and hedge fund managers), which has shot up since the 1980s, combined with the very poor investment returns witnessed in the last decade, has left many savers facing the prospect of labouring deep into their 70s and, perhaps, their 80s. Ruskin's insights of 150 years ago seem impressively prescient. We have allowed financial agents to greatly enrich themselves at the expense of the ordinary working people who supply the capital.

Finally, a word on just wages which is a key concern of *Unto This Last*. Ruskin did not believe in equality and he explicitly denied that his views amounted to a socialist position. Nevertheless he passionately believed in the dignity of labour and in the payment of just wages. "The sufficient or just payment gives each person fair and sufficient means of rising in the social scale, and thus not only diminishes the immediate power of wealth but removes the worst disabilities of poverty."

My reading of Ruskin suggests that the single most important thing that investors and pension savers can do to ensure that profit generated with their capital is indeed about creating wealth as Ruskin understood it, is to insist upon the payment of Living Wages by the corporations in which their shares are held.

A Living Wage, today in the UK, is above the level of the National Minimum Wage. In London it is calculated at £7.85 per hour; outside London it is £7.20 per hour. In contemporary Britain that is the minimum necessary to keep body and soul together. Next year, FairPensions, in conjunction with progressive investors and partners across civil society, launches a campaign for the payment of Living Wages by FTSE 100 companies. FTSE 100s are the largest and best capitalised companies in our economy and their shares are held in virtually every pension pot. Imagine the vindication of Ruskin's elegant and moving maxim, 'there is no wealth but life', if we could bring it to pass that Living Wages became embedded as a standard of responsible business practice in this country? Is this a pipedream? I don't believe so. Already many public and private employers have adopted the Living Wage. Amongst the giants of the FTSE 100, Barclays Bank has signed up to be an accredited Living Wage employer. All Barclays' own staff and those of its contractors providing cleaning, catering and other facilities services are in receipt of Living Wages. Other major companies are looking closely at adopting the standard. With active support for this position from shareholders, in other words from all of us, the pension fund members of this country, I firmly believe that solid progress can and will be made.

In honour of Ruskin, I have proposed that the slogan for next year's campaign be, 'There is no Wealth but Life'. I hope that Companions of The Guild of St George will take a close interest in our progress.

*Catherine Howarth*

*Catherine can be contacted at [catherine.howarth@fairpensions.org.uk](mailto:catherine.howarth@fairpensions.org.uk)*

*You can read more about FairPensions' work at [www.fairpensions.org.uk](http://www.fairpensions.org.uk)*

## Anthony Page Obituary

I think it must have been in the early part of 1994 that I received a letter from Anthony Page. He had recently retired from his architectural practice, having a number of important public buildings to his credit. He was interested in Ruskin and was a collector of books by and about Ruskin. He wrote to me to ask how he could become more involved in the Ruskin world.

1994 saw the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Bembridge School, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Ruskin's home, Brantwood, to the public, and the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ruskin's birth. As part of the celebrations at Bembridge I arranged a major exhibition of the Whitehouse Collection, occupying both of the Ruskin Galleries and also the School Library. I suggested that Anthony might like to come to Bembridge to see the exhibition. This would also provide the opportunity for a chat.

He came, and enjoyed the exhibition. He told me about his collection of Ruskin books which was clearly quite comprehensive. He specialised in American editions of Ruskin. I asked him if he would like to become a Companion of the Guild, and he said he would. As it happened, Guild director Henry King who had looked after our properties at Westmill had recently died. In addition to our properties at Bewdley, Cedric Quayle was also keeping a



*Anthony Page at Coniston on 20 January 2000*

temporary eye on Westmill. It seemed to me that Anthony would make a valuable addition to the board, with his brief to care for Westmill.

By chance, Anthony Harris, who was then Master, also lived in St Albans. I mentioned Anthony Page to him; the two met for dinner, and at the 1994 annual general meeting at the National Gallery he was duly enrolled as a Companion and was elected as a director of the Guild.

Anthony launched himself into the work of the Guild with enthusiasm. He and Nancy made frequent visits to Westmill where he kept a close eye on our properties and soon became much respected by the tenants.

