

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

MARCH

Guild of St George
With thanks to Museums Sheffield

*Text by Louise Pullen and Stuart Eagles
Images selected by Stuart Eagles
Images scanned by Museums Sheffield
Edited & designed by Stuart Eagles*

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GUILD of St GEORGE

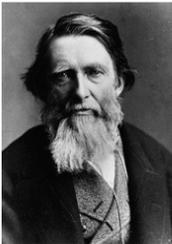
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Welcome to Ruskin's Guild of St George

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.





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](#)

News

RIP Companion Lord Asa Briggs

We are deeply saddened to report the death at the age of 94 of Lord Asa Briggs. He gave the first of the Guild's Ruskin Lectures in 1978 and has been a Companion since that time.
[More...](#)

Support the Big Draw

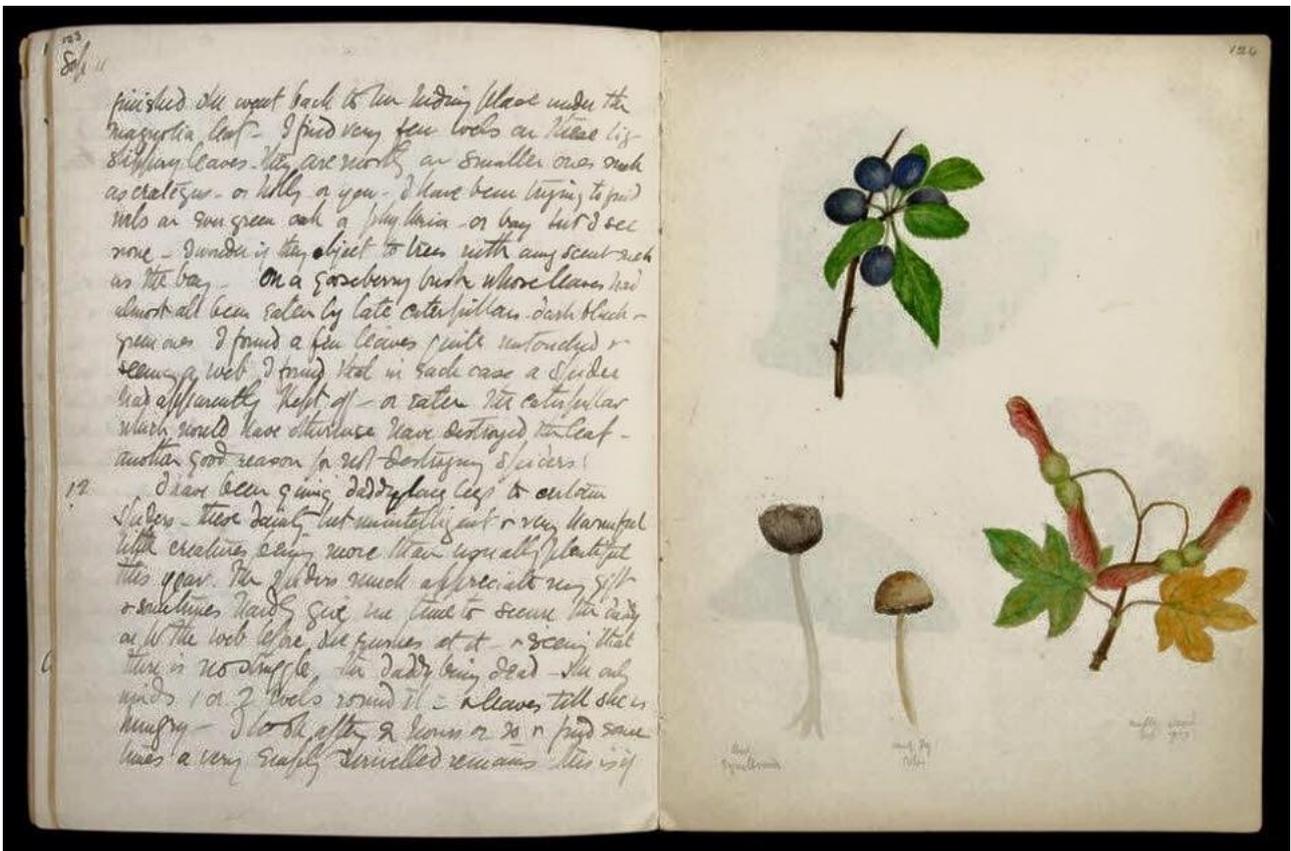
Please dig deep and bid. [The Big Draw](#) is currently supporting [an online auction](#) in order to raise funds.
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MARCH 1



On This Day in 1850, Mary Hope, later to be Mary Hope Greg, was born. This is her Nature Notebook (1905-22).





A keen admirer of Ruskin, Greg followed Ruskin's advice to look closely at nature. In her sketchbook and diary, she tried to capture on paper what she saw, interspersing notes and sketches with pressings and rubbings, and prose descriptions. She was a philanthropist who donated generously to public collections around the UK. On her death, she bequeathed the Guild nearly a dozen properties in the village of Westmill to lease to local deserving people at reasonable rents. Most of the properties remain in the Guild's hands today.

Read about Mary Hope Greg in this free download by Liz Mitchell:

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/.../History/MitchellGreg.pdf>



TREASURING THINGS OF THE LEAST: COMPANION EXTRAORDINAIRE, MARY HOPE GREG

Liz Mitchell

Mary Hope Greg (1810-1897) was the first woman to be elected to the Guild of St George in the Westmill area. She was a keen admirer of Ruskin and followed his advice to look closely at nature. In her sketchbook and diary, she tried to capture on paper what she saw, interspersing notes and sketches with pressings and rubbings, and prose descriptions. She was a philanthropist who donated generously to public collections around the UK. On her death, she bequeathed the Guild nearly a dozen properties in the village of Westmill to lease to local deserving people at reasonable rents. Most of the properties remain in the Guild's hands today.



of nature's smallest details, capturing, tracing and even commemorating Greg, Gild and each other's lives. It is a book that is both a history and a biography, a book that is both a history and a biography. It is a book that is both a history and a biography. It is a book that is both a history and a biography.

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MARCH 2

Paolo Salviati (1818-1894): "The Island of San Giorgio from the Gallery of the Doge's Palace, Venice, Italy" (photograph, late 19th Century).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



MARCH 3



Ann Elizabeth Seaton (1858-1903): "Study of Three Shells and Coral" (c. 1876-79).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

On This Day 1864: John James Ruskin, father of John Ruskin, died, aged 78. He was buried in Shirley Churchyard where John Ruskin had a memorial erected with this inscription:
"Here rests from days well-sustained burden, John James Ruskin. Born in Edinburgh, May 10th, 1785, he died in his house in London, March 3rd. 1864. He was an entirely honest merchant and his memory is to all who keep it dear and helpful. His son, whom he loved to the uttermost and taught to speak truth, says this of him."
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/>



MARCH 4



Jean Gabriel Prêtre: "Colibri à Plastron Noir" [Black-breasted hillstar] (1831).
(Latin name *Oreotrochilus melanogaster*).

Jean Gabriel Prêtre made the original drawing of this South American hummingbird for the illustrated book, "Histoire Naturelle Colibris et des Oiseaux-Mouche" [Natural History of Hummingbirds] which was produced by René Primevère Lesson in two volumes between 1829 and 1833. Lesson was originally a surgeon in the French Navy, but during 1822-25 was engaged as a pharmacist and botanist on the round-world voyage of the ship "La Coquille". From this trip, Lesson collected material for a number of books on ornithology and zoology and employed artists such as Prêtre to draw official illustrations for his works from notes and stuffed specimens. He wrote the text himself. The book was published in Paris by the publisher, Arthus Bertrand. Part of the Eyton Collection.

