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The Guild of St George

# The Companion

No. 17 (2017)



GUILD of St GEORGE

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The Guild of St George  
**The Companion**  
 No. 17 (2017)

Front Cover: Westmill Village Hall. Photo: Alec Hamilton.

This issue of *The Companion* is dedicated to the memory of  
 Companion Peter Wardle and collector Jack Walsdorf.

Editor & Designer: Stuart Eagles

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			Thank you to every- one who has contributed to this issue, including our proofreaders: Clive Wilmer, Ruth Nutter, Kay Walter and Chris Eagles. Special thanks to Sara Atwood. We wish Sara and Jodie South- wood all the best with the magazine in the future. Published Sep 2017.

Please direct any questions about *The Companion* to Sara Atwood <editor@guildofstgeorge.org.uk>.

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# LEARNING TO SEE

Kateri Ewing

In April 2013, a simple Google search sent me on a journey that would change the course of my life.

Recently divorced, recovering from breast cancer and five years of surgeries and hospital stays, having just seen both of my children off to begin life on their own in different parts of the world, and trying to find my own way to earn a living after being a stay-at-home mom for twenty-some years, I was really feeling the empty nest syndrome—quite alone, with far too much time on my hands.

My daughter, who had just moved across the country to El Paso, Texas, had left an assortment of her art supplies on the kitchen table, including a little set of watercolours, some brushes, an assortment of artist's pencils and a spiral pad of watercolour paper. I decided, to help fill some of my time, that I would give them a try.

I have always loved to sketch and to try my hand at art, but none of my efforts had ever revealed what was in my head or my heart. I would have this vision of what I wanted to

artist/naturalist whose work looked quite elegant and appealed to my own sense of aesthetics. The very first book on her list was *The Elements of Drawing* by John Ruskin.

'... your art is to be the praise of something that you love. It may only be the praise of a shell or a stone ...'

—John Ruskin, *The Laws of Fesolé* (Works, 15.3553).

I knew a bit about John Ruskin, as I was at one time the night clerk for the Roycroft Inn, birthplace of the Art & Crafts movement in Western New York. There is a room at the

Inn called The Ruskin Room and

I was also aware of Ruskin's influence on William Morris, who had a great influence on the founder of Roycroft, Elbert Hubbard. I had always loved Ruskin's watercolour drawings,

so I thought that perhaps this was the book for me. There was a link in the blog post to the Gutenberg Project, a website that features free downloads of many works of literature in the public domain. Perfect for my budget at the time. I had my local printer create a spiral-bound copy of the book and I began to read.

Over the next several months, I woke two hours earlier than usual and went to bed far too late so that I could learn more and practice my new skills. I worked through the writings and exercises that Ruskin had so carefully written long ago. The language was beautiful; the work was not easy. My first

Kateri Ewing,  
*The Goldfinch*  
(2015).



create, but I never seemed to have the skills, or patience, to see them through.

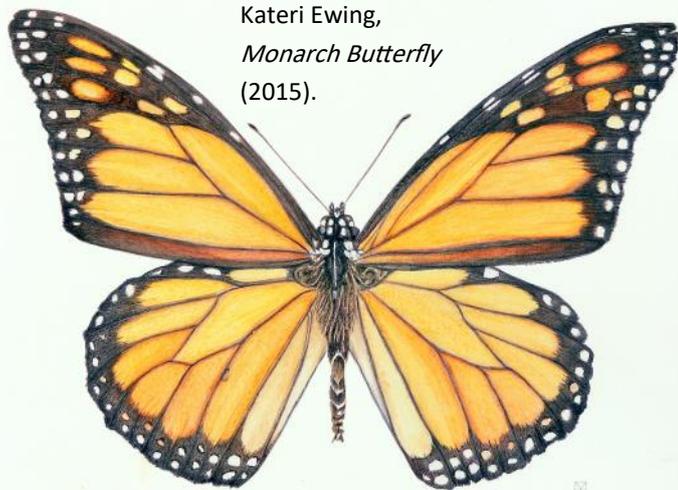
Something was different though, in that spring of 2013. I was searching for something more in my life. I had so much I wanted to say, so much I needed to discover about how to move forward in my new circumstances, and creating art just felt like a good way to begin.

Without the financial means to enroll in art classes, I decided to teach myself. So, into my Google search engine I typed: best books for learning how to draw and paint with watercolour. I clicked on a link that looked promising, a blog entry entitled 'Top ten books for learning how to watercolor', by an



Kateri Ewing, *Spring Crocus* (2016).

Kateri Ewing,  
*Monarch Butterfly*  
(2015).



attempts were disappointing, and at times I found Ruskin's mentoring harsh, even though his voice was intimate, as if he were writing only to me. At the same time, I knew that he wasn't offering his knowledge for those who simply wanted to make pretty drawings as a way to pass time: he had stated so in his first few paragraphs. Several times I almost gave up, but then I tried my hand at painting a fresh, spring-green leaf that I had found on my morning walk.

That first leaf was a bit sloppy and forlorn, and I realised that I was working too swiftly, not really taking to heart all that the Master had been teaching me. I began again, this time

spending days trying to paint another leaf that was left over from the previous autumn. It was dull and brown, not something most people would find beautiful or worthy of drawing, but something about it caught my eye and made my heart ache for its passing beauty. I worked on it for several days, always keeping in mind something that I perceived from my reading of Ruskin: beauty is in truly seeing. When I looked closely at this tobacco-brown, withered leaf, the patterns and spots and subtle variations of colour, the gentle turning lines of its veins, were far beyond my level of skill to paint at the time, but I knew that this was what I wanted to learn—how to capture the essence of something so ordinary, that people (myself and others) would perceive it as extraordinary. I found a little more success in that second leaf, and was inspired to get back to the labour of *The Elements of Drawing*. John Ruskin had become my master.

I have worked through the exercises in my dog-eared and stained printout of this book for the past four years. I have studied the paintings and drawings of Ruskin, mostly renderings of objects of natural history and, along with his words, they have been my greatest teacher. I am now a teacher of drawing myself (the greatest gift that has come from my new vocation as an artist) and I share Ruskin and *The Elements of Drawing* with all of my students. Every single time I meet with a student for the first time, I read to them Ruskin's passage about drawing a stone, and it becomes their first assignment. *The Elements of Drawing* is my first recommendation on their list of supplies, and it comes with a note: 'Read this. If you want to learn how to draw, listen to him and do the work.'

Through Ruskin I found another master, Albrecht Dürer. I also discovered the work of artist Sarah Simblett, a teacher at the Ruskin School of Art. Andrew Wyeth is my other great influence. Between these four masters, I have my education, my roadmap of learning, for life. It is constant work to strive to put into practice what they all have to teach me. There is so much to learn.

Over the past year I have delved further, beyond *The Elements of Drawing*, into some of Ruskin's other writings and I am constantly amazed and inspired by how relevant they still are today. I feel as though I have found a kindred spirit that illuminates and puts into words so many things that I have felt throughout my life, but have never seen so clearly before. I do not claim always to understand his concepts, or even always to agree with them when I do, but I can feel their relevance in my bones. Ruskin's life-work is a gift to all of us, beyond measure.

If I had to define the core of what I have taken from Ruskin into my heart, as an

artist, I would say that it is the belief that if we pay close enough attention we can discover immense beauty in the most ordinary objects of nature. When we pay close attention and find the beauty in the ordinary things that surround us, we tend to discover their importance and choose to care about them in a more profound way.

I have a phrase that I always try to keep in my mind when I begin to do my work. It is written at the front of every sketchbook, every journal that I use: *Remember the luminous particular*. I learned about this term, 'luminous particular', from my reading of the late poet, Jane Kenyon, and I believe she gleaned it from the writings of Ezra Pound. The luminous particular is what separates science from art. It is the spark of a very particular and individual presence, that all things have—if we pay close enough attention to them. It is my constant work to discover how to illuminate the soul, the essence, the spark—the poetry—of my subjects. My vocation is to seek out that presence. This I learned from Ruskin.

There isn't a moment I spend painting when I am not immensely grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the natural world around me in order to create something lasting and beautiful from it. With each drawing or painting I hope to discover and reveal the intricate cycles of nature, the luminous particulars that I have come to notice in natural objects—the spark in a bird's eye, a decaying leaf, a broken acorn, or the wash of light and shadow as they play over a meadow, pond or stand of trees. It is my desire to urge myself and others to pause and look more closely that stokes my creative fire.

Kateri Ewing,  
*Arjahli Snowy Owl*  
(2014).



It was one of my favorite poets, Rainer Maria Rilke, who said, 'If you will stay close to nature, to its simplicity, to the small things hardly noticeable, those things can become great and immeasurable'. I can't help but think this is a very Ruskinian idea.

My hope is to continue to learn more about the gifts that John Ruskin left us, and to continue to find ways of sharing them with others. It is my great honour to be a Companion of the Guild of St. George, and to share in a common spirit as we work together to spread Ruskin's vision far and wide.

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Kateri Ewing,  
*Leaves Found at Cazenovia Creek*  
(2016).



# THE NEED FOR BEAUTY: SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON DISCUSSIONS AT BRANTWOOD

Neil Sinden

In recent months there has been a growing interest in the idea of beauty and its contribution to human wellbeing. This has largely arisen from a recognition of our failure as a society to value what is beautiful in the natural and built environments that surround us, and to nurture and enhance it. It is encouraging that the same concerns that motivated Ruskin over 150 years ago are once again gaining prominence in public discourse.

The need for beauty was the subject of a weekend colloquium in April last year organised by the Guild of St George, hosted at Brantwood, and involving a panel of Companions with special knowledge and interest in the subject. It included a tour of

nature, he quoted Ruskin's view on the 'characteristics of a great painter': 'nothing exists about him that is not beautiful in his eyes'. Clive began by reciting Shakespeare's 65th sonnet: the lines 'how with this rage shall beauty hold a plea, whose action is no stronger than a flower' resonated particularly strongly. The event took place on what is reputed to be Shakespeare's birthday, St George's Day (23rd April).