We met regularly over the years at Guild meetings. During the celebrations of 2000 we spent a week together at Lancaster and Brantwood. His interest in Ruskin continued unabated. He was an early member of the Ruskin Society, was on the committee for a number of years and became the Society's Vice President. We met too at most of the Society's meetings.

Anthony continued to collect books and we regularly exchanged collecting experiences. He and Nancy spent a weekend at Bembridge so that he could see my collection, and we went to St Albans for a reciprocal visit. Much to Anthony's chagrin I found a book in his local second hand bookshop which he had missed!

Anthony Page retired as a Guild director on 30 March 2007. Thereafter he did not enjoy the best of health. I am sad to record that he died at St Albans on 29 March 2011, aged 82.

*James S. Dearden*

## The World Open Forum 2011: Conference Report

In the midst of the January snows this year the first gathering of the "World Open Forum" was held in England's Lake District. The first day of this three day 'travelling circus' was held at Brantwood, before moving to Dove Cottage, Grasmere and Ambleside. Billed as an alternative to the World Economic Forum held annually in Davos, its modest goal was to counter current economic thinking with Ruskin's dictum THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE.

The term *Recivilization* was coined to express the specific conference theme. The word distilled the notion of active values that reach both forward and backwards, connecting our aspirations for a better future to our sense of those things which are of enduring value in our past (and present). It was also suggestive of a certain idealism. Events like Davos seek to set practical global agendas and propose technical solutions for bringing them about. The World Open Forum was concerned to investigate underlying values and ideals. It set itself no outcomes except an enlargement of perspectives and the energizing of a network of those who shared its concerns. It was happy to be a talking shop, but in reality it was more creative than that – building understanding and relationships between a committed group of people. Since this was the first year, the forum was very much a pilot.

The introductory addresses set out the importance of WOF's agenda in a time of great societal transition. The face of the political economy is changing but the same underlying assumptions about the pursuit of material wealth remain at its core. Richard Little of Impact International, David Jackman of the Ethics Foundation and myself led the morning's discussion, which set the scene for the three days of debate and discussion. Being at Brantwood inevitably focused our thoughts on Ruskin's observations on the subject. Issues highlighted encompassed: the subject of moral influence in creativity, the reluctance of people to explore and develop their own values, the disconnection between people and place (and their sense of powerlessness in relation to the health of the environment), and correlative to all of these, the need to develop better tools to shape the consequences of our actions.

What ensued over the next two days ranged far and wide and was at times heated and passionate. A major area of concern was the relationship in its various forms between individualism and corporatism, as, for instance, in the relationship of the individual and community, community and globalism, macro-economic systems and personal responsibility and empowerment. Although terms like community and sustainability may be romanticized and can be applied inconsistently or divisively, at a local level integration and collective action allows individuals to express their wishes efficiently and to see them carried out without referral to higher tiers of governance. It was generally agreed that co-operation was positive emotionally as well, helping people empathize and value their neighbours and themselves.

Into this mix came a remarkable presentation by Polly Higgins, an international environmental lawyer and author. She spoke passionately in the face of global climate change of the need for effective and systematic environmental protection, in effect, the need to fight fire with fire. She proposed a strengthening of legislation

to dissuade polluters, including a new crime of 'ecocide', and the extension of criminal accountability to company managers as well as the company responsible for environmental damage. She also illustrated through hard evidence how improving peoples' understanding of the interconnectedness of the environment through financial consequences for their businesses could promote stewardship as opposed to environmental exploitation.

While sustainability was agreed to be crucial, the method of its implementation was thus hotly debated – whether through top-down methods (law, government) or by cultural shift and consensus. In relation to shared values and collective responsibility for the environment and social justice, globalization was seen as a positive if poorly directed force, and while corporatism was often criticized as unfair and thoughtless, it was recognized that it had potential for great good. A pathway had to be found which would turn these competing models into co-operating models. For instance, the connection between producers and consumers was seen to be weakening, in part because the moral values of the producer have become invisible to the consumer.