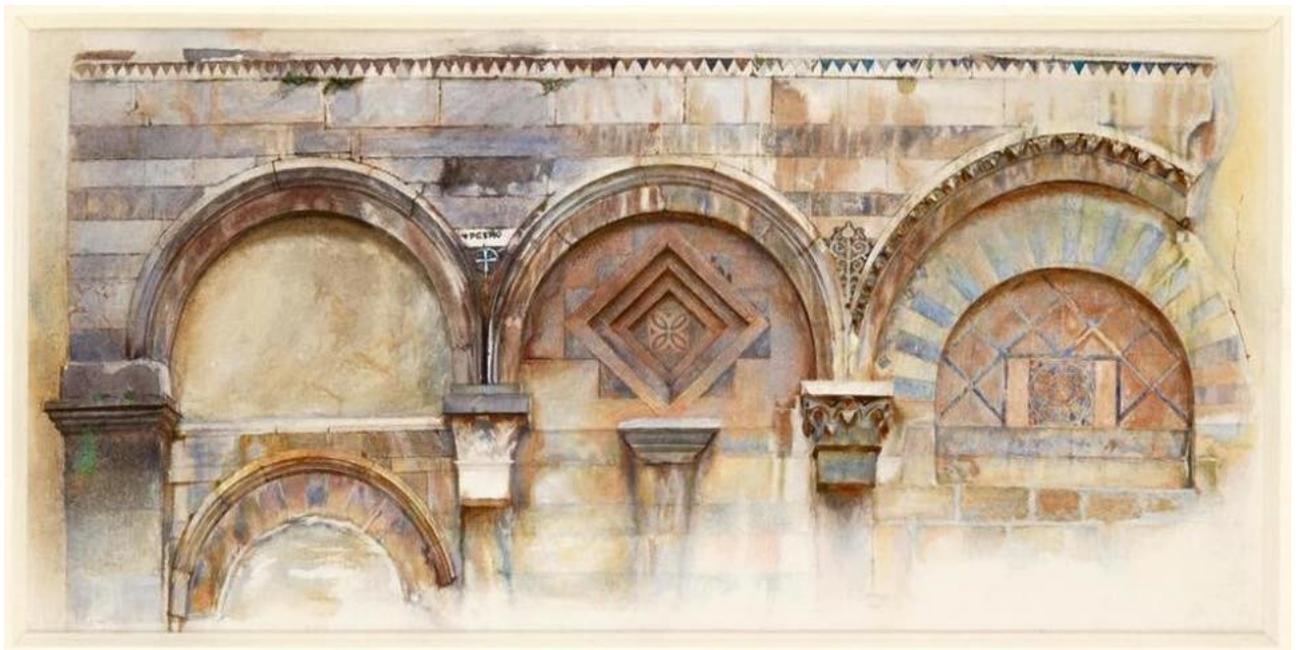
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

MARCH 5

Angelo Alessandri (1854-1931): "Detail of the Marble Wall, Church of San Nicola, Pisa, Italy" (1882).

This study shows part of the front wall of San Nicola. The facing on this wall is known as "marble intarsia" - a type of decoration made by cutting different coloured stones into shapes to create a larger decorative scheme. The wall was created in the 1100s using marble from different local mines to achieve the subtle colouring. Ruskin greatly admired this type of decoration. This watercolour is part of a series of studies of San Nicola that Ruskin commissioned.

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



MARCH 6

Edward Donovan "Study of Two Perna Shells".

Donovan probably made this study as an illustration for one of his books, 'The Natural History of British Shells' (1799). This was one of the most popular books on shells in the 1800s, owing to its beautifully produced, hand-coloured illustrations. Donovan produced each of his original watercolours in minute detail, creating iridescent paint layers and finishing them with egg-glaze varnish. He then made sure he had control over the production of his book illustrations by engraving and hand-colouring them himself. In Ruskin's estimation, Donovan's illustrations were "entirely beautiful and wonderful". They reminded him though of "the loss to the entire body of the nation of all this perfect artistic capacity." By this, Ruskin meant the many artists of an earlier age who had made spectacular natural history illustrations "for love and truth, and not for lust and gold". Artists were poorly paid for book illustrations so many artists were not prepared to devote such time to them.

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



MARCH 7

On This Day in 1802, Sir Edwin Landseer was born.

Sir Edwin Landseer, "Nero, a Lion, from Life" (1814).

Nero the Lion was a resident of Polito's Menagerie at the Exeter Exchange, on the Strand in London. Landseer, together with his friend, John Frederick Lewis (1804-1876), who is also represented in the Ruskin Collection, visited the menagerie from childhood and drew the animals they saw there. Together they produced many sketches from life. Landseer drew this work when he was about 12 years old. His brother, Thomas, engraved a published print entitled "Nero, a lion from Senegal, now exhibiting in the Tower of London". Ruskin wrote admiringly of Landseer's observational skill, saying that he was more of "a natural historian than a painter; and the power of his works depends more on his knowledge and love of animals, on his understanding of their minds and ways, on his unerring notice of their gesture and expression, than on an artistical or technical excellence".

Consequently, Ruskin used Landseer's exemplary works in his teaching in the Oxford Drawing School.

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



MARCH 8



Arthur Burgess (1844-1887): "Capital, Detail of Sculptured Moulding, Tomb of Can Mastino II, Verona" (1869). Arthur Burgess was a wood engraver who asked John Ruskin for illustration work. Ruskin, who wanted to give Burgess employment away from London's commercial trade, first employed him in 1860 to re-engage botanical illustrations from the historic Danish book, "Flora Danica" so that Ruskin could use them to illustrate his botanical work, "Proserpina". In the following years, Burgess worked with Ruskin in Verona where he drew praise from Ruskin for his drawings in black

and white, including this. He also made enlarged diagrams for Ruskin so that Ruskin could illustrate his Oxford lectures with them.

Although Burgess was not an original artist, Ruskin described him as "such a draughtsman ... as I never knew the match of, with gifts of mechanical ingenuity and mathematical intelligence in the highest degree precious to me." Like Ruskin, Burgess appeared to suffer from depression and seems to have received from Ruskin an uncommon degree of sympathy, friendship and understanding.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/treasures-of-the-ruskin-.../>

International Women's Day

The Courage to Wear Yellow: what did Oxford women, Louise Von Glehn and Bertha Johnson think of Ruskin? The portrait of von Glehn (pictured left) is by Johnson.

Read more online: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/.../Calen.../Extras/Yellow.pdf>



Isabella Fyvie Mayo (1843-1914)

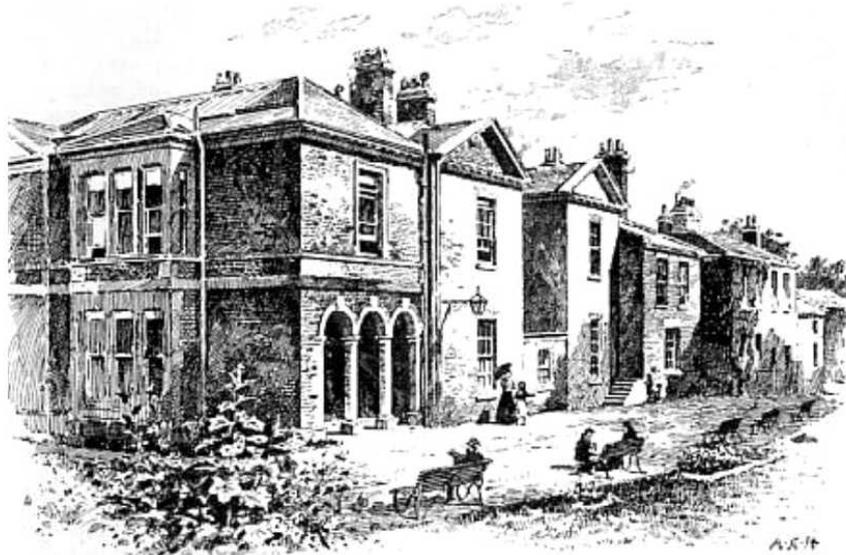


On International Women's Day, let's read what one of Ruskin's most dedicated women admirers, the novelist, Isabella Fyvie Mayo, wrote about the Ruskin Collection.

SHEFFIELD, YESTERDAY AND TODAY.

(From *THE SUNDAY AT HOME*, 1898-99.)

A two miles' journey through small streets with wooden shuttered parlour windows, or low rows of humble shops, brings us to the pleasantly-wooded and undulated Meersbrook Park, with the quaint buildings which house the "Ruskin Museum" which the St. George's Guild has loaned to Sheffield for twenty years from 1890. This museum is intended as a type of the collections which Mr. Ruskin desires to see established throughout the country for studious culture of all that is noble in art and beautiful in nature. He considers that such local educational museums are necessary to train the people to appreciate the unique treasures of any worthy national collection. As it is also his wise opinion that "a collection should never be increased to its own confusion," only a limited number of examples—especially of art objects—are on view at a time. The collection includes rare minerals, a collection of exquisite drawings in natural history, casts taken by Mr. Ruskin in Venice and Rouen, architectural studies, rare editions of classical literature, engravings after Turner, magnificent illuminated ancient manuscripts, and fine Greek and English coins.



THE RUSKIN MUSEUM.

