

A CALENDAR OF
TREASURES FROM
THE RUSKIN
COLLECTION
(with additional material)

JULY

Guild of St George
With thanks to Museums Sheffield

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GUILD of St GEORGE

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Welcome to Ruskin's Guild of St George

John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a polymath. As a writer, he commanded international respect. He was an art critic and an art patron, a skilled draughtsman and talented watercolourist, and a fierce critic of prevailing social and political norms. He wrote about nature and architecture, craftsmanship, geology, botany, Greek myth, education—a dizzying variety of subjects. Driven by his deep faith in social justice, he established the Guild of St George in the 1870s to right some of the social wrongs of the day and make England a happier and more beautiful place in which to live and work.

RUSKIN AND POLITICS
CLICK TO WATCH

POLITICAL THEORY - John Ruskin

The founding aim of the Guild was to acquire land and—through labour, wind and water power—to bring it into useful production.

The Guild's activities today are mainly focused around the [Ruskin Collection](#) in [Sheffield](#) and its [woodlands and rural projects](#) in the [Wyre Forest](#). We also host [symposia](#) on issues of contemporary concern and [publish](#) a growing range of books and cards.

JULY 1



"Yellow Crowned Heron" (1836) after John James Audubon.
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 2

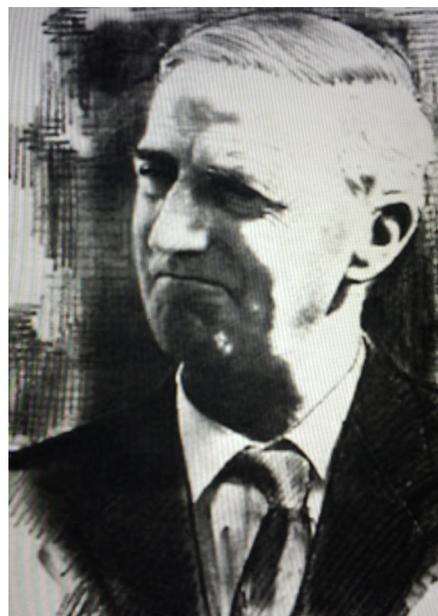
"Study of a Bridge and Cottages" by an unidentified artist, after JMW Turner (late 19th Century).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



On This Day in 1976 former Master of Ruskin's Guild, A. H. Hodges, Professor of Philosophy at Reading University, died.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/guild-masters/>