The second and third days took place at the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere, and at sites around Grasmere and Ambleside. The programme included poetry readings by Helen Mort and Andrew Forster. Michael McGregor, Director and Jeff Cowton, Curator of the Wordsworth Trust placed the ideas of the conference in the context of Wordsworth's belief in the importance of the balance between humans and nature, and the subsequent decay of both person and environment when the bond is neglected. Wordsworth's sense of the innate spirituality and imaginative power of the human mind put the dimension of LIFE firmly back into a discussion which at times risked being over-theoretical.

To anchor the conference in some practical demonstration of its ideas, Richard Lemmey, formerly of the University of Cumbria, outlined developing ideas for a sustainable community university – an institution designed to provide education from volunteering experts in various fields. This would deliver distinctive, locally enriched education at a far lower cost than the increased tuition fee rates. The idea recognizes the importance of allowing local expertise and understanding to shape or be active in communities, and to flavour education according to local and regional cultures. In effect, it applies Ruskin's ideas about the role of the affections in the political economy to education.

As a new and experimental event, the conference concluded by unashamedly reviewing itself. Participants were unanimous in believing that discussions had been enriching and far-reaching, and that a radical edge of thought had emerged which should be encouraged. It was decided that the conference should take place annually at or around the time of the Davos event, possibly just after so as to allow reflection on their conclusions. The Forum would continue to discuss globally significant issues (it is, after all, the *World Open Forum*) but would draw on the radical aspects of the cultural heritage of the Lake District and Cumbria to provide a rich and distinctive soil in which to develop.

Howard Hull

Details of the next "*World Open Forum*" will be circulated to Companions.

## Books for Companions

**Sara Atwood: *Ruskin's Educational Ideals*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. £55**

Professor Atwood has performed a notable service by bringing together every aspect of Ruskin and education. In a welcome and skilfully thorough survey she covers the education of Ruskin, his own life as a great teacher, and those who took up his teaching after his active days.

The education of Ruskin himself was initially undertaken by his mother, and closely allied to this is Ruskin's own teaching, summed up in his juvenile injunction - "People be good!". John James Ruskin of course also played an important part in his son's education, as also did Rowbotham, Runciman, Copley Fielding, Dale, Harding, and of course the Rev. Edward Andrews. Andrews was the editor of the short-lived *Spiritual Times* and as such he not only taught Ruskin Greek, but he was also Ruskin's first publisher in 1829. Ruskin's childhood was sternly regulated, but was not perhaps quite as hard as Ruskin would have us believe. For example, his box of lead soldiers in the collection at the Morgan suggests he had some normal childish pursuits.

Atwood's first chapter, "The forming time", surveys all of the early teachers and looks at the influence of Ruskin's reading – Scott, Shakespeare, Byron and others. Then there is the teaching of the Bible, the Greek writers, Dante, Sydney, and many others.

There are very few – if any – of Ruskin's own books in which he is not a teacher: *Ethics of the Dust* written to teach the girls at Winnington where he frequently also gave them lessons; *The Elements of Drawing* was not only

a manual for would-be artists, but it is still much used by them today. It grew from his teaching at the Working Mens' College. But there his activity was not confined to teaching the art class; he also gave hundreds of books to the College's library. All this was part of his attempt to make the students happier and more rounded people. At Oxford he taught far more than would be expected of the Slade Professor of Fine Art, and he linked his teaching with the foundation of his Drawing School and its amazing collection of teaching aids.

One of the roles of The Guild of St George was to teach men and enable them to have happier lives. To Ruskin's disappointment the proposed St George's Schools, on Guild land, never materialised – but we know what *would* have been taught in them. The teaching manuals were written – *Proserpina* for botany, *Deucalion* for geology, for example. Always able to adapt his plans to changing circumstances, Ruskin tried to put his ideals into practice at already existing educational establishments – ladies' colleges at Oxford, Cheltenham Ladies' College, and Whitelands Training College to which he gave many books and pictures and where he established a May Queen Festival. A former member of staff at Whitelands went to Cork Girls High School where a similar Rose Queen Festival was established. Through the teachers trained at Whitelands and Cork, his influence spread widely.