Further reading: Stuart Eagles, 'Lunch at Denmark Hill' in *The Friends of Ruskin's Brantwood Newsletter*, Autumn 2011, pp. 13-15. [Meeting with Ruskin in 1869 recorded by Isabella Fyvie Mayo.]

MARCH 9

John Wharlton Bunney (1828-1882): "Alpine Glacier" (1859).

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

Acceptance by HM Government in Lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to The Guild of St George, 2002.



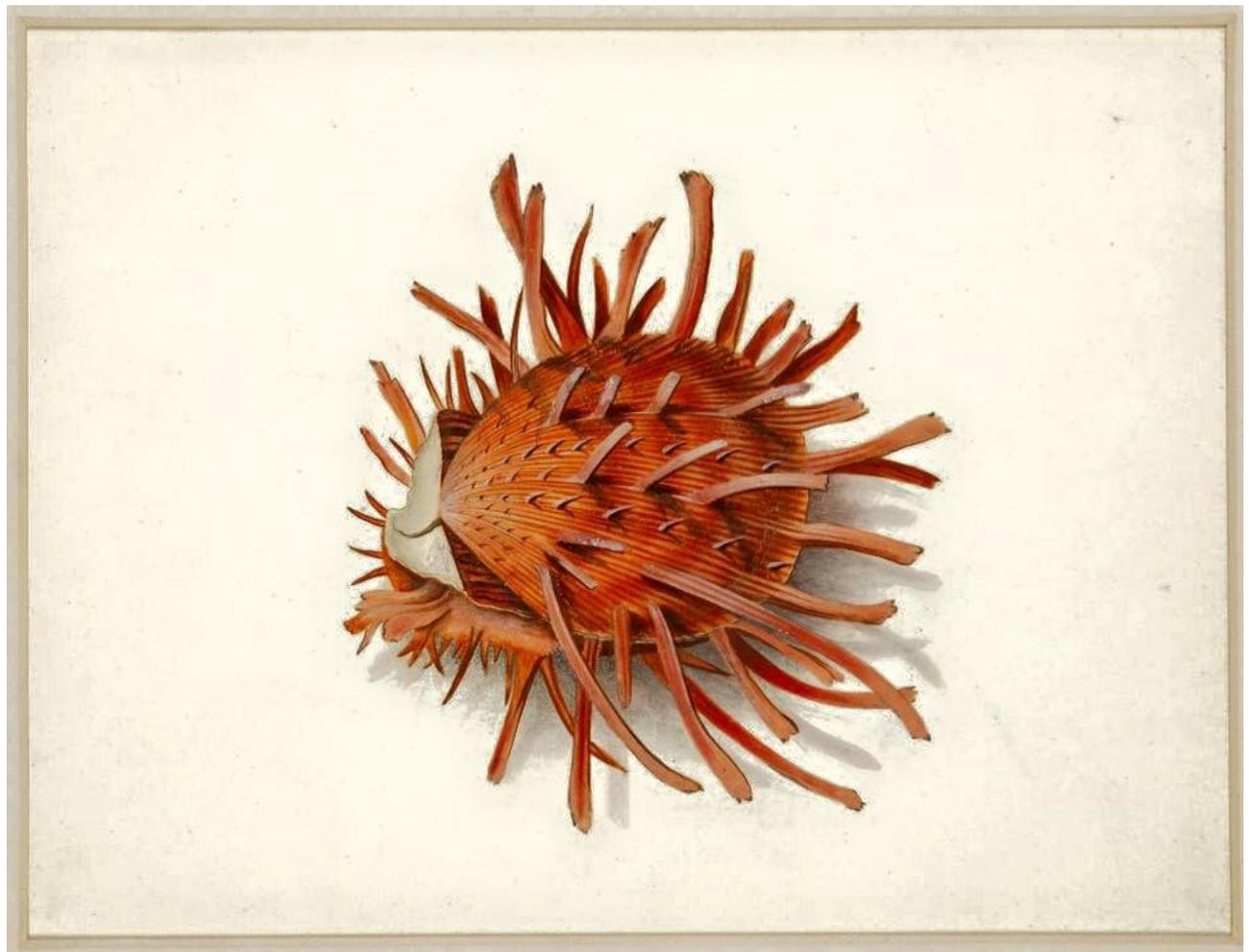
MARCH 10

William Hayes (1729-99): "Secretary bird" (1794).
Part of the Eyton Collection.

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



MARCH 11



Edward Donovan (1768-1837): "Study of a mollusc: Spondylus Regius, 'Regal thorny oyster shell" (1790-1820).

Donovan made this drawing in preparation for one of his books of natural history. One of the most famous was "The Natural History of British Shells" first published in 1799. It became one of the most popular books on shells during the 1800s, owing to its beautifully produced, hand-coloured illustrations. Not only did Donovan paint exquisitely detailed preliminary illustrations for all his books, he also made sure he had control over the final book illustrations by etching, engraving and hand colouring them himself. According to Ruskin, Donovan's illustrations were of "inestimable excellence". He added though that "[they] affect me with profound melancholy in the thought of the loss to the entire body of the nation of all this perfect artistic capacity". By this, Ruskin meant natural history artists who made spectacular illustrations "for love and truth, and not for lust and gold". Ruskin felt that illustrators of his day no longer worked with this same sense of devotion, wanting more money and fame than book-illustrators generally received.

Read more: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/treasures-of-the-ruskin-.../>

Buy this image as a greetings card (ref. Q3):

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/shop/>

MARCH 12



William Ward (1829-1908): "View of the Rhine" after JMW Turner (1880). Ruskin commissioned this study from a Turner watercolour because he felt that art students should learn about the ways in which Turner used colour and appreciate his "decisive and straightforward execution". Ruskin wrote that: "The most rapid appreciation of Turner will be obtained by accurately copying those in 'body-colour' on grey paper" which is what Ward has done here. Ruskin felt that this was an important part of an artist's education. At a time when Turner's work was not widely admired, Ruskin described him as "the man who beyond all doubt is the greatest of the age; greatest in every faculty of the imagination, in every branch of scenic knowledge; at once the painter and poet of the day." Ruskin felt that Turner painted what he saw, free from artistic and contemporary pictorial conventions. He particularly admired Turner's use of colour to represent emotion and his "truth" to nature.

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

MARCH 13



Antonio Fortunato Perini (1830-1879) "Palazzo Contarini Fasan, Venice"
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

MARCH 14

John Ruskin, "Study of a Silver Penny from the Reign of William I". Ruskin drew this coin according to a method set out in his book "The Pleasures of England". He told people to copy coins without the shadows so only the basic design can be seen, describing it as "Natural History painting, not great painter's painting." It's possible that Ruskin made this simplified but enlarged study towards an unpublished book, but in another of his books, "Aratra Pentelici" Ruskin used photography for coin illustrations as he didn't think artistic works were necessary in coin diagrams. Ruskin drew this from a coin in his own collection (and now, with many others. in the Ruskin Collection). Coin collecting was one of Ruskin's lesser known interests, which seems to have emerged later in his life. He was interested in the appearance, history and symbolism of coins and wrote: "the character of coins is quite conclusive evidence in national history; ...[every Empire] tells its story in beautiful coins." <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