The fragility of beauty and its association with the natural world formed the core of a contribution by Dame Fiona Reynolds, a former Director-General of the National Trust. Fiona's book, *The Fight for Beauty*, published last year, has

done much to rekindle debate in policy circles about the importance of beauty. Fiona explored how Ruskin inspired the founders of the National Trust, and William Morris who formed the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, all of whom had been driven by a passionate belief in the importance

of beauty for all. Ruskin's ideas also motivated those campaigning for the introduction of a planning system that would manage development in the public interest, ensuring that it was informed primarily by a concern for the preservation of natural beauty and public amenity.

This was followed by sessions on beauty in architecture, design and the wider cultural heritage. Clive recalled Ruskin's plea that 'when we build, let us think that we build forever' and emphasized Ruskin's notion of 'vital beauty' which magnifies our sense of self. Jan

Casey, a design management consultant, reflected on her exploration of how design and craftsmanship can enhance our lives. Following a series of meetings she had convened, involving the country's leading design theorists and practitioners, a consensus had emerged on the importance of morality and integrity in design practice, as well as a shared reverence for nature. Maria Laura Picchio Forlati, Professor of Law at the University of Padua, outlined the emergence of an interest in 'intangible cultural heritage', as defined by a UNESCO Convention in 2003. Encompassing performing arts, social practices, and festive events (often concerning nature), as well as traditional craftsmanship, the Convention supports action to safeguard physical heritage.

The group discussion concluded by considering how effective action might be taken to assert the need for beauty. Beauty means different things to different people, but the group agreed that beauty always inspires passion. It is something people are prepared to fight for, particularly when there is a threat to its presence in the public realm, or in our shared cultural heritage. As public policy and political decisions are increasingly dominated by short-term, commercial considerations, deeper human needs are not being recognised.

Yet the recent resurgence of public debate around beauty provides reasons for optimism, for example in the campaign led by the think-tank, Respublica. Supported by the National Trust and the Woodland Trust, this had fed into some important speeches by Ministers advocating the importance of beauty in policy making. But it will take more than a few lone and fleeting voices to put beauty where it belongs: at the heart of decisions that should enable us all to live better and more fulfilling lives. The Guild has a valuable role to play in pursuing that goal.



(Left to right): Clive Wilmer, Laura Forlati, Emma Sdegno, Fiona Reynolds, Jan Casey & David Ingram.

Brantwood's gardens, guided by the leading plant scientist, Prof. David Ingram. This provided a vital experience of natural beauty for all participants which helped balance the discussion and gave a powerful insight into Ruskin's personal perspective.

The discussion was led by Howard Hull, Director of Brantwood, and Clive Wilmer, Master of the Guild. Reflecting on his experience living and working at Brantwood over the past 20 years, Howard explained that he sees his role as 'taking care of people's experience of beauty'. Drawing parallels between art and

# BEAUTY: AN APPEAL

*Charlie Tebbutt*

The notion that we should pursue beauty has suffered a great deal since Ruskin's lifetime. It has been battered around, deconstructed and disparaged; now it is tossed away like an outdated combine harvester. It carries no weight in the boardroom, edged out by the focus on money and individual choice. As a goal of existence, it has withered and died. A healthy scepticism has its uses: from great doubt great faith can come. Yet the insistence on rationalising our public discourse has resulted in the denial of beauty as an ideal. This rejection has led to an ugly legacy and much unnecessary suffering.

Ruskin's ideas of beauty were expressed most vividly in the architecture and garden designs at Brantwood. The balance and harmony of the place derive from a gentle

humility, a diligence and joy in the process of creation which expresses Ruskin's personality without crying out for praise.

Such beauty is priceless both for individuals and society. When so much of our lives is spent pursuing other objectives, the ideal of beauty functions as a healthy reminder of death. We should pause and recognise that we have nothing but the present. Beauty can never become obsolete, for whatever else it is, it is the relation of one individual to another. It is an immeasurably powerful ideal which the Guild must defend.

To live with purpose is the true source of happiness. Happiness is the freedom to commit—not to drift, but to embrace our responsibility to act according with our

heart's feeling. Everyone who retains the gift to see beauty avoids growing old.

Beauty is one of the most precious elements in our culture and must be protected from all attacks and wilful neglect. If not, what remains but the last man? We seek not the conversion of the non-believer, but rather the conversion of the non-person.

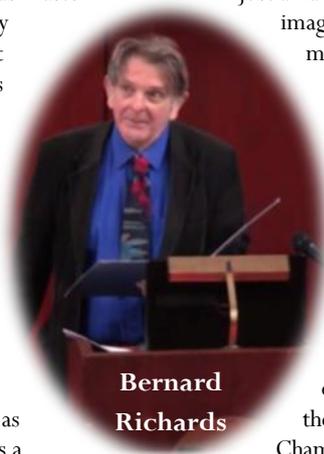
How can we defend beauty? How many Companions will join me in promoting Ruskin's ideas in the political arena? As I see it, the Guild is uniquely placed as an institution to fight the good fight. Its very name speaks of our heritage and our sense of tradition. Let us defend all that we cherish. Please get in touch if you wish to take up the challenge: <charles@fiatvita.co.uk>.

## THE RUSKIN LECTURE 2016 RUSKIN AND BIRMINGHAM

*Stephen Wildman*

Both as a lecture and in printed form, Bernard Richards has delivered something full of unexpected delights.

Ruskin's connections with Birmingham came chiefly through George Baker, Mayor of the city and his successor as Master of the Guild. Richards rightly refers to the article by Stuart Eagles on Baker in last year's *Companion* and concentrates on Ruskin's low-key visit in July 1877, eagerly anticipated by his local devotees but clearly something of a personal trial. A diary entry recorded that he 'couldn't say a word I wanted to any body' at a gathering for tea, and was evidently miserable as he peered through the rain as a guest in Baker's house, 'watching the workmen on the new Gothic school, which is fast blocking out the once pretty country view from my window.' The celebrated excursion into the Black Country (described in Letter 80 of *Fors*) is given a double context, from Thomas Carlyle's similar observations during a visit in 1824 to the more recent echo in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*.



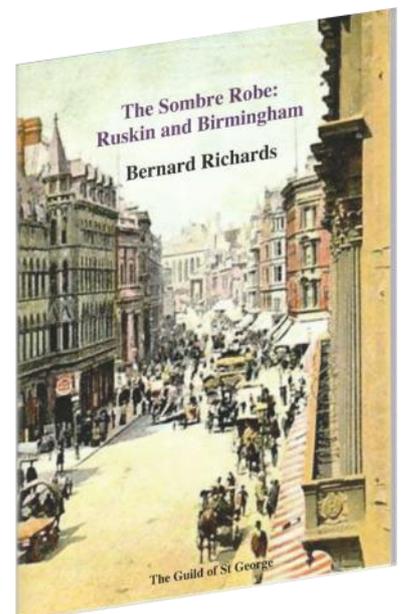
**Bernard Richards**

Richards has a keen sense of place, and the striking if somewhat melancholy photos accompanying the printed text, memorials to several of the great lost Victorian buildings of Birmingham, give just a flavour of the cornucopia of images which made the lecture a memorable event. The

audience was taken on an unexpected journey through the lecturer's boyhood—the title, 'The Sombre Robe', deriving from a line in the King Edward's School song, 'Where the iron heart of England beats beneath her sombre robe'—into the Birmingham of Joseph Chamberlain and the Civic Gospel; of John Henry Chamberlain (no relation) and his school buildings; and of the architects and artists associated with the School of Art and the Birmingham Group, each in their way touched and enhanced by Ruskin's ideas. One or two personal judgements could be queried: not everyone dislikes the delightfully quirky Beaucastle, Baker's house near Bewdley (the subject of a Guild visit last year), nor Holman Hunt's *Triumph of the Innocents*

(certainly not Ruskin). But his ultimate placement of Ruskin's Birmingham—if there was ever such a thing—at least on a par with the modern one, cannot be questioned.

The Sombre Robe: Ruskin and Birmingham can be purchased for £8 (+£1.50 postage & packing) from the Guild's Publications Director. You can watch the lecture online at [www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-ruskin-lecture/](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/the-ruskin-lecture/).



# LETTER FROM THE MASTER

Dear Fellow Companions

I recently noticed that when I talk about Ruskin to people who've never read him, I always refer to the things he has *taught* me. He was above all an educator, and it seems to me that his Guild of St George should carry on with his work. The Guild is in fact registered as an Educational Trust, so there is nothing strange about this observation, and we do indeed contribute to the education of people around the country. But we don't often talk directly about education and we don't in the ordinary way do any straight teaching. At a strategy meeting held by the Board in January, I suggested that that might change. As a result, we have set up an Education Committee, which is chaired by Rachel Dickinson as Director for Education, and modest plans are taking shape. The committee will also take responsibility for more broadly educational events, such as our annual symposia.

At the meeting I introduced the subject with a watercolour of Turner's that Ruskin writes about in the lecture 'Of Kings' Treasuries'. It is a view from Kirkby Lonsdale on the fringe of the Lake District. Ruskin loved the view itself so much that it has come to be known as 'Ruskin's view' and signposted as such. Here is the Turner picture.



J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), *Kirkby Lonsdale Churchyard* (c. 1818). Watercolour on paper. 286 x 415 mm.

And this is what Ruskin has to say about it:

There is a curious type of us given in one of the lovely, neglected works of the last of our great painters. It is a drawing of Kirkby Lonsdale churchyard, and of its brook, and valley, and hills, and folded morning sky beyond. And unmindful alike of these, and of the dead who have left these for other valleys and for other skies, a group of schoolboys have piled their little books upon a grave, to strike them off with stones. So, also, we play with the words of the dead that would teach us, and strike them far from us with our bitter, reckless will; little thinking that those leaves which the wind scatters had been piled, not only upon a gravestone, but upon the seal of an enchanted vault—nay, the gate of a great city of sleeping kings, who would awake for us, and walk with us, if we knew but how to call them by their names.