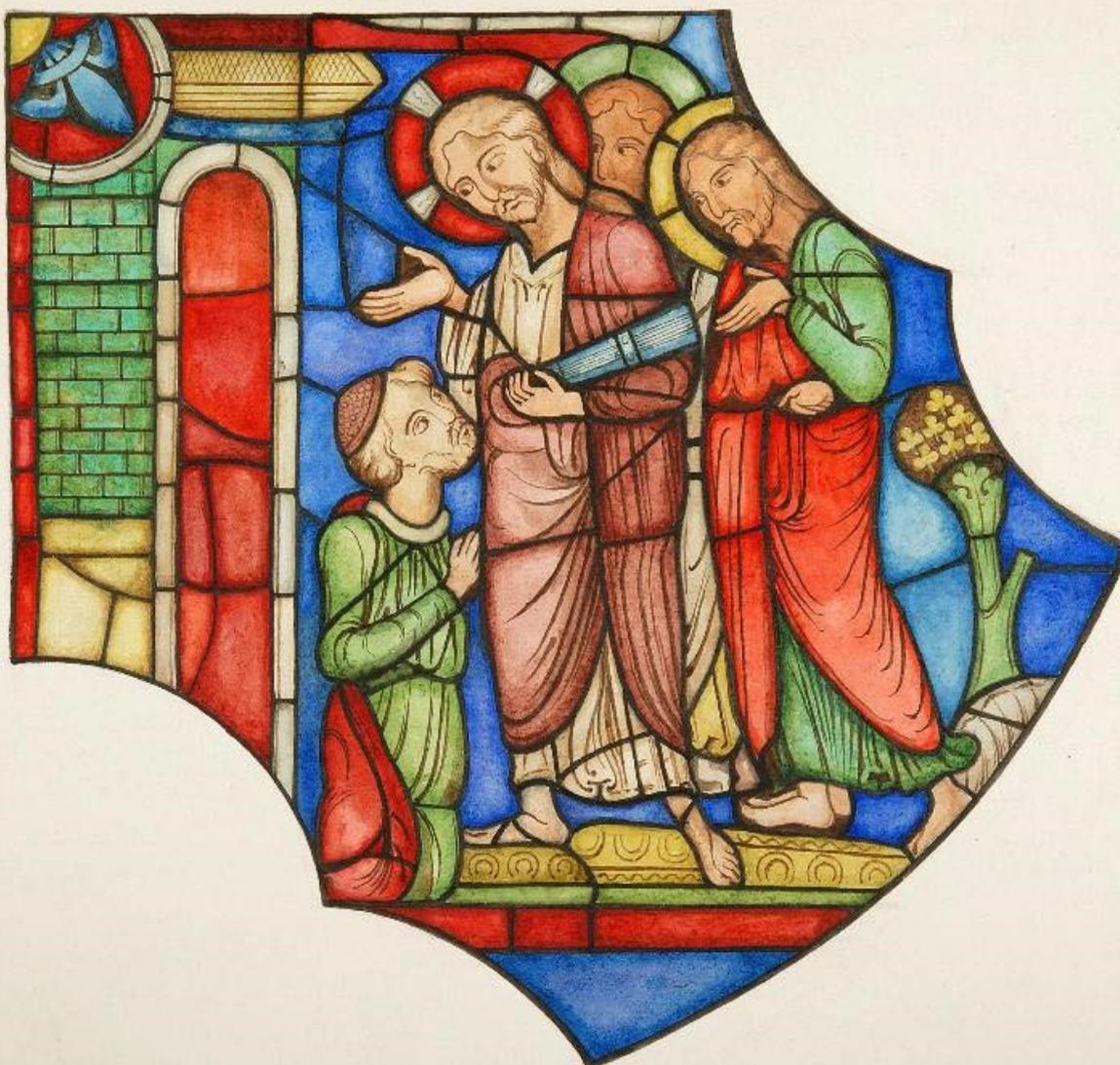


JULY 3

On This Day: Feast of St Thomas.

Frank Randal, "Study of Stained Glass, from the 'Legend of St Thomas' window, Bourges Cathedral, France" (1883).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 4



Frank Randal, "Canopy of Principit adjoining Stalls, North side of Choir, Amiens, France" (1881).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 5

John Ruskin, "The Towers of Thun, Switzerland" (1854).

In this watercolour, Ruskin painted the castle that dominates the skyline of the town of Thun. It is built on a steep mount above the town itself, which stands at the edge of Lake Thun in the Swiss Alps. The castle was begun in 1190 and work continued on it over the next two centuries. Today it houses the town's museum and concert hall. Ruskin emphasised the bright colour of the sky, which is reflected in the colour of the castle's roof. Ruskin often studied the shades of blue in the sky and recorded them in his diary. He invented a device he called a 'cyanometer', with different shades of blue painted on it. Using this, he could compare his readings of the sky's colour and purity over a long period. Ruskin did not give this work to the Guild of St George for its collection; the Guild bought it in 1990. It had been in private hands since Ruskin's death. Ruskin painted this work during a European tour in 1854, in which he intended to make drawings towards a new book on the history of Switzerland. Although he never wrote this work, Ruskin spent the summer drawing and exploring Switzerland, where he had plenty of time to study the mountain landscape and also the tourists visiting the town. Since the 1700s, it was fashionable for rich people to make a 'Grand Tour' of Europe. The Swiss lakes and Alps were an important part of the traveller's itinerary. Ruskin felt, however, that tourists did not stop to appreciate the magnificent scenery and wrote: "You most of you have been upon the Lake of Thun. You have been at least carried up and down it in a steamer... you looked at the Jungfrau and Blumlis Alp, probably, for five minutes, if it was a fine day; then took to your papers, and read the last news of the Tichborne case; then you lounged about,-thought it a nuisance that the steamer couldn't take you up in twenty minutes, instead of half-an-hour; then you got into a row about your luggage at Neuhaus; and all that you recollect afterwards is that lunch where you met the So-and-sos at Interlaken." Ruskin however reminded his readers what the view was really like: "the north side of the Lake of Thun consists... of a series of low green hills, with brown cliffs

here and there among the pines; and that above them, just after passing Oberhofen, rears up suddenly a great precipice, with its flank to the lake, and the winding wall of it prolonged upwards, far to the north, losing itself, if the day is fine, in faint tawny crests of rock among the distant blue; and if stormy, in wreaths of more than commonly torn and fantastic cloud."