Ruskin not only taught publicly and through his books, he also taught privately by letter. Atwood examines this aspect of Ruskin's teaching by looking at the letters to three very different ladies, Anna Blunden, Ellen Heaton and Lady Waterford, whose letters were edited by Virginia Surtees in 1972.

Perhaps Ruskin's greatest strength as a teacher lay in his ability to create a sense of intimacy, making the people in his class, those who read his books, or those who received his letters, feel that he was speaking *directly* to them. In his letter of September 1854 to Lady Trevelyan, Ruskin summed up his aims in education – he wanted to give short lectures to about 200 at a time, to sign painters, shop decorators, writing masters, upholsterers – and a great host of others – “and have a room where anybody can go in all day and always see *nothing* in it but what is *good* ...”

Sara Atwood points out that *Fors Clavigera* is a distillation of Ruskin's teaching and sets out how men should be educated while at the same time actually educating his readers to his very ideals.

His influence was far-reaching – the many Ruskin Societies, Ruskin College, Oxford, and later, Anglia Ruskin University at Cambridge. In America, colonies in Tennessee, Georgia and Florida were established by people who wished to live according to Ruskin's teaching.

Finally the author looks at those who carried forward Ruskin's teaching; such people as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir John Lubbock, William Marwick, Patrick Geddes, Michael Sadler and particularly John Howard Whitehouse, to whose work and influence she devotes the final pages of the book.

This is a valuable contribution to Ruskin literature because it brings together every aspect of Ruskin's influence as a great teacher, including many which one might easily overlook. Sara Atwood is a member of a new younger group of Ruskin scholars bringing fresh insight into his teaching. Her survey here of Ruskin's work and influence is right up to date, covering the work of the Guild, the Ruskin Foundation at Lancaster and Brantwood, and the Ruskin Museum in Coniston. This new book is a very welcome addition to our shelves.

*James S. Dearden*

**Paul Dawson: *John Thomas Hobbs, Adventurer: from Ruskin's valet to pioneer Australian settler*. Etchingam: Oxenbridge Press, 2011**

I have written elsewhere of Paul Dawson's lucky find in a Tolpuddle junk shop of a suitcase containing a cache of George Allen material. I assume he was interested in Ruskin and Allen before this, or else he wouldn't have bought the suitcase. Since his find he has established himself as the authority on George Allen, first with his bibliography of Allen's cheap editions of Ruskin's books – *The People's Ruskin*, 1999. Then in 2007 he masterminded the exhibition *George Allen of Sunnyside*, at the Ruskin Library, Lancaster. Linked to this was his book ('with contributions by Stephen Wildman'), *George Allen of Sunnyside*, 2007. Now he has published another book on a closely related subject, 'George' Hobbs who was not only Ruskin's valet but also George Allen's brother-in-law.

Born in Stepney in 1825 John Thomas Hobbs was seventeen years old when he joined the Denmark Hill household in 1842 and was immediately called 'George' to differentiate from the Ruskins, father and son. The Ruskins were no strangers to George. His sister, and before that her mother, served as Mrs Ruskin's maid.

George Hobbs was an intelligent youth and his work for Ruskin entailed much more than the usual role of a valet. Apart from travelling extensively with Ruskin, he became a successful user of the daguerreotype camera, he made fair copies of Ruskin's manuscripts, and drew (or traced) architectural features for his master – the bulk of



the 1845 manuscript of Ruskin's *Resumé of Italian Art and Architecture* (RF MS 5) edited in 2003 by Paul Tucker, is in Hobbs's hand. In the following year at Florence he copied a number of the floor mosaics at San Miniato al Monte which were subsequently adapted for the design of the binding for *Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Later he helped Ruskin, as a copyist, with *Stones of Venice*.

Hobbs left Ruskin's service in the summer of 1852 at about the time of his marriage with Maria Thomas. Five years later the Hobbs family, like many more of George's other relations, emigrated to Australia. Until now we had little knowledge of his life in this developing country, but Dawson's tireless research has now opened up for us the rest of George's life. Another stroke of good fortune led him to the New South Wales Narooma Historical Society which has a copy of William Makepeace Hobbs's remembrances of the life of his father, George.