Both Turner and Ruskin thought this view so beautiful that they wanted to draw it to everyone's attention. That is one of the things that teachers do—draw things to our attention. In this case, the subject involves conventional education, for the figures in the picture are meant to be schoolboys. We take it they are on their way home from school and simply behaving as schoolboys often do. This is not a big deal in itself, but Turner uses their unconscious irreverence to stand for a certain sort of moral blindness that is part of our moral frailty. The boys have turned their backs on nature and, having forgotten the presence of death in the churchyard, are throwing stones at the very things, books, which might make sense of a life lived in the shadow of death. (The 'great city of sleeping kings' which Ruskin refers to is a metaphor for literature and the treasure that is to be found in books.) The picture causes us to reflect, therefore, on nature, beauty, death, religion, literature, wisdom and—because all this appears in a painting—art. If the Guild is to teach, it should have something to say about most of those matters and, more importantly, the ways in which they are entwined and entangled with one another.

Ruskin said: 'Beautiful art can only be produced by people who have beautiful things about them, and leisure to look at them; and unless you provide some elements of beauty for your workmen to be surrounded by, you will find that no elements of beauty can be invented by them.' Setting up the St George's Museum at Walkley, he wrote: 'The mountain home of the Museum was originally chosen, not to keep the collection out of the smoke, but expressly to beguile the artisan out of it.' Elsewhere he suggests that beauty is part of our birthright as human beings and that to deny access to it is a crime against humanity.

It seems to me that, after a period when these things improved for a bit, we again live in a society in which many living in urban areas are denied access to natural beauty—through poverty or poor education or natural disadvantages. We have all heard stories of children who think that milk is something like Coca Cola and is made and bottled in factories. I recently heard of a whole class of schoolchildren living in estates on the fringe of Plymouth who had never seen the sea. If we are serious about the Guild, we surely cannot just accept such things.

As it happens, the Guild has already been involved in attempts to open the countryside up to children and other deprived and/or marginalised people. I am thinking of much of the work John and Linda Iles have done in the Wyre Forest—notably in Care Farming—and of Companion Lynne Roberts's work with children and parents at Birchen Coppice Primary School in Kidderminster. We have a further instance in the donation by another Companion, Annie Creswick Dawson, of £5,000 to fund a visit to the Wyre Forest by young people from 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in Manchester. Annie's offer includes a gift of Wyre oak and the experience for the young people of building a pergola with it for their building back in Ancoats. I should also mention Companion Bernard Richards's gift of his Ruskin Lecture fee to children in his home territory who have never visited the Wyre Forest.

These are, all of them, wonderful contributions, and I urge other Companions to follow suit. This is how the Guild has always operated—through piecemeal acts of charity. Like the Good Samaritan, you do the job you come across in the course of your daily life. I am nevertheless proposing that the Guild begins to build up a deliberate educational programme.

We shall begin modestly. I recently had a discussion with John Iles about requests he had had in Bewdley and the Wyre for classes on Ruskin's work. There has been a strong element of outreach in the work we have done in recent years, both in Sheffield as part of the Ruskin in Sheffield programme and in the Wyre Forest, where our new Ruskin in Wyre project has just begun. There are many people attracted to the Guild by its work and outlook, who would like to know more about Ruskin. Many of them find his books hard to read. Others need contextualisation. Yet others see the value of the Guild's practices but find them hard to connect with the founder's writing and drawings.

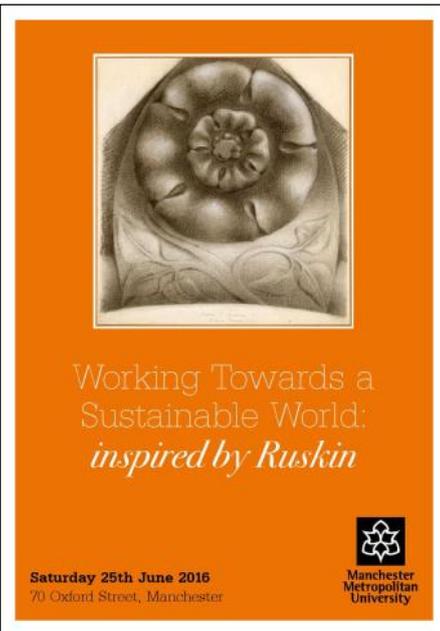
The new Education Committee have agreed that we will make a first attempt to meet these requests and needs by offering a study day in Bewdley on October 7<sup>th</sup>. This will consist of talks, classes and countryside walks. Rachel Dickinson and I will lead the teaching. It will be as modest a beginning as you could imagine, but I hope it will grow. I have also had discussions with Ruth Nutter, who feels that something similar would go down well in Sheffield and in connection with Ruskin in Sheffield. These seem like good opportunities for spreading the word. I hope we shall go further.

*Clive Wilmer*

# SYMPOSIA & SEMINARS IN BRIEF

*Stuart Eagles & Sara Atwood*

Companions and friends are advised that the Guild’s website hosts a section dedicated to past symposia and seminars with content including photos, PDFs, audio podcasts and YouTube videos. Visit <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/symposia-education/>



*Inspired by Ruskin*, a symposium held last June, co-sponsored by the Guild and Manchester Metropolitan University and organised by Guild Director and MMU academic

Dr Rachel Dickinson, looked at issues of sustainability from a wide variety of perspectives. Talks were given by Companions representing ShareAction, the ethical investment group (Catherine Howarth), 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, the mental-health charity for young people based in Manchester (Julie McCarthy), Manchester City Art Gallery (Ronan Brindley), Ruskin Mill, the education trust (Aonghus Gordon), Unto This Last, the London-based furniture



**The students with Catherine Howarth.**

makers (Olivier Geoffroy), the Wyre Community Land Trust, which operates from the Guild’s land near Bewdley and looks after its woodland there (John Iles and Jenny Robbins), and students involved in research and activity connected with Ruskin’s values and ideals (Robin Suckatorn, student winner of the third John Ruskin Prize, Dominika Wielgopolan and Caroline Ikin). This led to a series of discussions on what proved to be an energetic, engaging and well-attended day in the heart of Manchester.

In July last year Companion Dr Sara Atwood presented a lecture at a seminar jointly hosted by the Guild and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, held at CPRE’s London offices. The purpose of the seminar was to consider the relevance of Ruskin’s ideas to today’s environmental movement and how those ideas might be applied in Ruskin Land, the Wyre Forest and the wider countryside.

Representatives of various environmental and heritage groups, including the Landscape Institute, Woodland Trust, Natural England, CPRE, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Council for National Parks, and the National Trust participated. Following introductions by CPRE Chief Executive, Shaun Spiers, and Master of the Guild, Clive Wilmer, Sara presented her paper, “‘The secret of sympathy’: Ruskin and the language of nature’. She argued that one of the most important lessons we might learn from Ruskin, and yet one of the least explored, has to do with the words we use

it helps to shape them. Language is essential to our understanding of and feeling for nature. We give names to the things we see in nature—after the seeing comes the saying—but at the same time, language also *helps* us to see nature, so that the saying and the seeing are inextricably linked. Ruskin, who knew better than anyone the importance of seeing clearly, also understood this connection between language and thought.

Sara argued that today we have, as a culture, all but lost the language with which to speak of the natural world in Ruskin’s terms. There exist individuals and groups who speak it eloquently—many of them represented in our audience that day—but it is not the common tongue and struggles to make headway against the dominant corporate-scientific language. The vocabulary of environmentalism itself increasingly conveys a narrowly scientific view of the natural world; we talk, abstractly and objectively, about ecosystems, sustainability, natural capital, and carbon footprints, avoiding words with uncomfortable emotional or spiritual associations—



**Sara Atwood.**

reverence, mystery, affection, compassion. What’s more, the language of science and policy has been wedded to that of economics. When our very language promotes an economic view of the natural world, our proper relationship with it is corrupted. Such language doesn’t just *express* our market-centered worldview, it perpetuates it, language conditioning practice. Care and stewardship are not fostered, though they may be compelled, by economic incentive, legislation, or scientific reports, but by appealing to the imagination, sympathy and affection. Ultimately, it is these capacities that we must look to when confronting environmental challenges. Changing our language will not solve the problem or magically restore nature, but it may allow for the conceptual shift necessary to alter our thinking and, by extension, our behaviour. We have need of environmental policy and scientific research, but policy and research grounded in affection rather than calculation are far more likely to encourage wise and thoughtful practice.

The lecture was followed by thoughtful and stimulating discussion connecting Ruskin’s ideas to present concerns about the ways in

to talk about the natural world. Part of the problem we face in dealing with environmental challenges is our dependence on the language of science, technology and business. After all, language doesn’t just express our thoughts,



**The audience in Manchester.**

which we experience and value the natural world. After we paused for lunch, Clive Wilmer initiated the discussion period by talking about Ruskin's intention in founding the Guild as well as outlining the Guild's modern purpose. Tim Selman, Managing Director of the Wyre Community Land Trust, gave a short presentation about ongoing projects in Ruskin Land. The remainder of the afternoon was spent in roundtable discussions focused on how we

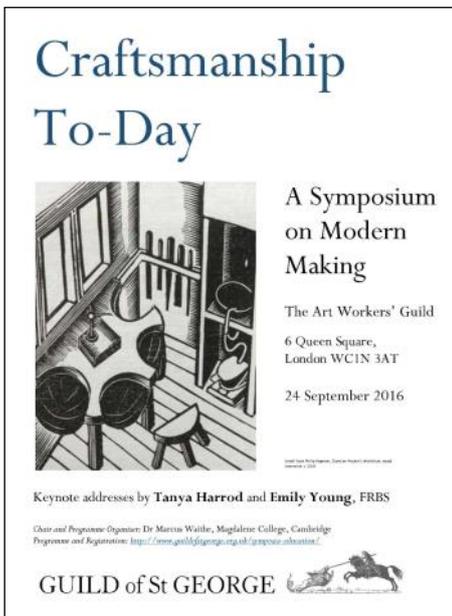
the modern world?).