<http://>



www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/

JULY 6



Charlotte C Murray, "Two studies of Muscari" (c. 1880).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

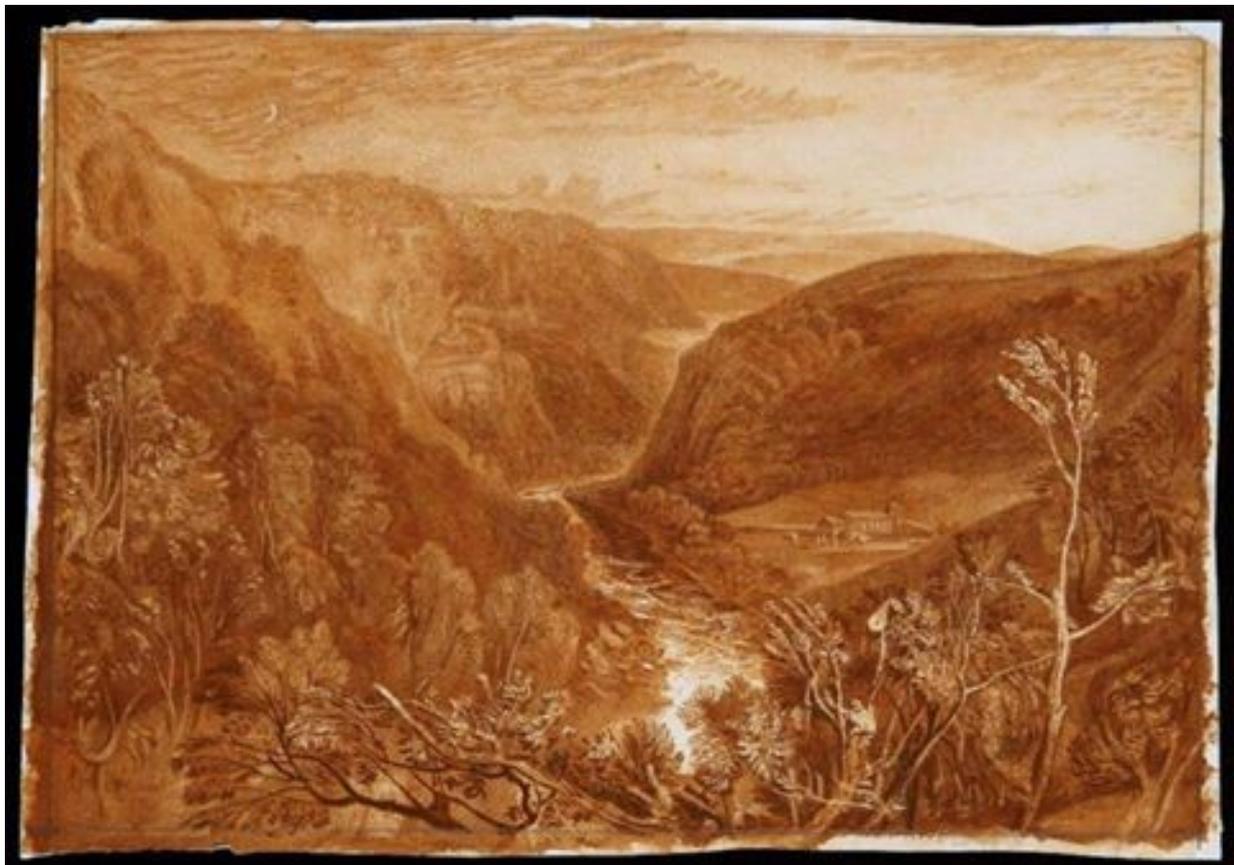


JULY 7

William Hackstoun, "Brignall Church, Yorkshire", after Turner (1880).

John Ruskin gave Hackstoun art lessons by means of correspondence. Whilst he later used him to make architectural studies of French cathedral cities, he also told him to copy Turner's works as a method of learning about watercolour painting. In general, Ruskin did not approve of artists copying work, calling it the "degradation of the art [which reduces] head-work to hand work." However, in the case of Turner, whom Ruskin admired above all other artists of his day, he wrote that art students would be "compell[ed by his] decisive and straightforward execution. ... The most rapid appreciation of Turner will be obtained by accurately copying his work." Ruskin wrote about "Brignall Banks": "The design is among the loveliest of all Turner's local landscapes and the engraving shows the peculiar attainment of recent line work in England." Hackstoun could not copy the original, however, as it had been destroyed in a house fire. Judging by the sepia colours, Hackstoun appears to have copied a mezzotint print.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 8

Charlotte C Murray, "Study of *Pyrola media*" (c. 1880).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 9

John Wharlton Bunney, "Chateau in Baden, Switzerland" (1859).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 10

John Wharltton Bunney, "Corner of Via del Cherchi and Via dei Cimatori, showing the towers of the Badia and Bargello iron rings and cresset holders on house, Florence, Italy" (1865).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 11

ean Jacques Daverne, "Chrysotis albifrons" [white-fronted amazon] (1857)
from the Eyton Collection.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 12



Frank Randal, "Il Fo, Lecco, Lombardy, Italy, 8.00am" (1885).