This account, with much other material, is included in *John Thomas Hobbs*. From it we learn of the trials, tribulations and successes of Hobbs's commercial and agricultural ventures, of his life as Secretary to the Sydney Mechanics School of Art, together with an appointment with the Government Railways, and later of his life as a respected Justice of the Peace and a Crown Land Agent. The account is illustrated by fascinating contemporary photographs of Sydney Harbour, Sydney itself, and of the Wagonga River where in 1867 Hobbs took up a grant of 640 acres of land.

This is a fascinating, as well as an important, publication, and I would urge all who are interested in Ruskin and his circle to obtain a copy.

James S. Dearden

**Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 304 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-960241-4, hardback, price £60.**

It is a real pleasure to open a book that has been created and produced to the highest possible standard, with care and attention to every detail. It is an even greater pleasure to read it. Both scholarly and readable, this is a book that is accessible to Ruskinians and to a wider public. Its scope is as follows:

- Ruskin's political views – was he a Tory or a Whig or neither?
- His practical projects – Guild of St George, Farming initiatives
- Ruskin the reformer – Toynbee Hall, the Slade Professor at Oxford
- History of the Ruskin Society
- Ruskin as a socialist
- Ruskin's true disciple.

As Vice-Chairman of the Ruskin Society, I was naturally drawn first of all to chapter four, "The Ruskin Diaspora: A History of the Ruskin Society". This chapter is broken down into nine short sections, giving the reader a choice ranging from a short philosophical introduction reminding us of Ruskin's own warning of the dangers of "isms", to practical details about the various branches, membership, speakers, and a final section on "Decline and Significance".

Stuart Eagles has meticulously researched the history of these numerous societies that flourished in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, at a time when Ruskin's influence was at a high point. They were anchored in cities and flourished like the great Town Halls, symbols of civic pride in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Paisley and other places. Eagles observes that "the Ruskin Societies were not trivial affairs but an important part of the wider socio-cultural fabric" (p. 175). Not only did they organise lectures –very well-attended – but they had a practical purpose and a role in civic life: for example, members of the Liverpool Ruskin Society taught spinning to blind girls twice a week.

After so much excellent activity, it is sad to read the coda on "Decline and Significance"; it seems that Ruskin Societies faded partly as a result of the loss of their Master, but also as a result of the changing political climate – "the increasing intervention of local councils and national government in civic life and social policy" (p.196).

These Ruskin Societies were remarkable in that they were created to revere a living person, a prophet, and wanted to emulate and promote Ruskin's teachings in a messianic and practical way. So great was his power. Are there any Societies today that honour a living person? Is there a Robert Hewison Society, or a Tony Benn Society? I could not find any in the *Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*. In a way, this is an unfinished book, for Eagles' cut-off point – and there has to be one for every book- is 1920. What it needs is another chapter, and an optimistic one at that, about the Ruskin Society re-formed by John Howard Whitehouse in 1932 and flourishing to the present day.

I then moved on to read about Toynbee Hall. At that moment, I had an unexpected phone call from a severely disabled man in Poplar, East London, who wanted advice on reading Ruskin. What can I read next after *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*, he asked me? He was trying to find *Modern Painters*, so I recommended David Barrie's abridged edition. The Whitechapel Library (in East London), that used to stock all the works of Ruskin, closed down a few years ago and the books were thrown out. A new "library" was built, a glass house called "Idea Store" – note the singular! – where computers replaced nearly all the books. I got a sudden glimpse of the damage inflicted by the current policies of local councils.

Eagles explores the meaning of "disciple" and of being a true disciple of Ruskin. Although Ruskin refuted the notion of anyone being a "Ruskinian", Eagles demonstrates how John Howard Whitehouse was really the "true" disciple, through his actions, particularly in saving Brantwood, Ruskin's Lakeland home, for the nation. Many other less well-known figures helped to preserve the legacy, too. Edward Denison, whose work I much admire, is one of them. Denison's philanthropy in helping the poor in very practical ways in the East End of London predated that of Ruskin: I did not know that the two men had met (p. 115). Eagles' meticulous, far-reaching research has unearthed a large number of other people involved in Ruskin's projects who deserve to be remembered: (George Parkin, who became the principal of Upper Canada College, Toronto; Leonard Montefiore, and politicians such as Charles Beilby Stuart-Wortley, to name but a few).