Participants reflected on these matters also in their practical dimension, as they heard modern craftspeople discuss the opportunities and challenges posed by different materials, and by different qualities of finish. In this way, the event combined the insights of theorists and thinkers with reports on the continuing experience of making. The first of the keynote addresses was given by Dr Tanya Harrod, the author of the prize-winning *The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press 1999) on 'Ruskin's Material Vision'. The second was given by the sculptor, Emily Young (now a Companion), who spoke on 'Kinds of Finish'. The first panel discussion was dedicated to 'The Materials of Craftsmanship' with short presentations by Companion Peter Burman MBE, an Arts & Heritage Consultant and Nicholas Hobbs, a furniture maker (both talking about wood), Companion Richard Watts, a sculptor and letter cutter (on stone) and Guild Director Dr Rachel Dickinson (on wool). The second panel focused on

'Making in the Modern World' and involved Annie Warburton, Creative Director of the Crafts Council, Angela Cork, a designer and silversmith and Vice Chair of Contemporary British Silversmiths, and Sebastian Cox, a designer and furniture maker.

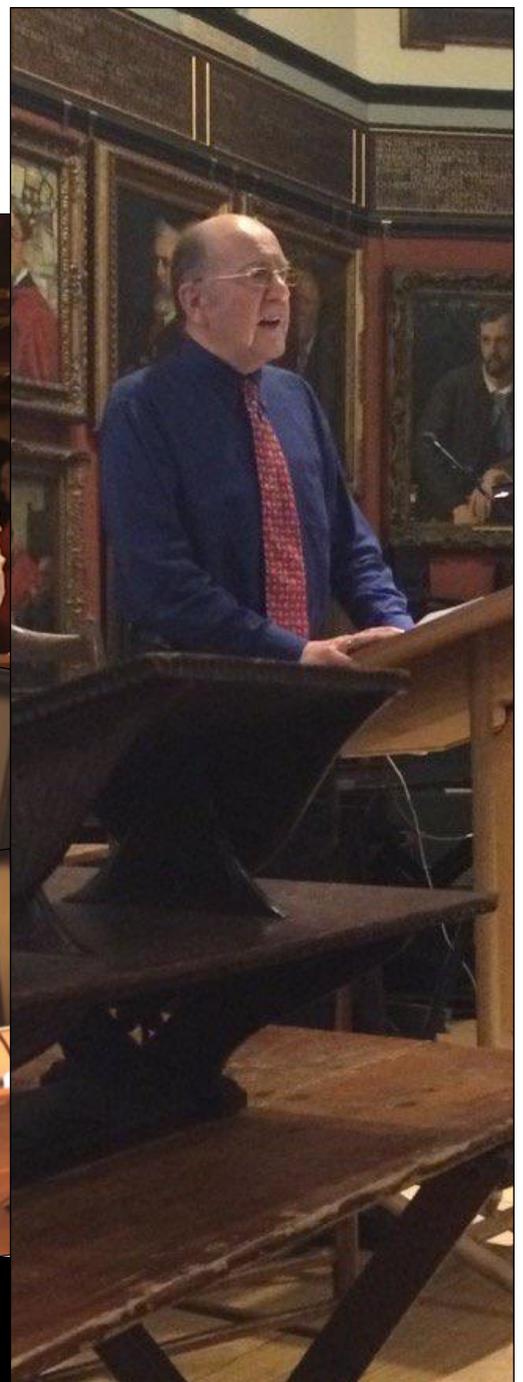
The event was inspired by Ruskin's views on the ethical and human value of craftsmanship which inspired William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Ruskin was interested not only in the crafts of the past, but in their present practice: his stirring personal motto, 'To-Day', was echoed in the title of this event.

A video recording which includes Marcus Waithe's introduction, the keynote addresses by Tanya Harrod and Emily Young, and closing remarks by the Master of the Guild, Clive Wilmer, can be viewed from the Guild's symposia pages (see p. 9).



might use Ruskin's ideas to inspire and inform the Guild's work in the Wyre.

Troubled by the sense of an economy running 'on thin air', and by a trade system that routinely divides the design of a product from its production, a new generation of thinkers and makers are turning their attention to the human and material value of craftsmanship. The symposium, *Craftsmanship To-Day: A Symposium on Modern Making*, organised for the Guild by Companion Dr Marcus Waithe, a Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and held at the Art Workers' Guild in Bloomsbury, was designed to explore and extend such debates. The symposium provided an opportunity to discuss the big questions (What is 'craftsmanship', and what do craftspeople stand for? Is craftsmanship a matter of the hand and the eye, or can it work in partnership with machines and computers? Is craftsmanship a matter of nostalgia, or can it survive in



*Craftsmanship To-Day: (top) Dr Marcus Waithe, (middle) Dr Tanya Harrod, (bottom) Emily Young, (right) Clive Wilmer.*

# CELEBRATING 175 YEARS OF WHITELANDS

*James S. Dearden*

Whitelands College was founded in Chelsea in 1841 as a ladies' teacher training college. By 1874 the Revd J. P. Faunthorpe had become the Principal. He wrote to Ruskin in 1877, after reading one of the letters of *Fors*

*Clavigera*. A correspondence ensued and Ruskin began to make gifts of pictures and books to the college. In 1879 Ruskin's book on 'wayside flowers', *Proserpina*, was published. Faunthorpe asked Ruskin if he would give a copy of the book as a Botany examination prize. Ruskin replied that indeed he would *not*, because he did not believe in that sort of competitive examination. However, Ruskin said that if Faunthorpe would establish a May Day ceremony at Whitelands, he would give copies of his various books to the May Queen for herself and other copies for her to

distribute to her attendants. He also offered to have a gold cross made annually for successive Queens. The first ceremony was held in 1881. After Ruskin's time, the Guild continued the custom of presenting Ruskin's books annually and it continues to this day, though at some stage the custom lapsed.

In 1979 the then Principal of Whitelands, Roy Knight, sought to re-establish the connection with the Guild. As a result, I visited the college, by then well-established in custom-built premises at Putney. I presented the Ruskin books—and I continued to do this for the next 26 years, with only two years missed.

Whitelands College, now part of Roehampton University, celebrated the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation in 2016. Clive Wilmer, Stuart Eagles and I received an invitation to attend a special Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey on Tuesday, 24 May. In due course my ticket

arrived together with one for my eldest granddaughter, Caroline, who is a Companion. Our small Guild party met outside the west door of the Abbey on the day.



The view from the south transept.

As it happened, Clive's and Stuart's tickets were not numbered in the same sequence as ours. Caroline and I showed our tickets at the west door and we discovered our seats were in the north transept—just below the pulpit, though we could see Clive and Stuart in the south transept. While we were waiting for the service to begin pieces by Mendelssohn, Elgar and Vaughan Williams were played on the organ. And what a magnificently powerful organ it is! As the music swelled you could feel it vibrating through your feet.

Round the corner we could just see more guests—in academic or clerical dress—seated in the eastern end of the Choir Stalls. The choir was next to them, just below the organ. Eventually the procession of clergy made its way to the seats in the Chancel and things got properly under way.

The service was conducted by the Dean of Westminster, and the Principal of Whitelands, the Revd Dr Mark Garner, who is also a Companion, read one of the Lessons. At the end of the service our Steward indicated that we should process through the Choir, by now empty, and through the Screen and into the Nave, with the organ still playing Widor's *Toccata*. As we passed through the Screen we were amazed to see that the Nave was also packed with people. Many hundreds of people had shared in the Service of Thanksgiving. And eventually emerging through the west door we heard all of the Abbey bells ringing. The whole thing was a magnificent experience.

Following the service we were invited to a reception in Church House in Dean's Yard at the side of the abbey. In the large hall was a vast group of guests. Distantly I could see Companion Canon Revd Dr David Peacock, a former Principal of Whitelands, and eventually we had a brief chat. We also spoke with Companion Malcolm Cole and his wife. He had written two pamphlets on the May Queens and on Whitelands's history. He had also delivered the Guild's Ruskin Lecture in 1992 on the subject and had arranged the Whitelands exhibition that had taken place at Liberty's. We also spoke with Mark Garner who said that, while seated in the Chancel during the service, he suddenly realised that he was sitting just feet away from the place where British sovereigns had been crowned for a thousand years.

A truly memorable morning.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

To celebrate the anniversary of Whitelands College, the University of Roehampton instituted the Whitelands Anniversary Fellowships to recognise individuals outside the College who have contributed to the life and success of the institution. Companions Clive Wilmer, Stuart Eagles and David Peacock (a former Principal of the College) were elected Fellows in 2016. In 2017, Jim Dearden attended May Day once more and accepted the award of his Fellowship in person. No-one has done more than Jim over the years to maintain Ruskin's link with Whitelands College and those of us who were present at the ceremony, including Jim's daughter, Sarah, felt privileged to share in Jim's pride at this well-deserved recognition of his outstanding contribution to the enduring relationship between the Guild and the College.

# WHITELANDS RUSKIN LECTURE 2016

## RUSKIN AND DRESS

Beate Howitt

'What do you mean by dressing?':  
Ruskin and Dress



Dr Rachel Dickinson delivering the 2016 Whitelands Ruskin Lecture.



Dr Rachel Dickinson's Whitelands Ruskin Lecture in 2016, "What do you mean by dressing?": Ruskin and Dress', expounded the depth and breadth of meaning John Ruskin wove into the term *dressing*. The lecture also embraced our understanding of Ruskin's personal philosophy and his social criticism of Victorian England's industrial society—a society which emphasised consumerism and the unfair labour practices that reduced the workman to a mere 'tool'. Dr Dickinson stressed Ruskin's vision of a better world, a world of craftspeople, and she highlighted Ruskin's passionate 'redemptive, life-enhancing' theories on how to make life more beautiful through creative work, including 'dressing'—dressing both for the individual and for society as a whole.

The question, 'What do you mean by dressing?' is raised by Ruskin in a conversation in a somewhat 'odd book', according to Dr Dickinson, called *The Ethics of the Dust*, written when Ruskin was 46, but in which he cast himself as an old lecturer who questions a group of young female students at Winnington Hall on their understanding of the word *dressing*.