Il Fo is a mountain pass on Mount Resegone, high above Lake Lecco, which adjoins Lake Como. Randal described the scene as "8.00am" and produced a companion piece of the entire Resegone at 6.30pm (see 13th July). Randal probably painted these scenes in response to a letter from John Ruskin: "it happens just now that I am more interested in mountains than anything, and in clouds next." The changing appearance of mountains and clouds at different times of day had interested Ruskin throughout his life, and Randal's watercolours coincide with a time when Ruskin was writing about geology in his book "Deucalion". Ruskin had sent Randal to Lecco to holiday over the winter. He was, however, still expected to work for Ruskin, who sent him regular instructions: "Get a warm cell of a lodging under the rocks, with windows to the lake, and study skies and distant mountains, until further orders; and row and fish, if the days are fine, but don't work more than five minutes of sketch in pencil out of doors."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 13



Frank Randal, "The Resegone of Lecco, Italy, 6.30 p" (1885).

The "Resegone" mountain dominates Lake Lecco, near Milan. Painting it at 6.30pm, Randal has shown the clefts in the rock in sharp relief. His companion piece to this work, painted at 8.00am (see 12th July) shows the mountain in a much hazier light, and focuses on Il Fo, the mountain pass visible at the far right of this work. Randal probably painted these scenes in response to a letter from John Ruskin: "it happens just now that I am more interested in mountains than anything, and in clouds next." The name "Resegone" comes from the Italian word *sega*, meaning saw, or *résega*, in the Milanese dialect. Ruskin pointed out the strata and jagged peaked formation of this mountain in his book "Modern Painters": "Such mountains are not merely successions of irregular peaks, more or less resembling the edge of a much-hacked sword; they are orderly successions of teeth set in one direction, closely resembling those of a somewhat overworn saw."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 14

William Henry Gill, "From Bud to Fruit: The Life History of a Cherry, 'Three states of Fruit'" (1881).

This study is the last in a series of ten showing the development over 74 days of a sprig of cherry tree. Gill was responding to a lecture by John Ruskin in which he said: "What we especially need to know of plants for educational purposes, is, not their anatomy, but their biography... We want them drawn from their youth to their age, from bud to fruit." Later, in his botany book "Proserpina", Ruskin looked at the development of the cherry plant in reverse order, concluding that the function of the fruit is to make the flowers: "You are fond of cherries perhaps, and think that the use of the cherry-blossom is to produce cherries. Not at all: the use of cherries is to produce cherry-blossom, just as the use of bulbs is to produce hyacinths, - not of hyacinths to produce bulbs" Ruskin concluded that the flower is more important than the fruit because plants don't only multiply through fruit seeds, but also by bulbs and roots.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 15