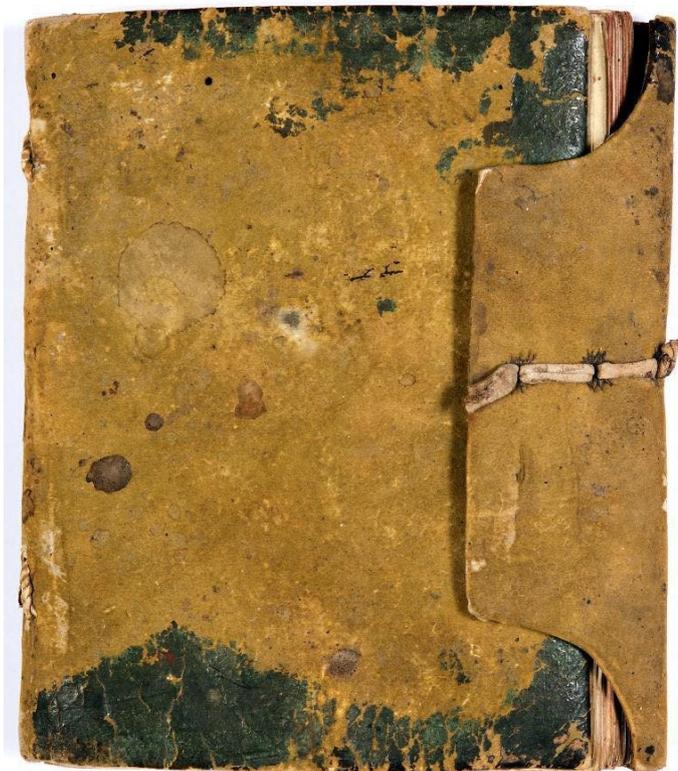


MARCH 15



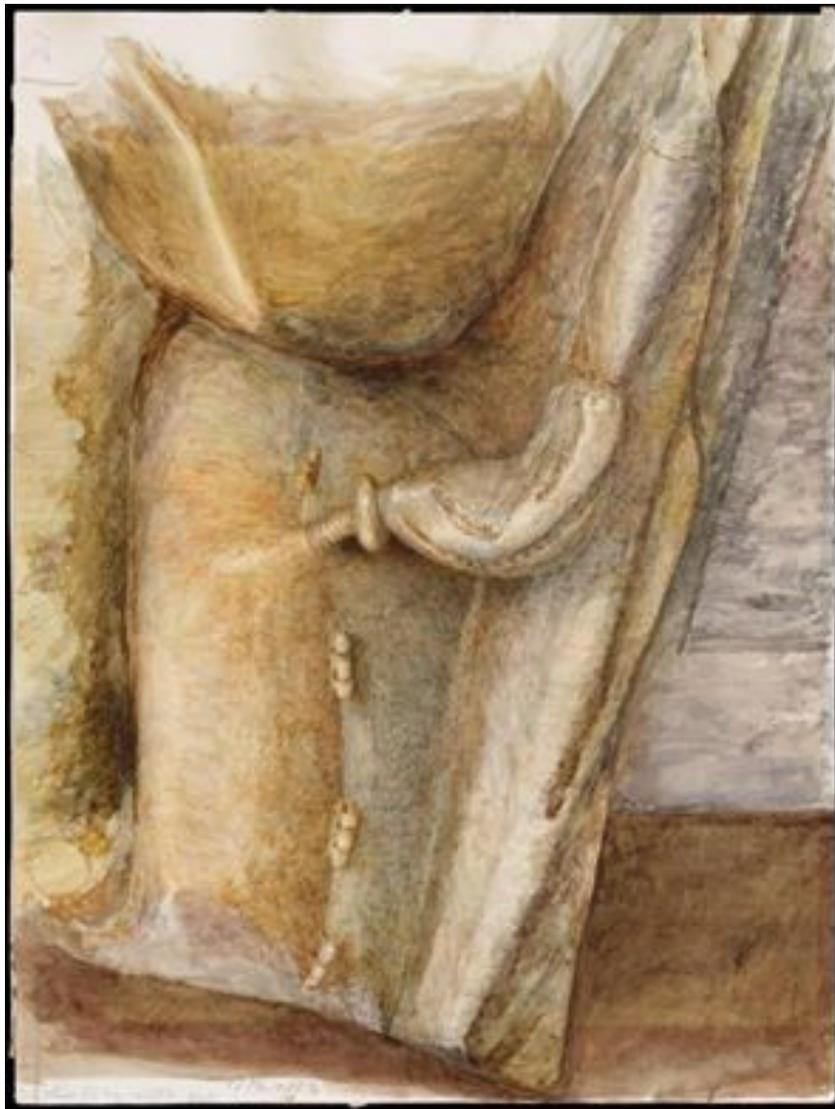
A manuscript cookery book by
an unknown Italian writer,
1501-1502.
On parchment with a suede
binding.

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



MARCH 16

Raffaele Carloforti, "Detail of Cushion & Tassel, Statue of St Simeone, San Simeone, Venice" (1876-77).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>



MARCH 17



On This Day in 1846, Kate Greenaway was born.

Kate Greenaway, "Study of Rock, Moss and Ivy" (1885).

John Ruskin challenged Greenaway, a popular children's book illustrator, to paint this rock, considering that she needed to draw from nature to improve her artistic skills. Kate recorded this event in a letter to Joan Severn, Ruskin's cousin and nurse towards the end of his life, writing: "I remember he wondered at the

way I did it," suggesting that he also criticised it.

Ruskin found great beauty in the everyday rocks he found lying around his garden at Brantwood by Coniston Water. He encouraged people to draw the stones they saw and he described the beauty he found in them - a microcosm of Nature itself:

"When a rock of any kind has lain for some time exposed to the weather, Nature finishes it in her own way. First she takes wonderful pains about its forms: sculpting it into exquisite variety of dint and dimple... then she colours it, and every one of her touches of colour... is a minute forest of living trees, glorious in strength and beauty."