The exchange between them reveals very different interpretations: the girls perceived dressing as 'wearing fine clothes', whereas Ruskin explained, *dressing* means, among other things, 'plain' clothes and learning to make them. In *The Ethics of the Dust* Ruskin questioned common cultural assumptions about what the word *dressing* and the notion of *what is beautiful* truly mean, and redefined them.

The young girls associated wearing fine clothes with wealth and economic power. Ruskin, however, believed wealth to mean something totally different; for him it meant anything that is useful, recuperative, beautiful, healing—the things that lead to life in all its fullness. He coined the word 'illth'—contrasting being ill with being well—to signify the very opposite of 'wealth', and to express all that he saw as malignant and destructive in Victorian industrial

society. His image of St George fighting the Dragon of destruction, of ugliness and illth, articulates his concerns for society.

*Dressing*, by means of some characteristic Ruskinian word-play, encompasses all Ruskin's thoughts on how to make society more beautiful, including by learning dress-making, drawing and looking, *really* looking, but above all, by learning to perceive and question what is truly beautiful and valuable, and like St George, by learning to see what is wrong and choosing to fight for beauty and real wealth.



May Day 1896.

Ruskin found his inspiration for his notions of dressing in Venice, in Carpaccio's medieval depiction of *The Legend of St Ursula*, which he felt was an ideal model of utopian society and culture. Every figure in the nine paintings is beautifully dressed, and Ruskin argued that external grace and beauty mattered, for 'the exterior clothing reveals the true nature of the interior, the soul'. He felt that everyone, rich or poor, should be

empowered to create clothing that is beautiful, and that rather than wearing (so-called) perfect, mass-produced items, they should wear garments that reveal their individuality, that they should add variety to the world and improve the world by dressing 'as beautifully as birds'.

Dr Dickinson alluded to the metaphorical and didactic fairy story that Ruskin sent, together with a pretty silken dress, to his niece, Lily Severn, for her eighth birthday. It illustrated how 'the good, honest labour of the silkworms'—and, by implication, that of all workers—yields good, ethical and beautiful results. The story of Lily's silken dress, Dr Dickinson argued, also embodied Ruskin's theories on ethical, sustainable textile production, as well as teaching Lily about *dressing*. The fairy story sheds light on Ruskin's eccentric, idealised attitude towards women's clothing, hand-made by good, industrious workers.

Ruskin's belief in the 'transfiguring power' of work by hand is indicated by the contrast he drew between happy Venetian builders, who were free to give individual expression to what they designed and made and make their work beautiful, and Victorian industrial work, which had a 'corrupting, hellish influence' on the workers, and exacerbated the forces of illth. Dr Dickinson also referred

to Ruskin's condemnation of the Victorian structure of class and power in which the worker was neither rewarded nor praised.

The notion of *dressing* is relevant to the students of Whitelands College, the teacher training college for women founded in 1841. Ruskin thought that the education of women mattered just as much as that of young men and developed a friendship with the then Principal, the Revd John Faunthorpe. Faunthorpe suggested that Ruskin's botanical work, *Proserpina*, should be given as an annual prize, but Ruskin disliked any form of competition, preferring the recognition of 'uncontending and natural worth'. He suggested instead an annual secret ballot to choose a Queen of the May who would be given *Proserpina* and other books by Ruskin. Thus, Ruskin's romantic fantasy inaugurated Whitelands's annual May Queen Festival.

Ruskin became a major benefactor to the college, giving the May Queen a set of all his published books to share with her Maids of Honour, as well as a gold cross as a



*(Left)* The May Monarchs on the steps of eighteenth-century Parkstead House in the grounds of Whitelands College. (2017).  
*(Below)* Dr Rachel Dickinson (far right) making the Guild's annual presentation of Ruskin books to outgoing May King Gavin (far left), incoming May Queen Navita and her attendants (2017).  
 All photos on this page: Jenny Robbins and Martin Green.

permanent memento of her office. No personal 'tailored dress' was worn by Ellen, the first May Queen, but a queenly dress of variable size was made by Kate Greenway for succeeding May Queens whose duty it was to undertake charitable works. Whitelands continues to embody this tradition of good works and Dr Dickinson judged that Ruskin would have approved of the choice of charity, War Child, favoured by the May Monarch for 2015-16, King Qusai.

Whitelands's mission was to 'teach all fair arts'—and the needlework and craftsmanship of Whitelands's students represented the ideal dress-making Ruskin envisaged. His message to the students of Winnington Hall, to Lily Severn, to all Whitelands students and to the Companions of the Guild of St George, was to go on and fight against the dragon of 'illth', to give help to others, and to be always beautifully dressed. This was Ruskin's answer to what *he* meant by dressing.



POST SCRIPT

May Day in 1957 was very special for me. After the Chapel service, all the students of my year, and all invited guests, gathered in the main Hall. Following Queen Janet's retirement speech, the Principal, Elizabeth Williams, opened Miss Murton's letter announcing the name of the new Queen, and I nearly collapsed: Beate, a needlework student wearing her new home-made dress, was to be May Queen.

Miss Murton had created a number of unique and individual dresses for many of my predecessors and mine was her last. My pale green dress thrilled me with its decoration based on the azalea bed in the college grounds, and I felt it suited me to perfection. It was innovative too, for the overskirt was nylon, a very new fabric. The colourful procession around the beautiful gardens of the Giles Gilbert Scott building in Putney, was followed by

revels in the main Hall that included poetry and song, and modern dance displays by two African students on the roof-top terraces.

This never-to-be-forgotten day ended with me dipping into the books by John Ruskin given to me by the Master of the Guild of St George. My heart was full of humble gratitude for the honour the students of my year had bestowed on me, a refugee from war-torn Germany. Having been bullied at school because of my nationality, being chosen May Queen in Ruskin's unique May Day tradition finally made me feel accepted and fully rooted in my adopted country.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Following the May Day celebrations in 2016, Beate returned the honour and became a Companion of the Guild.

May Day in 2017 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the crowning of Queen Beate. Beate made a moving speech about the value of education and the role of Whitelands College in promoting it.

Dr Rachel Dickinson once again presented the Guild's gift of Ruskin's books to the May Monarch (Queen Navita) and her attendants, in a session held at Whitelands College Chapel.



*(Above)* May Day 2017. Beate Howitt celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of her coronation as May Queen in 1957, with the current Principal, Revd Dr Mark Garner (right).

# WHITELANDS RUSKIN LECTURE 2017

**'Three-corneredest of Chaplains': John Ruskin and the Revd J. P. Faunthorpe**



*David Peacock*

The Guild of St George

Companion Revd Canon Dr David Peacock, a former Principal of Whitelands College, delivered a superb Whitelands Ruskin Lecture on Ruskin and the College's longest-serving Principal, Revd John Pincher Faunthorpe. The lecture is available as a booklet for £6 + P&P (watch out for a review in the next issue). Faunthorpe emerged from David's authoritative and entertaining lecture as someone dedicated to education and especially to teacher training. He went to great pains to please Ruskin, encouraging some of his students to cook for the great man and make him a fine waistcoat. The College's most significant collective endeavour was the production of a magnificent index to *Fors Clavigera*, a project that at first greatly excited and pleased Ruskin, but led to disappointment and criticism that wounded Faunthorpe deeply. Yet the service Ruskin did Whitelands in associating himself with the College, and the enduring respect in which Faunthorpe held his great Master, shone through in a characteristically warm and positive lecture which this year was attended by at least two former May Monarchs, as well as the outgoing and incoming Monarchs, several Companions, plus alumni from Whitelands's Guild of St Ursula. The lecture was, as usual, followed by a convivial thank-you dinner at the nearby King's Head. *SE.*



**Revd Canon Dr David Peacock reading a lesson at Whitelands's May Day Ceremony in 2017.**

## PROFESSOR STEPHEN WILDMAN

We wish Companion Professor Stephen Wildman, the Director of the Ruskin Library and Research Centre at the University of Lancaster, all the very best in his retirement. Every serious student of Ruskin over the past twenty years or so has benefited from Stephen's encyclopaedic knowledge of Ruskin and his circle, and his intimacy with the Whitehouse Collection. The many visitors to the Ruskin Library have delighted in the numerous Ruskin-related exhibitions, many of which he has curated. That he has done such exemplary work, and has always been so ready to help, is all the more remarkable for the good humour and ready wit with which he has always done it. His presence at Lancaster will be sorely missed. *SE.*



**Prof Stephen Wildman (left) introducing Tristram Hunt MP (right) as the Mikimoto Lecturer at Lancaster in 2012.**

# RUSKIN in SHEFFIELD

## ‘MAKE GOOD LIVELIHOODS’: RUSKIN IN SHEFFIELD 2016

Ruth Nutter



The events of *Ruskin in Sheffield 2016* took place between May and September. They were inspired by the third of the Guild’s triennial exhibitions, *In the Making: Ruskin, Creativity and Craftsmanship*, which was shown at the Millennium Gallery from January to June.

Entitled ‘Make Good Livelihoods’, *Ruskin in Sheffield 2016* celebrated all that Ruskin admired about the ‘hand-power’ and ‘heart-passion’ of craftsmanship, and the enterprising spirit of Sheffield’s craftspeople today.

The programme was designed to appeal alike to children and adults. Its objectives were to encourage people to embrace the possibility of making good livelihoods from craftsmanship, to learn more about Ruskin and craftsmanship, and to inspire them to make something. Over 4,500 people viewed, exhibited or made useful and beautiful things, and they took time to talk and listen to each other while they were doing it.

Building on established partnerships, community relationships, and invaluable contributions from Guild Companions living in Sheffield,

we were again able to create events in Walkley, Stannington and at the Millennium Gallery. New partnerships meant that we also branched out to create events in Ecclesall Woods, on The Moor in the city centre, and in Meersbrook, at the former home of the Ruskin Museum (1890-1953).

The first event, *Make Good in the Woods*, drew many family visitors to Ecclesall Woods, home to some of Sheffield’s finest wood designers and makers. Despite occasional drizzle, children and adults got their hands on green-working tools, and the pole-lathe, and made bark jewellery, while the timber builders and designers talked throughout the day to visitors

interested in their businesses. The opportunity to share with a wider audience their experiences of working with wood was welcomed by the makers. A sense emerged of a tangible connection being forged between them and the Ruskinian tradition of craftsmanship in Sheffield.