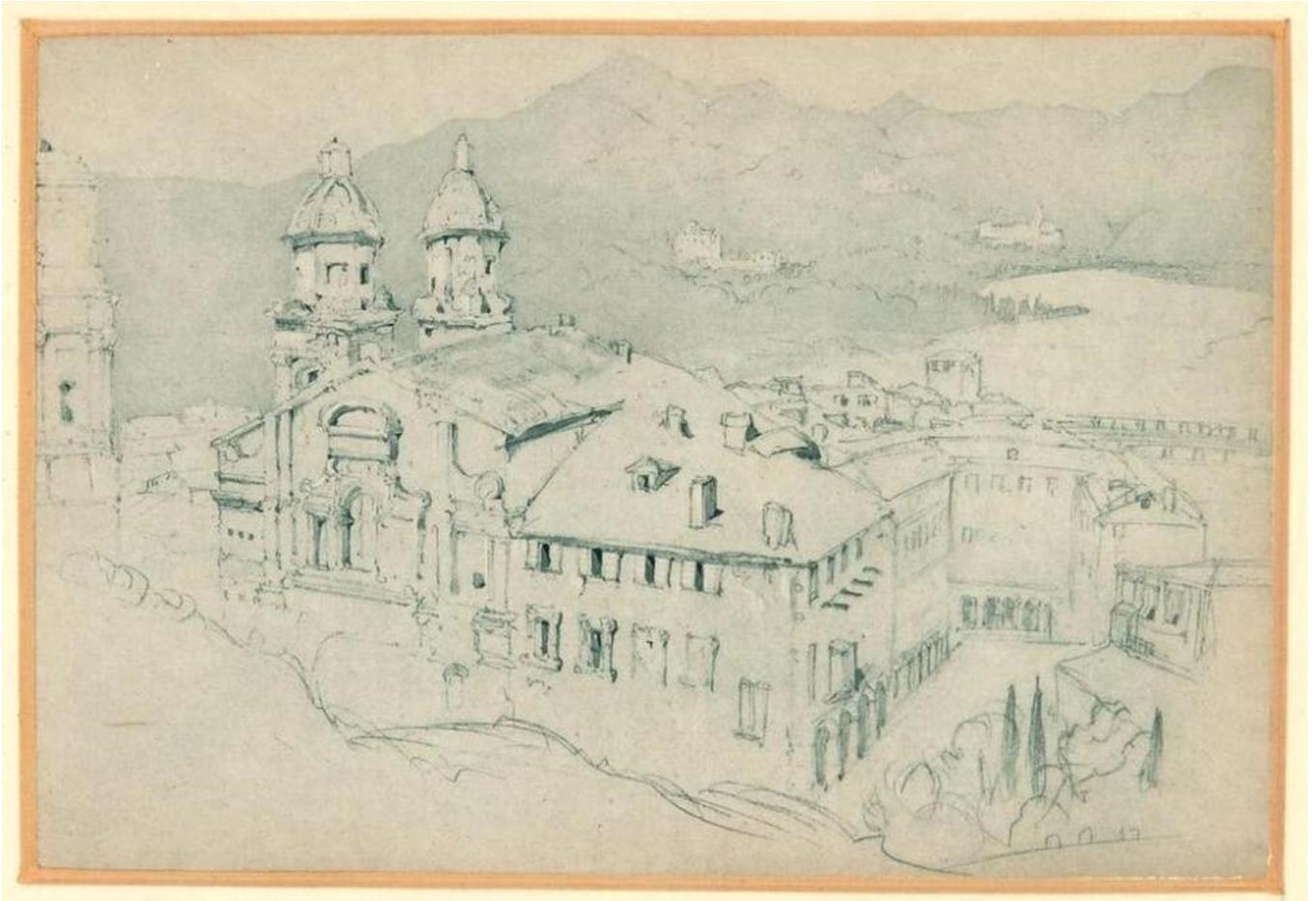


Edward Lear, "Study of a Female Blue-Winged Teal" (1837).

Lear painted this study for the naturalist Thomas Campbell Eyton, towards his book "A Monograph of the Anatidae or Duck Tribe," published in 1838. In 1837, Eyton employed Lear to make bird studies from life, or (where necessary) from stuffed birds--the first step in producing the illustrations. Six of Lear's duck drawings were later developed for the book, and unused ones were kept in Eyton's private collection. Interestingly, the Royal Academy of Arts has an almost identical drawing by John Halphead Smith (1826-1896), painted in 1840. This too was painted for Eyton. It's possible that Smith copied Lear's work, and that Eyton allowed his collection or specimen drawings to be used by other artists and authors. Certainly, one of Lear's drawings from Eyton's collection was reproduced for Sir William Jardine's book, "Illustrations of the Duck Tribe" of 1839.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 16



Nice, France, by an unknown artist, after John Ruskin (mid 19th Century). This is a print of an original drawing Ruskin made in 1840, when he visited Nice en route to Italy. He made the tour with his parents over a period of ten months and stopped to make studies and notes about each place they visited, particularly when artists such as Turner or Samuel Prout had previously admired them. Ruskin did not write much about Nice in his later published works, suggesting that the town did not particularly interest him, and to his tutor at the time he wrote that "among the noble southern scenery there is excessively little to interest in the way of ecclesiastical architecture." Much later, Ruskin wrote about Nice's architecture and landscape to his friend, the artist Elizabeth Siddal: "its blue sea, hills and white houses look to me like a bunch of blue ribands dipped in mud and then splashed all over with lime." <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 17

Charles Fairfax Murray, "Abraham leaving Babylon with Sarah and Lot" after Benozzo Gozzoli (1876-80).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 18

Frank Randal, "House built onto the Remains of the Church des Soubiours, Cahors, France" (1883).