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



MARCH 18

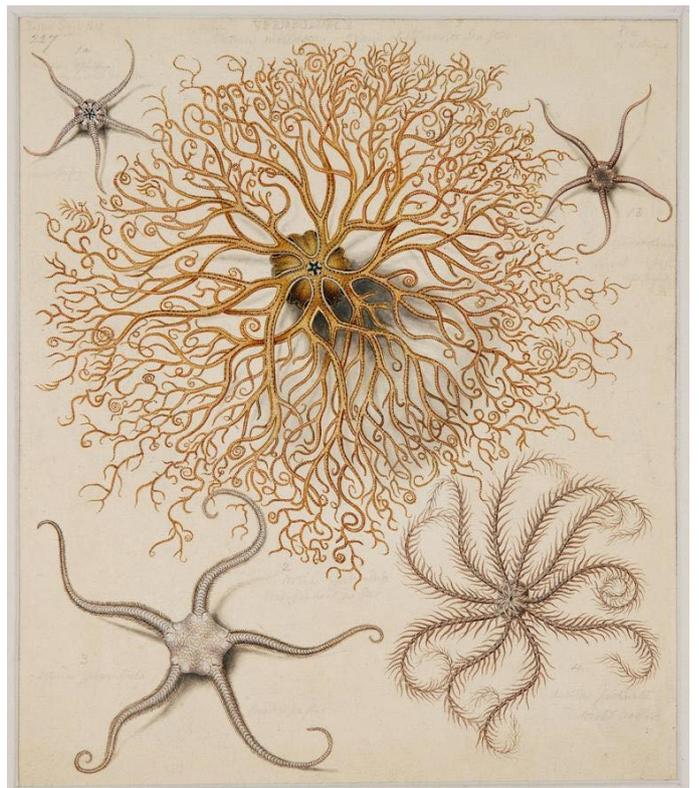


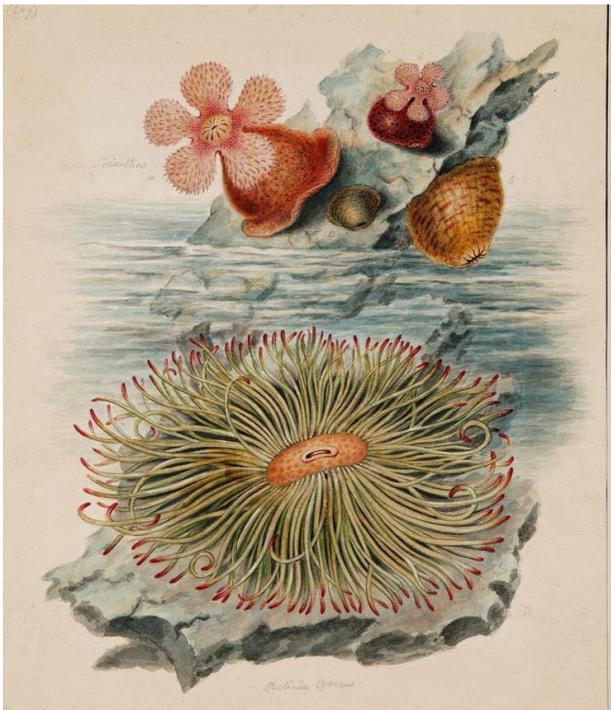
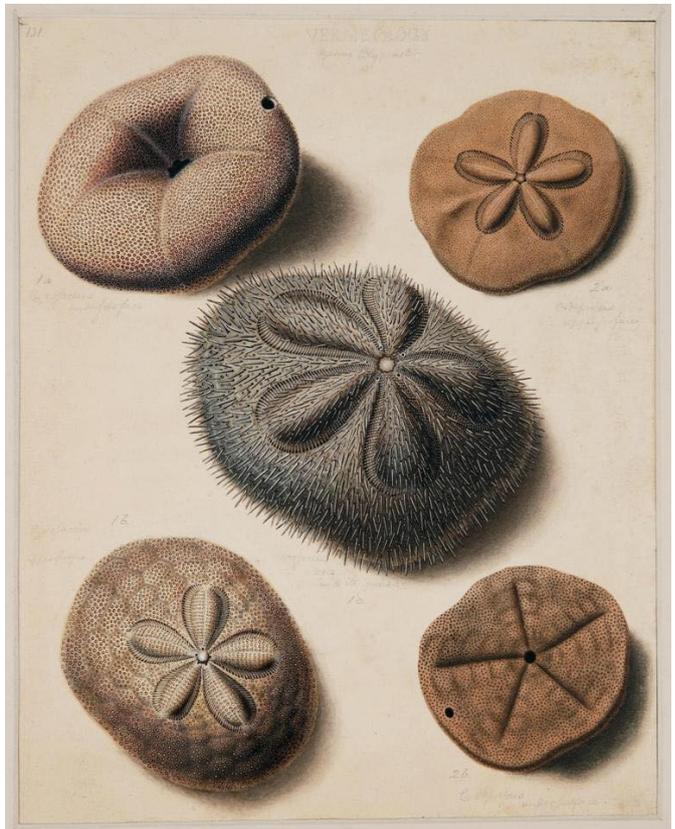
Frank Randal, "'La Casetta di Lucia', near Bonacina, Lecco, Italy" (1885). The "Casetta di Lucia" (Lucia's cottage) is named after the fictional heroine of the novel, "I Promessi Sposi" (The Betrothed) which is set in Lecco. Randal has in fact mis-identified the building and tourists celebrated a quite different house! Postcards from the late 1800s show it to be a larger building built around a courtyard. Randal was in Lecco painting views for John Ruskin. This building, with its crumbling exterior, seems to conform to Ruskin's description of villas in this area: "almost all the buildings on the lake shore are built [from black limestone]; and, therefore, were their material unconcealed, would be of a dark monotonous and melancholy grey tint, equally uninteresting to the eye, and depressing to the mind. To prevent this result, they are covered with different compositions, sometimes white, more frequently cream-coloured, and of varying depth." The landscape around the villa also echoes another passage from the book describing the local countryside: "festoons of the luxuriant vine, purple with ponderous clusters, trailed and trellised between and over them... guides the eye away to the unfailing wall of mountain."

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

MARCH 19

Edward Donovan: "Study of Invertebrate Animals" volume I (1799-1810) *eight Images* [For a further twelve examples, please see March 28, April 2 and April 9.]
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 for several of Donovan's books of 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, Quadrupeds, 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 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 book illustrations by etching, engraving and hand colouring them himself.

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

MARCH 20

John Ruskin, "Coastal Scene, Italy" (1841).

Ruskin made this drawing when his artistic tastes were still developing. At this time he often imitated either his drawing masters, or the artists his father admired such as Samuel Prout and David Roberts. While Ruskin was dismissive of his early drawing skills he did think his pictures were of "historical interest in their accuracy of representation." The city shown here has not been definitely identified. One title, "Palermo" comes from the shape of the mountain to the picture's right. However, Ruskin didn't stay at Sicily during his 1840-41 tour. The view better fits his visit to Genoa as described in "Praeterita" - Ruskin's autobiography: "I... went into the confused frontage of the city ...and drew the crescent of houses round the harbour, borne on their ancient arches." In addition, Ruskin mentioned in his diary the blue, stormy clouds that hovered over the mountains on Genoa's coastline. Yet although these descriptions seem to conform to the scene here, the landscape and some architectural features don't entirely fit.

Buy this as a greetings card (ref. C22). Download the full catalogue: http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/.../2016/Guild_FullCatalogu...



MARCH 21



Charlotte C. Murray "Study of a Bulb and Flowering Stem" (c. 1880).
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

MARCH 22



"Brazilian Caracara Eagle" (1833) after John James Audubon.
<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>

MARCH 23

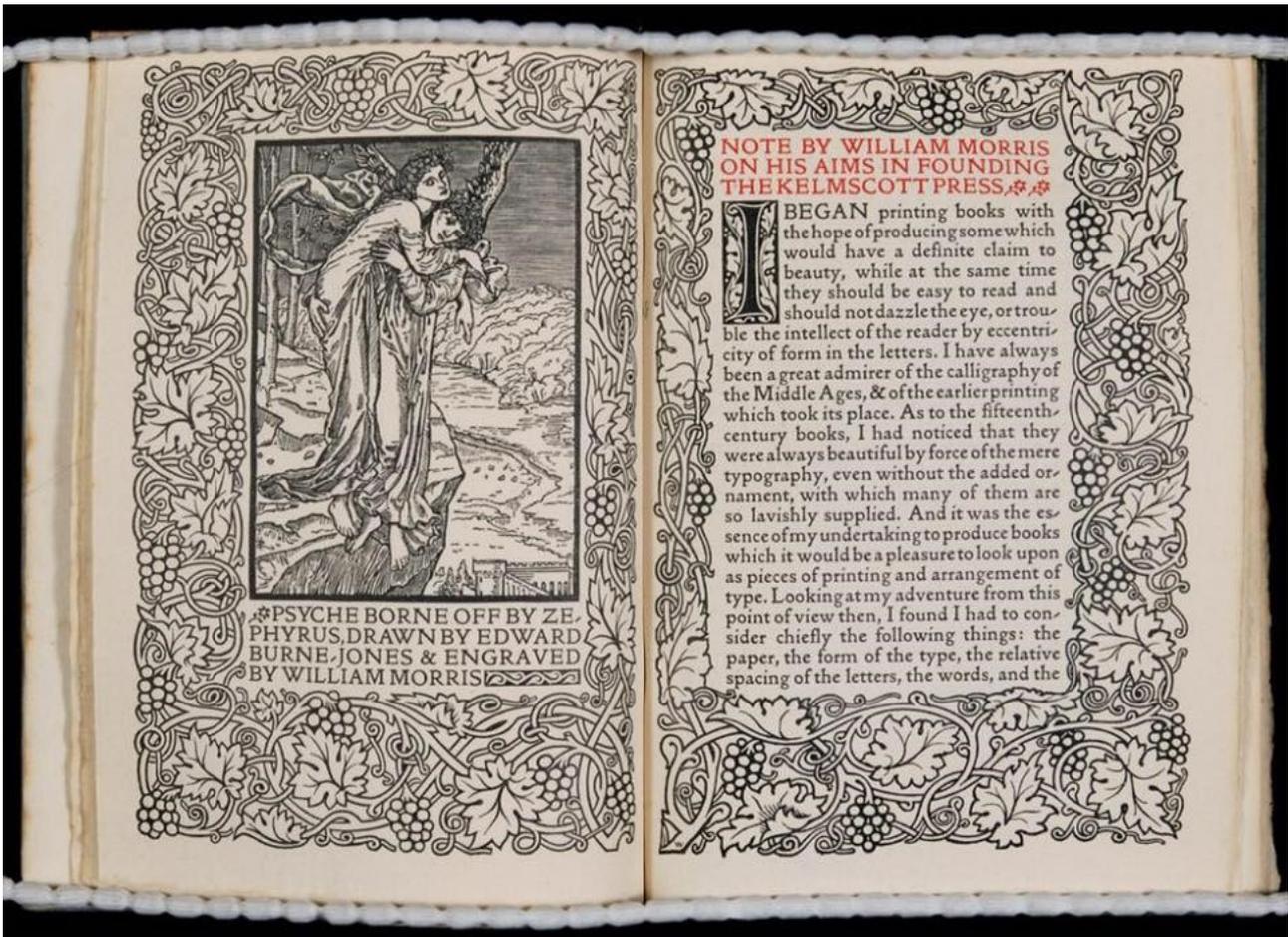
On This Day in 1812: birth of the printmaker, John Henry Le Keux.
He was responsible for this, among many other prints: "The Buttresses of an Alp" a
Plate from Ruskin's "Modern Painters" (Volume IV).