The *Make Good Livelihoods Weekend* took place across four venues: the Millennium Gallery, the Sheffield Institute of Arts (SIA) at Sheffield Hallam University, modern-day little Mesters’ studios at Portland Works and the digital creation community facility, Access Space. It came about through a new partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, and was made possible by the award of funding to take part in their new

*Catalyst Festival of Creativity.*

Ten accomplished Sheffield-based artists and makers, including stone-carvers (among whom was Companion Richard Watts), a visual artist (Companion Carole Baugh), a wood-carver, corset and scissor maker, a community maker, sculptors, an architect and a textile artist demonstrated their crafts and offered hands-on activities to appreciative participants of all ages and backgrounds, many of whom stayed all day.

The artists spoke about their work during panel discussions that addressed issues around digital creation and craftsmanship, and how key participants became makers in the first place. Ruskin’s view of poetry as a form of craftsmanship in words was vividly explored in an engaging series of readings by poets including the Guild’s Master, Clive Wilmer, and Companions Fay Musselwhite and Sally Goldsmith. The event inspired at least one local poet to write a new poem about making. Portland Works and Access Space were very pleased with the opportunity the event gave them to bring in new audiences to



### *Make Good in the Woods*

*(Above left) a visitor tries spoon carving.*

*(Above right) pole lathe demonstrations.*

*(Above centre) green woodwork demonstration.*

*Photos: Ruth Nutter and Nadine Grimdu (lathe pic only).*





### *Make Good Livelihoods*

*(Left) drawing on to fabric; and (right) making mini crystal gardens. Photos: Ruth Nutter.*

understand what they do and how people can benefit from their resources.

A local school, Arbouthorne Primary, involved their entire Year 6 group (90 pupils) to engage as deeply as possible with the *Make Good Livelihoods* event—exploring how to make a living from craftsmanship. The Guild worked with all participating venues to ensure that the 90 children were given a tour of the Ruskin Collection and other collections in the Millennium Gallery, in order to inspire them to create artworks for the event itself. Sixteen of the pupils were also selected to visit Sheffield Institute of Arts, Portland Works and Access Space, which they found extremely valuable. Many of the children came to the *Make Good Livelihoods* event and, together with their parents and grandparents, helped to host their school's exhibition display.

Companion Jodie Southwood, a second-year Graphic Design student, undertook her first paid commission to help create publicity material for the event.

Our support for *Walkley Festival* this year yielded an eclectic mix of Ruskinian events and activities. The reproduction of a sketchbook belonging to the Victorian silversmith Omar Ramsden, one of the most

renowned visitors to St George's Museum, was created by a local volunteer, Jude Warrender, and displayed in a shop window. Companion Gerry Pert displayed his giant artisan croissant baking skills to admiring crowds. Walkley Edge artists led 'sketch-crawls' around local gardens. The Japanese Society demonstrated traditional flower-arranging and needlework technique at the Community Centre, both of which were hugely popular. Companion Natalie Hunt extended her offer of making characters out of vegetables, to make soup for people to consume together on South Road. Companion Fay Musselwhite devised an unusual poetry event which brought people together for one day in Gerry's Bakery to write about different types of making. Fay then corralled the words into a poem, called 'Like Rain on Fresh Ground'. The poem was written up to create a beautiful hanging which was presented to Walkley Library at their AGM in October (see poem and report, pp. 19-21).

A selection of reproductions from the Ruskin Collection, created by True North Brew Co. (with support from Museums Sheffield and the Guild) will be displayed

in their new restaurant in the Walkley Library building, when it is re-opened following refurbishment. The exhibition of reproductions was displayed early in 2016 in the Forum Bar and Restaurant in the city centre.

It was a pleasure to work with Companions Carole Baugh and Sophie Hunter, and Freeman College staff, to present a second summer open day, *Crafting the Land*, at the college's Biodynamic Garden at High Riggs in Stannington. The event, on the theme of *Ruskin, Craftsmanship and Nature*, featured talks from Freeman College staff, local CPRE Planning Officer, Andrew Wood, and Companion Kate Genever. Kate also offered drawing activities, and there were wood-working and copper-forging workshops taking place throughout the day. Many Sheffield Companions volunteered to support the event. It was heartening to see how much this horticultural site had developed through the hard work of staff there. Partly because of wider public exposure generated by last year's open day, there is increased awareness of their veg box scheme, and opportunities for volunteering.

*Ruskin's Use & Beauty Parlour* nestled amongst market stalls, street buskers, the Moor's indoor market and high street shops in the city centre for two weeks over the summer holidays. Adults and children from an extremely diverse mix of cultural backgrounds and ages visited this temporary structure which provided space for an exhibition, hands-on activity and social gatherings. Prams and wheelchair users frequently came in to this welcoming, accessible, pop-up parlour to get involved. Hundreds of small artworks were made by visitors, often by people staying for a long time to talk about what they used to do and



### *Walkley Festival*

*The art of Ikebana.*

*Photos: Seiko Kinoshita.*

what they would like to make, not infrequently socialising with people they'd never met before.

Mir Jansen and Henk Littlewood's globe-shaped sculpture commissioned for the exhibition, *In the Making*, was a key attraction, providing a sanctuary for visitors to relax in, take selfies, and enjoy many conversations about craftsmanship and Ruskin. High-quality hosting at the Parlour by Companions Carrie Leyland, Eliza Gilbert and Jodie Southwood meant that everyone

though it was September, maypole dancing expert Penny Rea inspired children and adults to take part in maypole dancing, a tradition encouraged by Ruskin. Our partners for this event, Heeley Development Trust and the *Friends of Meersbrook Hall*, plan to refurbish the building and transform it into a thriving community resource with artists' studios, workspaces for small enterprises, a café, a playgroup, and rooms to hire. This fruitful collaboration underlined the great value

developed independently of *Ruskin in Sheffield*. The collection of early 20th-century paintings of the Rivelin Valley, curated by Chris Baines, which was displayed in the Pop-Up Ruskin Museum in Walkley in 2015, was exhibited at Weston Park Museum this year.

Strong engagement in *Ruskin in Sheffield* by the Master and Directors of the Guild remains a vital part of the success of the project, which is guided and supported by Janet Barnes and Peter Miller. We are grateful to Arts Council England, Sheffield



*Crafting the Land*  
(Left) the new orchard and flower beds; drawing with Companion Kate Genever.

Photos: Ruth Nutter.

felt welcome, as did the thoughtful, engaging craft activities and personal encouragement provided by Seiko Kinoshita, Coralie Thomson and Jason Turpin. (See report, pp. 22-24.)

Our final event in the programme, *Celebrating Meersbrook Hall*, on 11 September, took place after months of increasing local interest in the building's future. I don't think any of us had quite anticipated 1000 visitors, but we were blessed with a beautiful, sunny day. The former print room was transformed into a small gallery exploring the history of Meersbrook Hall and Park, focussing on the building's role as the home of the Ruskin Museum from 1890 to 1953. Guided tours around the building were all booked up within the first half-hour. The tours included a fascinating talk about the Ruskin Collection by Guild Director, and the Collection's former Curator, Janet Barnes.

Outside the Hall, local artists and craftspeople sold their creations at a makers' fair. On the lawns, professional craftspeople offered wooden knife-making, photography, and mosaic-making activities. An artist worked with people to wrap trees along the path to create a stunning avenue connecting the Hall and the Walled Garden. And, even

that the Guild can bring to work aimed at revitalizing an area with strong historical connections with Ruskin and his legacy. (See report, pp. 25-26.)

Following a pilot project in 2015, the Ruskin Collection again incorporated aspects of the work of *Ruskin in Sheffield* into their displays, showing contemporary craftworks created by makers based in Ecclesall Woods, for example. The next re-display in November 2016 included exhibits about Meersbrook Hall such as items made during the *Celebrating Meersbrook Hall* event.

It was truly heartening to see some of the events and activities of last year's programme maintained and further

Hallam University, *Year of Making* and Museums Sheffield for helping to fund *Ruskin in Sheffield 2016*.

As we look towards the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth in 2019, the doors appear to be open for *Ruskin in Sheffield* to deepen the role of the Ruskin Collection and Ruskin's ideas in helping to create better lives in Sheffield, focussing on longer-term projects which can culminate in city-wide celebration.



The Ruskin Collection at Forum Bar.  
Photo: Stuart Eagles.

## Like Rain on Fresh Ground

It is often difficult to stop making things, I can spend hours — leftovers into risottos, rugs or ragout; watercolours of little birds, border fragments for pictures with words. A soft surface may be easier, but ragged lines skid and leave a scuffed trail.

A friend picks my strawberry breakfast: black soil, green leaves; sisters squabble, chuck beans. Mum makes peace, buns and tea, the most of everything during a war. Tents move with the seasons, a child strings a loom and grows, with the long knots of family secrets.

In the making we carried hope along the US eastern coast: a dead-end or steps towards family and friends in Walkley for two decades. Memories of prom-dress stress fade to pastel rainbow, buttons travel down the party years, and in my posh-do frock they knew I'd made it.

Strange, not knowing who sewed all our clothes, or just where— I see pictures of invisible stitchers, and journey by nature's images through my subconscious to study a spoken language. Nervousness and doubt roll in, I read the names of Adobe designers and wonder.

Income tax is the communal way—when they built our home, tradespeople pooled their funds, drew lots. Outside, sun on skin, honoured by shoes made to last, I help worms and weather, let slugs be frog supper, imbricate us in messy disorder, the cycles of life.

When needles, quill and knife lie still, a surge rises in my limbs, until I'm slicing colour, stretching texture, fettling it straight in the shed. Hear the sshtursshturp, sticky slurp, shreep as I print lino-cuts, in the air sense the sharp tang of oak in the wake of axe.