In the later part of Ruskin's life, many of the ancient buildings he had studied for his books such as "The Seven Lamps of Architecture" and "The Stones of Venice" had changed. Historical buildings across Europe were, in Ruskin's view, under constant threat of destruction by neglect or restoration. In Ruskin's eyes, the original "spirit" of the craftsman could rarely be recaptured by restorers. Similarly, Ruskin was keen to capture everyday and picturesque street scenes in drawings to record the slow pace of life, which was rapidly changing as society became more competitive and materialistic. With this in mind, Ruskin commissioned various artists to record medieval architecture and village life, particularly in France and Italy. This study is one of these architectural records.

It was made by one of

Ruskin's most favoured artists, Frank Randal. He made it on a tour of France in 1883. It was the third "season" that Randal had spent in France with Ruskin's basic instructions to paint: "For your French work you may really go where you have a fancy to..." and later, 'If the railway from Limoges went south to Cahors there is or was a bridge there.'" This building is in Cahors, in southern France, where Randal painted not only the bridge Ruskin mentioned, but several picturesque buildings as well. Cahors was an attractive and scenic town, with medieval bridges, buildings and streets. These buildings were built in the 1200s and 1300s after bankers and merchants started to use the town as a centre of business.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 19



"Convolvulus Border Design with Red Campion" (1880) possibly by Charlotte C. Murray.

There are a number of works by Miss Murray in the Ruskin Collection. Most of them are carefully-observed studies of a particular flowering plant. Their foliage and roots are included and are presented simply rather than in an artistic manner. This watercolour is different: a design using intertwining flowers and foliage. Ruskin admired Murray's botanical illustrations. He wrote about one of her works: "It is quite impossible to see better painting than this, in the uniting of instantaneously right contour with consummately tender, yet effective laying of colour. In absolute quality of colour, it is incomplete, but in texture, even at this stage, unsurpassable; and generally, the same may be said of all Miss Murray's flower-paintings." Ruskin felt that artists should "day by day... draw some lovely natural form or flower ...choosing ...what is beautiful and strong in life." That way, he or she would find a new sense of beauty in his surroundings.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 20

On This Day in 1929: Marian Twelves, leading figure in the Ruskin Linen Industry, died.

W. Christie: Textile pattern with hops (1893) design made for the Ruskin Linen Industry.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 21

Henry Roderick Newman, "Coire in the Grisons, Switzerland" (1881).

Coire is more commonly known as Chur and is situated in the Swiss Alps. This view of Chur seems to chime with John Ruskin's memory of the area from when he was 16 years old in 1835: "The higher part of this large valley... is... exceedingly beautiful, shelving up to the mountains in smooth slopes of green turf, not jagged with monotonous pine, but tufted with various and beautiful trees." Ruskin wrote to Newman about the work: "I can't tell you how delighted I am ..[it is]... a hitherto unseen thing in art - the richness with light - the realisation



with sensitiveness. The honesty, with her praise of the thing loved..." Ruskin always wanted to see the artist's praise for "a thing loved" in artworks. He believed that if an artist felt more pride in his skill than love for the object they painted, they would not be able to capture it either with truth, or feeling.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 22



On This Day (Feast Day): St Mary Magdalene.

Frank Randal, "Study of Stained Glass, 'St Mary Magdalene and Jesus' , Bourges Cathedral, France" (1883).

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

JULY 23

Edwyn Frederick Temple (1835-1920) "Gorge of the River Rakaia and Mount Hutt, New Zealand" (c. 1880).

This watercolour is, with Temple's other work (see July 24) almost the only work in the Ruskin Collection about which Ruskin wrote catalogue notes. Ruskin never travelled to New Zealand, so instead compared its landscape with that of the European Alps. Ruskin wrote speculatively as a geologist as well as an art critic. "We have here a stream which I should guess to be nearly as strong as the Rhone in the Upper Valais, yet entirely pure, and showing in the equally pure evening light, all the colour-phenomena proper to pure snow-water..." He praised Temple too for his truthfulness writing that "the painter has been thinking of his subject only, and has been able to set down his certain and accurate observations of fact". He therefore saw this painting as a scientific study, "not at all as an example of painting as an art... it is executed with all the artistic skill necessary for its own perfection as a scientific record of natural phenomena".

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 24

Edwyn Frederick Temple, "The Upper Reach of Lake Wakatipu, looking South, South Island, New Zealand" (c. 1881).

(See also July 23.)