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



46. The Buttresses of an Alp.

MARCH 24



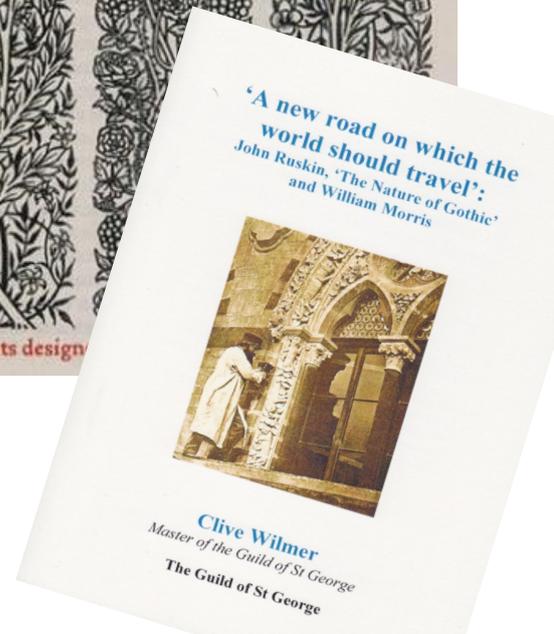
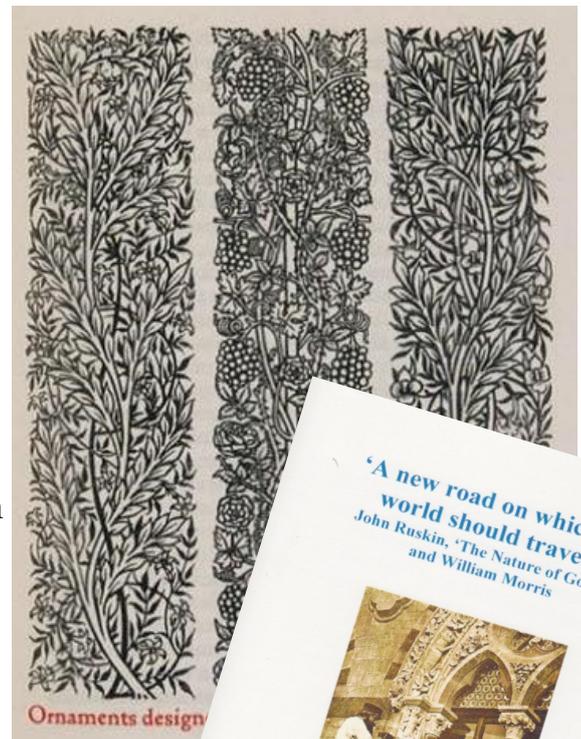
TREASURES OF THE RUSKIN COLLECTION (Museums Sheffield).

On This Day in 1834: William Morris was born. Of all Ruskin's disciples, arguably none shared so many of Ruskin's values and interests as William Morris. And none attempted to put so many of his ideas into practice.

"A Note by William Morris on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press, together with a Short Description of the Press by S C Cockerell, and an Annotated List of the Books Printed thereat" (1898).

Morris's Kelmscott Press is the ultimate expression of the arts and crafts in harmony.

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-collection/>
Check out the William Morris Birthday Lecture (2014) by the Master of the Guild of St George, Clive Wilmer: "A New World on which the World Should Travel": Ruskin, 'The Nature of Gothic' and William Morris' (available for £6 from our shop <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/shop/>).



MARCH 25

On This Day: The Annunciation.

Angelo Alessandri (1854-1931): "The Annunciation" after Tintoretto (1889).

The original "Annunciation" painting is by Jacopo Robusti (1518-1594), usually known as Tintoretto, one of the most celebrated painters of Venice. The painting was commissioned by the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice, the meeting halls of a powerful religious and charitable organisation. It still hangs there today. It is part of a series of large-scale paintings telling stories from the Bible, which Tintoretto painted between 1564 and 1588.

In 1885, Ruskin wrote to Alessandri asking for watercolour copies of the complete series of paintings at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco saying that "nothing would be more valuable to me than a complete series of it." Ruskin hugely admired Tintoretto's paintings at the Scuola and wrote a critique of them in his Venetian Index of 1852. He wrote that "the execution [of the "Annunciation" was] carried to the utmost limits of boldness consistent with completion." Yet the painting is hung high on the wall so he felt compelled to tell visitors: "The face of the Virgin is very disagreeable to the spectator from below, giving the idea of a woman about thirty, who had never been handsome... [but] when seen near, the face is comely and youthful, and expresses only surprise, instead of the pain and fear [seen from below]." Ruskin also commented on the clumsy restorations that had disfigured Tintoretto's original painting, and took care to point these out, whilst prompting visitors to focus on Tintoretto's original work.

Ruskin first commented on the "Annunciation" in his book, "Modern Painters". He noted the difference between most artists' "Annunciation" pieces where beautiful Madonna figures sit in rich surroundings, and the harsher appearance of this work. He wrote: 'Severe would be the shock and painful the contrast, if we could pass in an instant from that pure vision to the wild thought of Tintoret. For not in meek reception of the adoring messenger, but startled by the rush of his horizontal and rattling wings, the Virgin sits, not in the quiet loggia, not by the green pasture of the restored soul, but houseless, under the shelter of a palace vestibule ruined and abandoned, with the noise of the axe and the hammer in her ears... [Tintoretto] has chosen to give a coarse explanation of the calling and the condition of the husband of Mary.' William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, two of the first Pre-Raphaelite artists read this book and later wrote that this passage greatly influenced their work. In particular, Hunt felt that the passage showed how an artist should imagine and then paint what the scene would really have been like, rather than paint according to artistic, more romanticised conventions. Soon they began to produce such works as Millais' "Christ in the House of His Parents" - a painting that showed the family's poverty and the reality of their everyday lives.

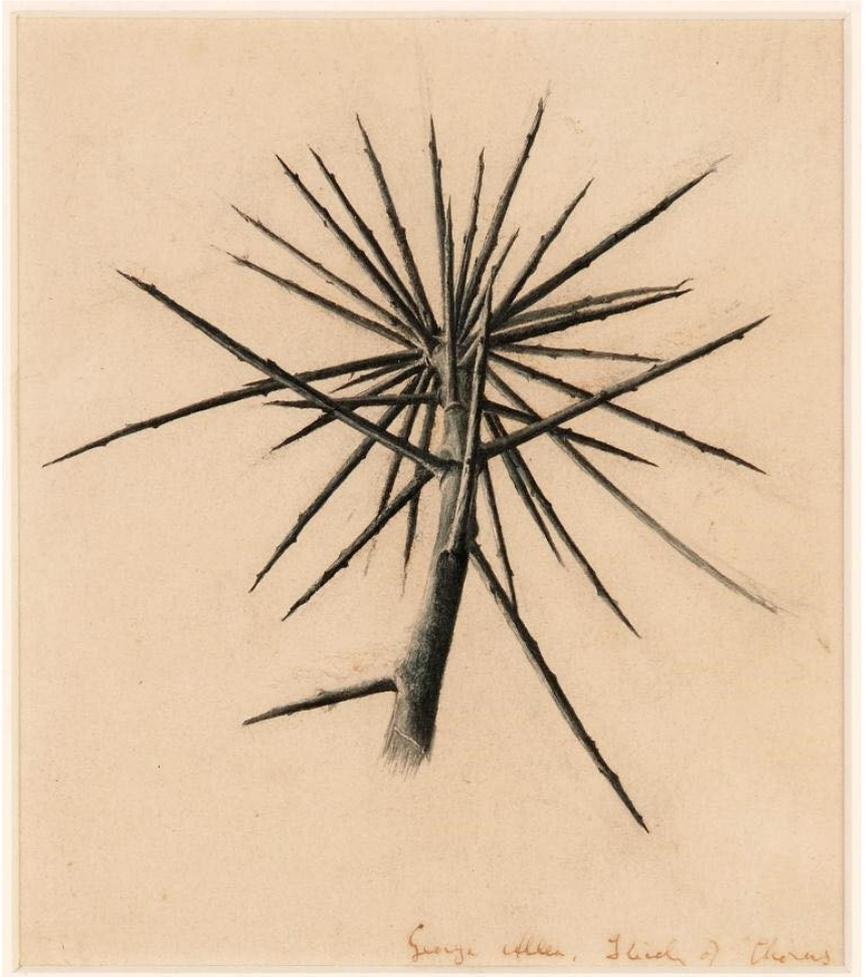
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MARCH 26

On This Day in 1832: the birth of George Allen (1832-1907). George Allen, Ruskin's publisher, friend and Companion of the Guild of St George, had been a student at the Working Men's College. His "Spirals of Thorn" (1859-60) shows something of his skill as an artist.

Allen made this study, together with another study of thorns, towards John Ruskin's multi-volume study, "Modern Painters". While Allen later engraved the second study as a book illustration, this one wasn't used. However, it was probably meant to illustrate Ruskin's "Law of Deflection" in which he explained the way leaves "fall gradually back" from the top of a stem. The study didn't need to be coloured as the book illustrations would have been reproduced in black and white, but Ruskin perhaps thought that drawing in monochrome would be a useful technical



exercise too. He believed that students should use black and white to try and capture the gradations of shade and tone accurately, in order not to be distracted by colour. This could only be done by "rapid and various practice from natural objects, during which the attention of the student must be directed only to the facts of the shadows themselves, and not at all arrested on methods of producing them."