We make our way, as things of true beauty must be lovingly made. If bleeding's unexpected we have hands, eyes, hearts and brains to crack open a tune and believe—patterns will dance together when ideas fly and you become the maker.

by *Line at a Time* responders.  
devised and corralled by Fay Musselwhite.  
(June 2016).

# LINE AT A TIME

*Fay Musselwhite*

When Ruth Nutter asked me, last spring, how we could deploy poetry in Walkley, in conjunction with Sheffield's *Year of Making*, the potential of the chosen theme was immediately appealing: Making touches so much of our lives in ways that range from the purest to the most problematic. I suggested Line at a Time as a method of distilling a poem to express and reflect the emotions and experiences of a community. This is an account of the project.

Many poems that I enjoy sound like the everyday speech of story, conversation and memory; in writing this way, the poet's job is to arrange such elements artfully. For this poem, then, I didn't want responders to write poetry, I wanted their passion and truth in natural cadence as raw material for the substance and voice of the piece. So I needed to prompt, gather, then combine words and phrases about Making. These were the three stages of my task.

Poetry is an art-form that works well under pressure, so the tight turnaround of this project was fitting. Nevertheless, I was daunted by our agreement that I would present a 'finished' poem four days after the material-gathering event. I cleared my diary for those four days, and began designing prompts that were as broad and engaging as possible. Their purpose was to generate ideas without suggesting vocabulary, to spur responders to write in whatever ways moved them, and to give permission for that in case anyone thought they needed it. Other welcoming material ensured that everyone knew only to write about Making as that was all I would

use for the poem.

Companion Gerry Pert kindly hosted the event at his bakery and café, so I shaped some of the written prompts as slices of bread and presented them in bread baking tins. Other prompts were folded in a sweet jar. There was also a handout and a few rallying posters. On Saturday 25 June, I arrived at Gerry's to set up for the afternoon, and hoped that people would arrive to contribute. It went well. For a while the event filled the café. Gerry and Ruth gave invaluable support to everyone, the atmosphere was terrific: enthusiastic, tender, encouraging. Some contributors were there all afternoon, some wrote quickly and left, some chatted around the table while they wrote. The previous day had brought the result of the UK referendum on leaving the EU, and the Line at a Time poem seems to have benefited from the light shed on our communities by that news. In any case, people were eager to share their feelings, ideas and stories.

Responders were self-selecting to an extent, as they were all up and dressed, curious, and on South Road that Saturday afternoon. However, the cohort varied: there were families, individual shoppers, people who'd seen publicity for the event, others who were surprised by it. At a guess, their ages ranged from four to perhaps over eighty years, and there were more than several nationalities represented. This meant that some were writing in at least their second language, which of course may also have been true of the four-year-olds, but anyway, we all have our own unique ways of using the common language. All of this brings depth and texture to the Line at a Time poem.



At

tea-time, I took home thirty responses of three words to several pages in length. I read them all, started noticing phrases, and groupings of ideas, and wondered how to frame the poem. Then I found the first line in one of the contributions, and tweaked it slightly to make it fit. I liked its unhurried pace, and conversational, almost confiding tone, which I knew the poem could sustain and develop. I also realised that from this beginning I could write in a single voice to thread through the community.

Nervous from the project's start of this writing-up stage, and especially its deadline, I was soon thrilled by the energy of what I had to work with. People were extremely generous with their stories, tender memories, heart-felt truths, attention to valuable detail, and their language was packed with imagery and



**(Top right and above) a community writes a poem: the gathering event at Gerry's in Walkley, led by Fay Musselwhite (image, right). All photos in this article: Ruth Nutter.**

reference. In this rich store of passionate ideas, so much of the job had been done: words were selected, even invented, and beginning to cluster. The ingredients were all there, including some amazing phrases which deserved the best chance to sing. Once I got the tone from that first line, the poem began to unfurl and shape itself.

I recalled the atmosphere in the café: the talking and the writing silences, the good humour and thoughtfulness. The developing poem was capturing all that, compressing the multiple stories and voices into one expression. I combined words into new phrases, and changed parts of grammar to suit the flow. In the resulting piece, when I hear elements from two or more responses fused to make a single sentence, it sounds as though the responders speak together, and thus bear witness to each other's stories.

Meanwhile, visual artist Sarah Lewis waited to design and make a bespoke background, and write the poem on to it. After a couple of days' work I was able to email her an early draft so that she could make a start on the surround.

We agreed on no more than thirty lines, so I cheekily made them quite long, and when it soon settled into quatrains, I knew there'd be seven of them. I ensured that every piece of paper I took home yielded something to the poem, but that wasn't difficult because everyone wrote something potent. There are roughly three words in the poem which are not from any contribution (because I felt I had no choice), all the others, including the title, are from those papers I took home. More importantly—and this is crucial to the integrity of the project—from the first word to the last, in spite of my mixing and merging, there's not a sentiment in the poem that wasn't fully expressed on one or more of those pages.

Wednesday tea-time was my deadline, and after I'd emailed 'Like Rain on Fresh Ground' to Sarah and Ruth, Sarah worked even faster than I had at creating the finished piece. Two days later we met at Gerry's for the hanging, and it was marvellous to see her bold design and delicate carvings, the wood-grain's curves against blunt straight lines, thread joining the stanzas' images. It struck



me as rustic and modern, very Ruskinian, perfect for the project, for Walkley and for the poem. I also realised how immersed Sarah had been in those very words that I'd lived with day and night as the poem became itself.

This was a tremendous project for me, a worthwhile and nourishing collaboration. I was humbled by the responders' generosity, grateful for the potency of what they offered, and personally involved

with the feelings expressed in the poem: it was a great privilege to have such access to the material. My thanks go to the thirty people who contributed to the poem, to Ruth and the Guild for commissioning the project, to Gerry for hosting the gathering event, to Sarah for realising it in the physical world, and to Walkley Library, where the finished piece now hangs in its permanent home.

# RUSKIN'S USE & BEAUTY PARLOUR ON THE MOOR

*Mir Jansen*



Wood craftsman and Companion Henk Littlewood and I—I am a visual artist—were commissioned by Museums Sheffield in 2016 to create a new exhibition piece for the Guild's third triennial exhibition, 'In the Making'. Celebrating the legacy of John Ruskin, the exhibition focused on craftsmanship.

Henk and I travelled to Bewdley in November 2014 to choose a tree from Ruskin Land, a mainly oak woodland that had been given to the Guild by George Baker, eventually Ruskin's successor as Master of the Guild. A new management structure set in place for this woodland meant that some oak trees had to be felled in order for the remaining oak trees to thrive. Henk and I picked one, coppiced it and transported it to Sheffield where Henk turned it into our exhibition piece: a beautifully constructed pod-shaped space with seating inside. Using panels from the same oak tree, I created a series of small paintings, drawing inspiration from the display in the Ruskin Gallery, and the huge Ruskin Collection stored in the basement archive at the Millennium Gallery. I also drew inspiration from recent news events and from Ruskin's writings, looking at the prevailing values of the Victorian era compared to those of our own time. The paintings were hung inside the pod to create a meditative arena within the 'In the Making' exhibition that enabled visitors time and space to reflect, not only on Ruskin's ideas, but also on the current state of our world. The piece was entitled, 'What you do, Where you're from, Who you know'. To me, the piece was a comment on the concerns I have about the increasing likelihood that social mobility and equality in

contemporary Britain will not be all that different from the Victorian era if we don't attempt to address the issue of what it means to be poor in this country.

The piece was displayed to the public at the Millennium Gallery between January and June 2016. We were then asked by Ruth Nutter, Producer of the Guild's *Ruskin in Sheffield* programme, to display it at The Moor, in Sheffield city centre, where it would form part of a pop-up Use and Beauty Parlour during two weeks in August. Designed by graduates from the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield, the Parlour was a mobile pod that not only housed our exhibition piece, but provided a space in which the public could engage in craft workshops delivered by professional artists and craftsmen. These included mosaic artist, Coralie Turpin, sculptor, Jason Thomson, and Japanese weaver, Seiko Kinoshita, all now Companions. Henk also delivered some wood-carving workshops, assisting people to carve the memorable Ruskin statement, 'There is no Wealth but Life' into wood that remained from our Ruskin Land oak tree. During those two weeks, I spent my time talking to the people who entered the space, finding out where they were from, what they did for a living and who they thought had helped them in their lives.

I heard some interesting stories from people, most of them from Sheffield itself, but also from many

different places in the world. The bottom end of The Moor, a well-known shopping area in Sheffield, is where you find the markets that tend to attract an economically less well-off demographic. After a few days, I began to recognise the regulars—people who came to shop for affordable food and cheaper goods. Many came in for a chat or had a go at one of the workshops on offer. There were quite a lot of people with noticeable and less obvious disabilities. One lady popped in every day with one of her many different carers. She loved to draw, which helped her to focus and made her calmer and happier. One disabled Pakistani gentleman, with his three children in tow, popped in every day. The children were cheerful, bright and had so much energy that they took part in every workshop on offer, leaving with many tiny artworks and giving us some of the best smiley pictures.



Choosing the oak tree in Ruskin Land, in the Wyre.

My immediate thought about the Use & Beauty Parlour on the Moor was that it was similar to other events Ruth Nutter had created—a beautiful, peaceful, creative environment.

The Moor is currently in the middle of being regenerated but previously had felt like a neglected part of town. It felt like it really needed a bit of ‘use & beauty’.

One thing that really surprised me was the variety of places people came from—as we found out from the cards on Henk’s sculpture. I had no idea just looking at people walking past that Sheffield enjoys such diversity. The Moor has a different demographic from Walkley.

The activities, like Jason’s metal-work and Coralie’s crystal gardens, were potentially much more dangerous than the kind of thing I used to take my children to, but we didn’t have any accidents. People seemed to enjoy doing something different and a little edgier. Retired steelworkers, who gravitated towards Jason hammering out the metal bowls, would stand quietly for quite a while just watching, then some would tell their life stories.