Ruskin wrote that this watercolour puts the "scene vividly before the eye, and perfectly before the imagination." Even so, he studied Temple's work as a geological diagram rather than as an artistic landscape and therefore found fault with some of Temple's embellishments, in particular the colour and confusing scale of the "obnoxious pine trees". He commended though the "peace and beauty of the entire scene and the delicately decisive painting of the ferny foreground" calling it "an exemplary piece of work." He also noticed with interest the addition of the cut logs and piles of wood on the shoreline.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

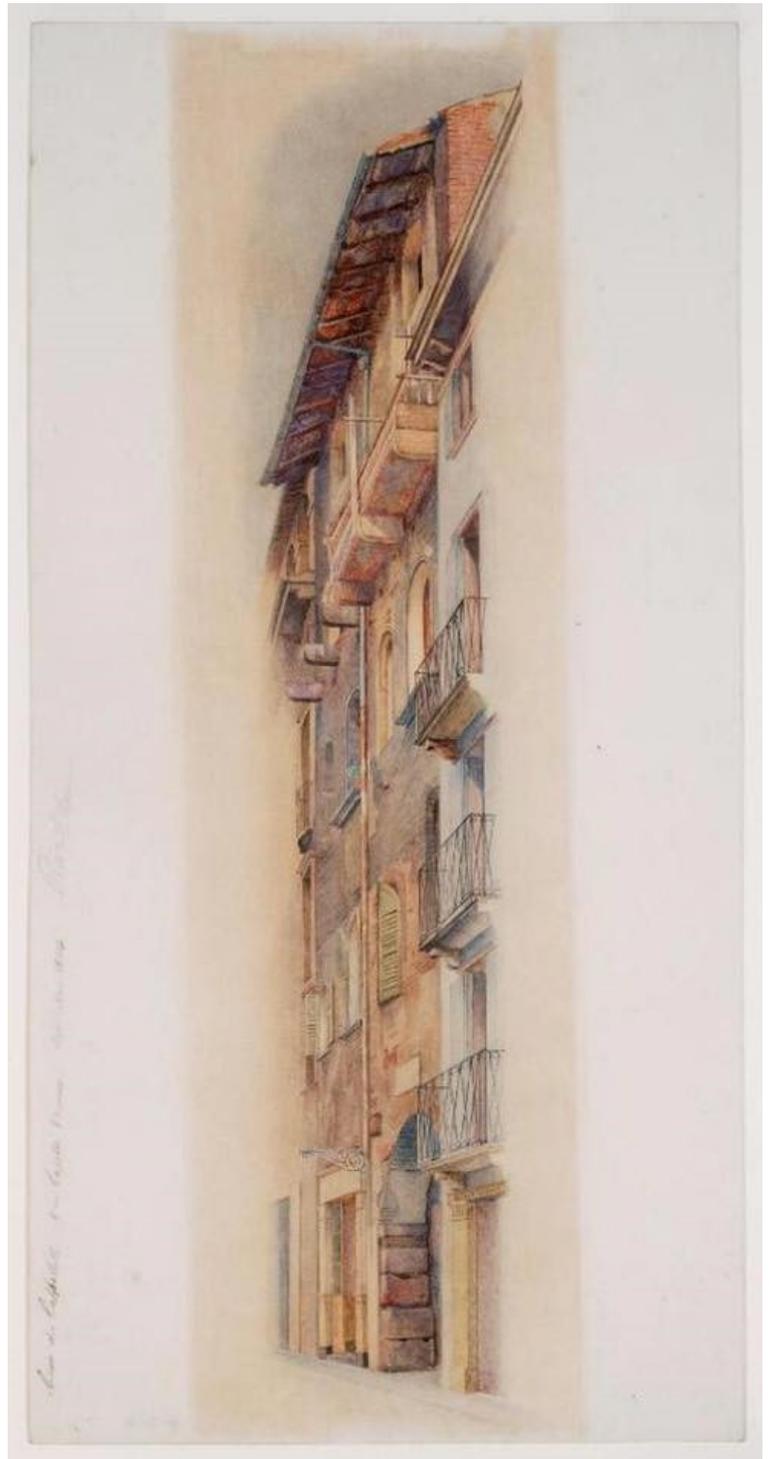


JULY 25

Frank Randal, "Casa dei
Cappelletti, Via Cappello,
Verona, Italy" (1884).

<http://>

[www.gildofstgeorge.org.uk/
the-collection/](http://www.gildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/)



JULY 26

"Townsend's Sandpiper" [Surfbird] (1838) after John James Audubon. From the Eyton Collection.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 27

On This Day in 1942, Thomas Matthews Rooke died, aged 99.