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

The portrait of Allen (1890) is by Frederic Yates.

Read all about George Allen in this website by Guild Companion, Paul Dawson: <http://www.georgeallen.co.uk/>



MARCH 27

Albrecht Dürer, "The Last Supper" (1510).

Traditionally celebrated by Christians on Maundy Thursday, Christ's last meal with his apostles in Jerusalem provides the scriptural basis for the Eucharist. Ruskin was a great admirer of Dürer's engravings. Like Ruskin, Dürer was influenced particularly by the work of Venetian artists.

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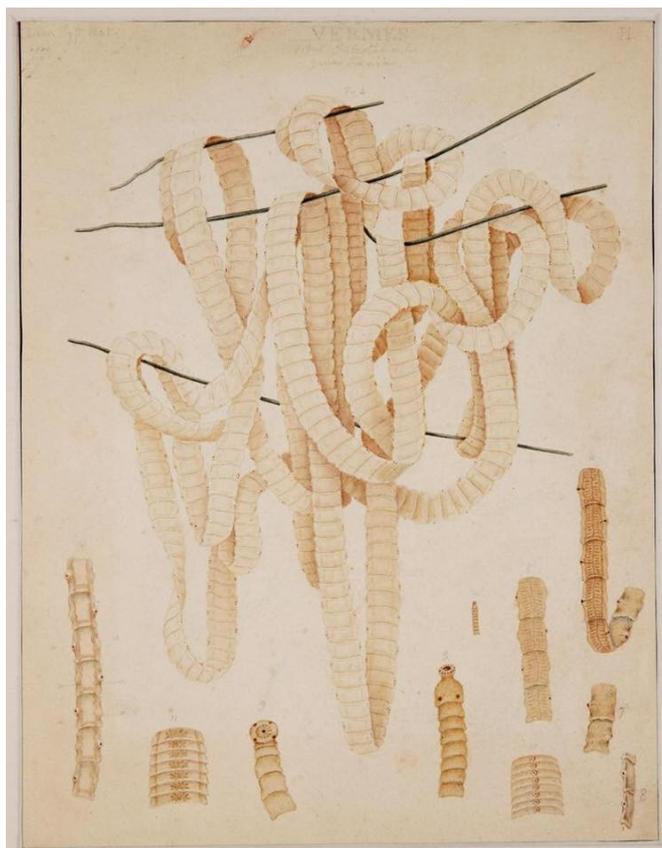
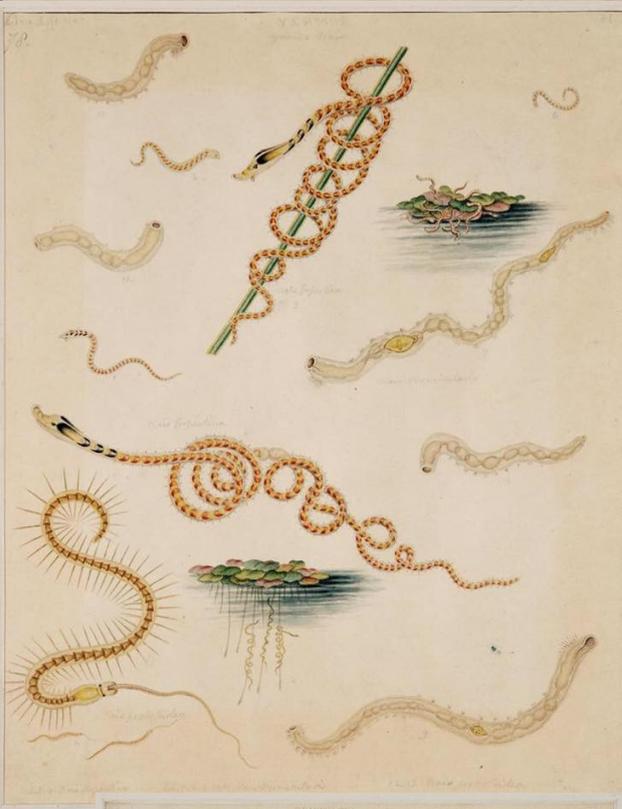


MARCH 28

Edward Donovan: "Study of Invertebrate Animals" volume I (1799-1810) post 3 of 5.

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 for several of Donovan's books of 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, Quadrupeds, 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 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 book illustrations by etching, engraving and hand colouring them himself.

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On This Day in 1824, Fanny Talbot was born. A keen admirer of Ruskin and an enthusiastic supporter of the Guild of St George, Fanny Talbot donated a number of fishermen's cottages to the organisation in the late nineteenth century. These were situated on the steep cliff looking out to sea at Barmouth, West Wales.

Download a free PDF outlining a pictorial history of Mrs Talbot and her Barmouth gift here:

<http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/.../Hist.../EaglesBarmouth.pdf>



BARMOUTH (In Pictures)



(Left) Mrs Fanny Talbot (1824-1917), Guild donor and Companion. A landowner and philanthropist, she not only donated thirteen cottages in Barmouth to the Guild, but is credited as the first donor to the National Trust, with the gift in 1895 of four and a half acres of land, Dinas Oleu ('Fortress of Light') in the same west-coast Welsh town. Growing up in Bridgwater, Somerset, the daughter of John and Mary Browne, she married George Tertius Talbot and later moved to Barmouth. He died in 1873. The couple had one son, George Quartus ('Quarry') Talbot.

(Right) The gravestone of Fanny Talbot (centre of photo) in neighbouring St Mary's Churchyard, Llanaber, overlooking the sea. One of the many women to support Ruskin's ventures in the Guild of St George, she became a keen correspondent of his. He called her 'a motherly, bright, black-eyed woman ... if you answer one question she'll ask you six.'



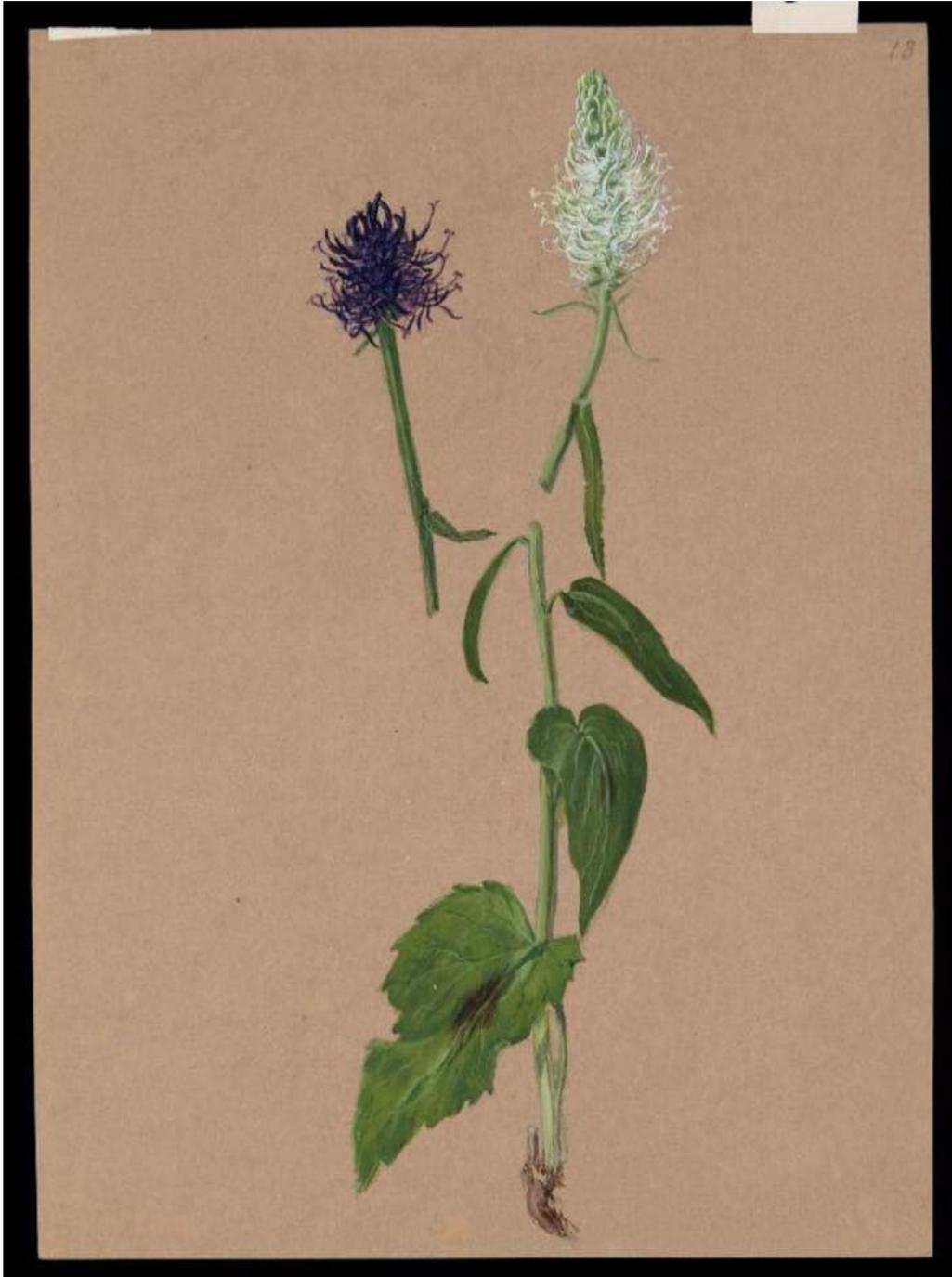
TYN FFYNNON
once the home of
MRS FANNY TALBOT
1824-1917
First donor to the
National Trust