The chapter on Ruskin's politics, in which his message "There is no wealth but life" rings out, and is a call to social action, should be read carefully by every politician. Could this immensely valuable chapter be published as a pamphlet and made more readily available?

There is much unpublished material here. Eagles has explored and dug into archives near and far, and travelled the length and breadth of the British Isles in pursuit of discovering Ruskin's legacy, which is all too often hidden in unread manuscripts: Reading University, the Bodleian in Oxford, the Ruskin Library at Lancaster, Leeds University, Aberdeen Local Studies Library, the Isle of Wight Record Office, the National Archives of Canada and many, many more.

The book is a clarion call to all of us to be true disciples of Ruskin, by action rather than by words uttered among ourselves in our own Ruskin circles and fraternities. Ruskin's legacy is a rich one, as this excellent and thought-provoking book demonstrates. We are left with the question of "Who is the true disciple of today"?

Cynthia Gamble

## 'Savage Ruskin / Stuck his tusk in'

Is there no end to the fascination with Ruskin's private life? The British Dental Journal has recently published two articles on Ruskin's teeth. The author, M.G.H. Bishop, has extracted his information from the numerous references to dental problems in Ruskin's letters and diaries, and put together an informative account of his relations with his dentists. We learn how Ruskin coped with the depression caused by his not infrequent toothaches, and how the state of his teeth affected his relations with those around him.

Ruskin's first dentist, Mr Rogers of Sackville Street, London, died in 1866, after he had been treating his patient for only a short time. His death, nonetheless, caused 'a form of bereavement' in Ruskin, who recorded in his diary that he felt 'very sad and ill' after he heard the news, and in an attempt to cheer himself up, 'went to the Christie Minstrels and the Royal Academy'. Mr Rogers was followed by Mr Woodhouse of Hanover Square, who was a man of some distinction in his profession. His photograph shows that he looked remarkably like John Millais, and he also happened to be the dentist used by the La Touche family when they were in London. He also treated Joan Severn ('her teeth are not the best of her', Ruskin remarked in a letter). After Ruskin had had several teeth pulled out, Woodhouse inserted what Ruskin called a 'mahogany bar' in his mouth to hold his false teeth in, and this bar caused him a lot of problems in eating. He wrote in a letter in 1867 to Woodhouse 'I find that food accumulates more in *front* from the front teeth not being used – so that I never could eat before people'. This was obviously a severe social disadvantage.

Conversation in the surgery was fairly unusual. Dentist and patient talked about religious matters, and it seems clear that the condition of Rose La Touche, who was seriously ill by 1873, was also discussed. Patient confidentiality was not a feature of these meetings. Joan Severn wrote to Ruskin in autumn 1874 that Woodhouse had asked her if Ruskin's relationship with Rose 'was to be Platonic or otherwise. I told him it was not yet certain – he fears you'll find her a worry if it's the 'otherwise! – but I told him that you were well prepared for all that'.

The articles note that Ruskin was often plagued with dental problems in his travels across France and Switzerland, and in Venice. Finding relief was always difficult, and one is reminded how very painful life could be in those days, when dentists were rare and treatment primitive. Ruskin's frequent distress deepened his depressions, and gave him bad dreams. In Venice, in 1877, he fantasised about St Ursula being his patron saint, and protecting him from toothache: 'St Ursula has kept my poor little mouth for me much better than ever I did myself'. The most surprising distraction that he found from his troubles was cricket. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1882 he went to see the match between England and Australia, and then, 'an inevitable appointment with [my] dentist'.

Graham Parry

Information derived from *The British Dental Journal*, Vol. 210, Nos. 4 & 5, 2011.

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Nativity with St George and St Dominic, after Filippo Lippi  
Charles Fairfax Murray

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