T. M. Rooke, "Fête Dieu, Laon, France" (1886).

In 1886, John Ruskin sent Rooke to paint in France, writing, "I am going to avail myself of your divine sympathy with the French character and your exquisite architectural drawing. I want you to go first to Laon and see how you like it... The mouldings at Laon are the finest in the world, and for the town - you'll see." Ruskin commissioned not only architectural studies but also scenes of everyday life. Here, the festival of Corpus Christi takes place on Laon's main street, Rue du Bourg. Townsfolk are gathered outside the main public house, "La Hure" (or Boar's Head), recognisable by its decorative inn sign. The figures in white are girls awaiting their first communion. One contemporary commentator on this work also noted the tourist, standing a respectful distance away at the lower left of the scene. Ruskin wrote to Rooke that this drawing was "among the very delightfulest and usefulest you have done."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 28

Hugh Allen, "Study of Young Leaf Twigs: Lilac" (1880-85).



Records suggest that this study is one of a set of plant studies made under Ruskin's instruction. There are several more of these studies at Whitelands College in London, where Ruskin also placed a small collection. They may have been carried out as part of Ruskin's research for "Proserpina" - a botanical book in which Ruskin wrote in detail about each section of the leaf and the importance of recording the "biography" of each plant. As the son of George Allen, an engraver whom Ruskin had previously employed to illustrate his books (and who was Ruskin's publisher from the 1870s), Hugh Allen would have known Ruskin personally, and would have made the studies to Ruskin's exact plans. If they were meant to be for engraved illustrations, his studies would not have needed colour. Even so, Ruskin's 'instruction' for painting plants also started by learning to paint in black and white successfully, before moving on to colour.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

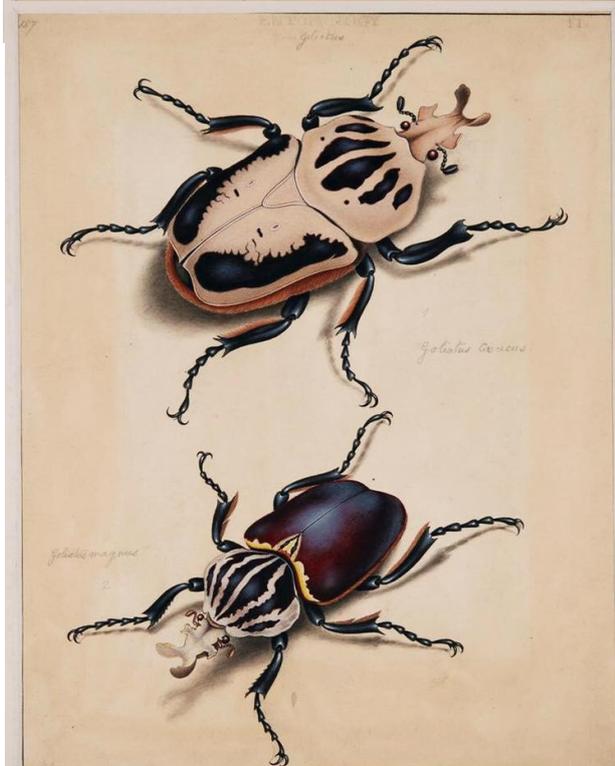
JULY 29



Edward Donovan, "Studies of Invertebrate Animals, Volume III" (1790-1810).

This is not a book as such, but a volume of collected watercolour illustrations that were bound together in the 1870s for the Ruskin Collection. It contains watercolour studies made towards several of Donovan's books on natural history. He produced a number of these, under titles such as "The Naturalist's Repository, or Miscellany of Exotic Natural History Exhibiting Rare and Beautiful Specimens of Foreign Birds, Insects, Shells, Quadrapeds, Fish and Marine Productions", which he published between 1822 and 1827. More famously, Donovan produced "The Natural History of British Shells", first published in 1799, which became one of the most popular books on shells during the 1800s, owing to its beautifully produced, hand-coloured illustrations. All of his books, however, were notable for their vivid and detailed studies. Not only did Donovan paint the preliminary illustrations for his books, he also made sure he had control over the final published illustrations themselves by etching, engraving and hand-colouring them himself.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 30

"*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*" [Fiordland Penguin] (c. 1845) by printmaker Charles Joseph Hullmandel (1789-1850).

Ruskin wrote: "One can't be angry when one looks at a penguin."

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



JULY 31

Carlo Ponti (1823-93), "Palazzo Franchetti, Venice, Italy" (a photograph) (1860s).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



On This Day in 1825, the Curator of St George's Museum, Walkley, Sheffield, was baptised in Devizes, Wiltshire. Visit the Museum online at <http://www.ruskinatwalkley.org/>