(Left, with plaque above) Tyn-y-Fynnon today: the totally rebuilt home of Mrs Talbot, high on what the locals call 'The Rock' (of Gibraltar), just above the cottages she donated to the Guild, and just below the National Trust land, Dinas Oleu. Sadly, the original house was destroyed by fire.

Talbot shared the property for some time with another of Ruskin's correspondents Blanche Atkinson (1847-1911). The daughter of Jonathan Atkinson, a prosperous Liverpool soap manufacturer, she became a novelist and children's writer. She also edited two works by the Irish feminist and social reformer, Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904). Talbot's donation to the National Trust was largely the result of her respect for and friendship with its two Ruskinian co-founders, Canon Rawnsley and Octavia Hill.

One of the first residents of Talbot's St George's Cottages was August Guyard (1808-1883), the French political activist and participant in the 1848 revolution, who counted both Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo among his friends. A 'back-to-nature' community experiment in Frotey-les-Vesouls having fallen foul of the Church authorities, he moved to Paris and eventually fled Prussian invaders in 1870 to move to Barmouth, the home of his daughter, the wife of Mrs Talbot's son, Quartus.

MARCH 29



Charlotte C. Murray, "Study of Wild Flowers" (c. 1880).

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

Read about the Guild's own wildflower meadow in Sheepscombe, Gloucestershire: <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/shop/>

MARCH 30

Francesca Alexander, "The Madonna and the Rich Man": Music & Drawing towards "Roadside Songs of Tuscany" (1882). "The Roadside Songs of Tuscany" is a decorative book of twenty songs, collected from the countryside around Florence. Alexander transcribed and translated the songs, noted down the tunes and illustrated scenes from each ballad using local people as models. Together, she and John Ruskin used the book to raise money for the area's poorer families. Alexander also wanted to preserve a fast disappearing part of the area's culture. She collected many of these songs from an elderly woman called Beatrice Bernardi who had been a stone labourer and shepherdess, and had been famous in the local area for her improvised poetry and singing. This particular song tells how the Virgin Mary, who is hungry, goes to a rich man to ask for scraps of discarded food. He refuses to give her any, saying they are for his dog. Three days later, the rich man dies and, because he refused to help Mary, he is sent to Hell. In addition, here is Alexander's original full-page illustration to this song (also in the Ruskin Collection).

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LA MADONNA ED IL RICCO
The Madonna and the rich man

Andantino



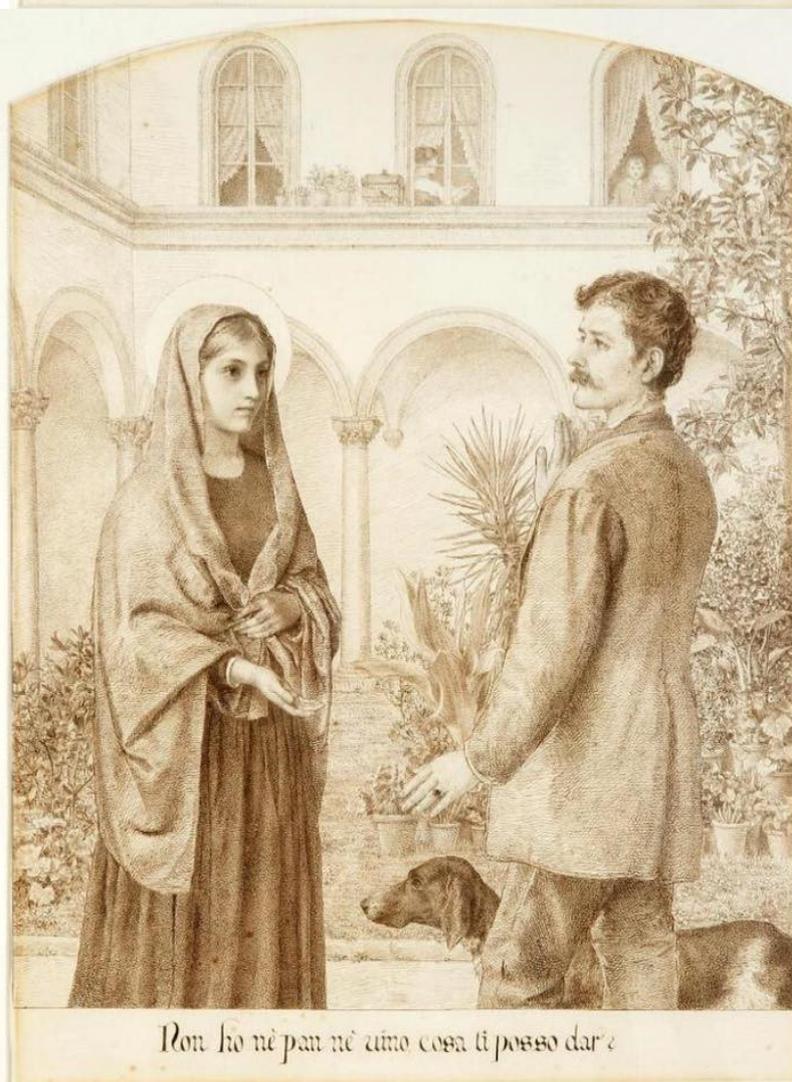
A piano la Madonna, non ha nè pan nè vin,
piano la Madonna, Oh Dio Redentor Me ce ne del Rosario Oh Madrice di gran Oh Madre del di gran.



Mary sees an old man, led by a woman, walk over the mountains above S. Marcello singing hymns to her. The man carried an old staff, the woman a crozier like the image of which I do not know the name, but I have seen one like it in the hands of an angel painted by Botticelli.

Beatrice of Pistoia had written from them the very curious song, and afterwards taught it to me. It took such a hold of my imagination that she could not sing it without the tears running down her face. The notes of her voice were so sweet and soft all but a very poor idea of the tone as it sounded in the beautiful and impassioned voice of Beatrice, breathing with emotion in the song.

The meaning of the story is not so clear as might be, but if I understand it, it relates not to any singular event in the life of the Madonna, but to an occasion. One of those of which we have no other in which the Madonna, compassionate in her state of the rich man, appeared to him in the form of a poor woman with what would the song tell...



MARCH 31



John Wharltton Bunney (1828-82), "Alpine Scene with Lake and Vegetation"(mid C19th).

At the lower edge of this drawing is an inscription in Italian, said to be by John Ruskin: 'Benissimo - ma bisogna, per finire, di piu cura e fedelta'. This translates as 'Very good, but needs finishing with more care and truthfulness.' It's probable that Ruskin's comment relates to Bunney's study of the foliage. Ruskin always insisted that artists study foliage carefully, depicting detailed leaf outlines and the individual shape of branches, rather than simply giving an impression of the general shape. These studies are however unusual for John Bunney, who observed his subjects carefully and whose studies of trees and foliage are typically very detailed. The larger scene's colouration and romantic appearance is in the style of the vignettes or small scenes by JMW Turner, made to illustrate poetry books by Samuel Rogers. Despite their "untruthful" romanticism or idealism, Turner's vignette scenes inspired Ruskin's lifelong admiration of Turner's artwork.

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