*Carrie Leyland*

One day I found a lady standing quietly in front of our exhibit. She didn’t want to take a seat but told me that she had seen the piece at the Millennium Gallery and that she had been moved to tears by it. ‘It’s so unfair,’ she said, ‘that so many people have so very little. When I saw this [exhibit], I told a friend of mine to go and see it, as he is homeless. This piece is really good’. She told me about how she had struggled with depression and still found it hard to cope sometimes.

I also met a lot of people from different countries, some European and some from much further afield. Most people I spoke to told me that the people who had helped them the most in their lives had been their parents or teachers. And most people I spoke to also seemed to be proud of where they came from. I began to find that people who had benefited from positive parental support also seemed to have fared better in life. I don’t mean that their incomes were higher (I didn’t ask about income) but that they seemed more resilient in a way, less likely to give up when times were hard.

John Ruskin was lucky in that his parents had been well-off and encouraged him to study and live a life filled with tours to different parts of Europe where he learned about architecture, art and nature. He had an enormous amount of support from his family and the network of wealthy and influential people surrounding him, though they were nearly always grown-ups, even in his childhood, which separated him perhaps even more from those who were less privileged. It was therefore all the more remarkable that, later in life, he used his position to attack Victorian society as



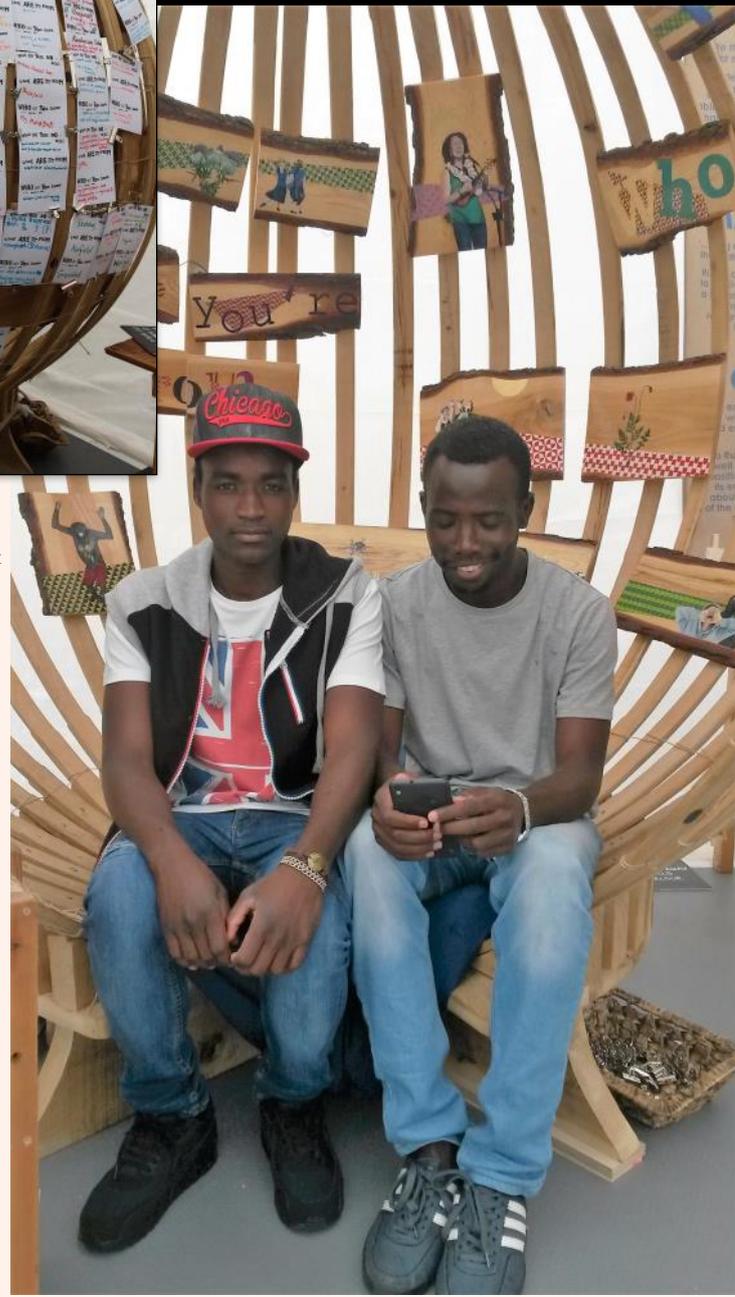
unequal and unjust, and to argue that much needed to change. People who had not been as lucky as him, he said, should have access to beauty, education and experiences that could make them more content and fulfilled. For me, this is perhaps Ruskin’s greatest legacy—that he provoked his contemporaries, stood up for those who were not being heard, and created opportunities for people who were less fortunate, offering them the chance to experience the same sense of wonder and curiosity he enjoyed himself throughout his life.

I see great parallels between Ruskin’s time and

our own—and this concerns me. Of course, there are politicians who are shouting loudly about growing gaps between the well-off and the poor, and the effect this has on health and wellbeing. This is, no doubt, very true, and the issues obviously need to be addressed.

But most of what they prescribe won’t remedy a much greater kind of poverty. I have no name for it, but I have always known that you don’t need to be economically well-off to feel happy and be compassionate. Having shared experiences, and a supportive family and set of friends, can make you more resilient, even when times are tough. Ruskin understood this when he pronounced that there is no wealth but life—and that this life is for everyone, not just those who are better off. This life is for sharing—for doing what you can to make all lives as good as they can be, no matter what you do, where you’re from or who you happen to know.

**Henk Littlewood and Mir Jansen, ‘What you do, Where you’re from, Who you know’ (2016). All photos: Mir Jansen.**





Products of Use and Beauty. All photos: Ruth Nutter

# HERITAGE OPEN DAY: CELEBRATING MEERSBROOK HALL

*Rhiannon Thomas*

Meersbrook Hall in Sheffield was the home of the Ruskin Museum from 1890 until it closed in 1953. Until last September, the Hall had remained closed to the public. In partnership with *Ruskin in Sheffield*, it opened its doors to the community once again as part of the Heritage Open Days weekend.

I worked in the Hall for several years as a Project Officer for Sheffield City Council's Parks and Countryside service. I spent hours watching the passing of the seasons outside my window—the cheery display of crocuses and snowdrops giving way to daffodils and umbellifers, the woodpecker busily feeding her young in the cherry tree, the local

longer worked for the Council, but lived locally and saw a notice about a public meeting called to try and prevent the Council from selling the office building in the local park. I went along—concerned that the sale of the offices could also mean that parts of the park would be lost forever. From that initial meeting, attended by about 60 local people, the organisation, *Friends of Meersbrook Hall*, was (eventually!) established. Fairly quickly the importance of the building—historically and culturally—became apparent, as did the difficulty of the task ahead if we were to realise fully our ambitions. We did not

meetings held to establish the *Friends* group. HDT have been working locally for 20 years and take an holistic approach to connecting land, buildings and people. Following approval by the members of the *Friends of Meersbrook Hall* and HDT's trustees, we formed a partnership to work on bringing the Hall back to life. Heeley Development Trust signed a Licence to Occupy the Hall and we received the keys in May 2016.

Around this time, I met Ruth Nutter, Producer for *Ruskin in Sheffield*, and we were soon busy making plans to host a Heritage Open Day at the Hall as part of the *RinS* event programme for 2016, 'Make Good

*Celebrating Meersbrook Hall. Photo: Ruth Nutter.*



nursery's outing to collect autumn leaves and the giddiness of my colleagues when it snowed and we knew we'd spend our lunchtime sledging down the best hill in Sheffield. Despite this, I had never given much thought to who had previously looked out on the same view. We were once asked if we wanted to spend a night in the Hall 'ghost hunting', as it was rumoured someone had died there and still roamed the corridors at night, but that came to nothing and thoughts of previous occupants were soon forgotten.

Fast forward a few years to 2014 and I no

want merely to prevent the sale of the offices, but to celebrate the heritage of the building, provide affordable space and facilities for the local community, make it an attractive base for local businesses and, vitally, ensure its economic sustainability in the longer term. It became obvious we would need to work with an established organisation which had experience of developing heritage buildings and was well rooted in the community.

Fortuitously, the Trust Manager of Heeley Development Trust (HDT) is also a local resident and had attended the public

Livelihoods'. The morning of the Open Day was still and clear, perfect weather for showcasing the makers and crafters integral to the event's success.

Whilst we were planning the event we had no idea how many visitors to expect—we never anticipated there would be nearly a thousand people coming by in the course of the afternoon! I was running tours of the Hall with Andy Jackson, Trust Manager at HDT, and Janet Barnes, a Director of the Guild, who offered a fascinating insight into the Ruskin Collection and her experience as its curator.



**(Left to right) Faunagraphic's heron pictured in the walled garden; Janet Barnes looking out from Meersbrook Hall at the activities in the Park; and Companion Sarah Coleman leading a mosaic-making workshop. Photos: Ruth Nutter.**

Due to high demand for the tours I was restricted to watching the rest of the event unfold from the Hall. It was such a pleasure to see the park buzzing with activity. Adults and children participated in making wooden spreading knives under the watchful eye of skilled craftsman Will Ferraby. Faunagraphic painted a stunning heron mural for display at the entrance of the Hall; Ruthie Ford dressed trees in vivid fabrics; and Laura Page led photography trails around the park.

Companion Sarah Coleman (with the assistance of many visitors) produced a beautiful peacock mosaic, which was on display in the Ruskin Gallery in Sheffield until 13 August this year. A peacock was said to have roamed the flower beds in the park and, when it died, it was stuffed and apparently had pride of place at the entrance hall and we know that Ruskin's celebrated drawing of the peacock's breast feather once hung in the Picture Gallery at Meersbrook. We are delighted that Sarah's mosaic will eventually be displayed in the Hall, reflecting the significance of the peacock to Meersbrook and deepening our connection with Ruskin.

We also held a mini market at the Open Day. As part of the 'Make Good Livelihoods' programme we wanted to show that local

people were making a living from making and selling their craft products. The Real Junk Food Project did a roaring trade catering for the crowds and the *Friends of Meersbrook Hall* sold a lot of cake. We couldn't have been more delighted with our first Open Day: my only regret was not getting the chance to try any of the activities—or cakes.

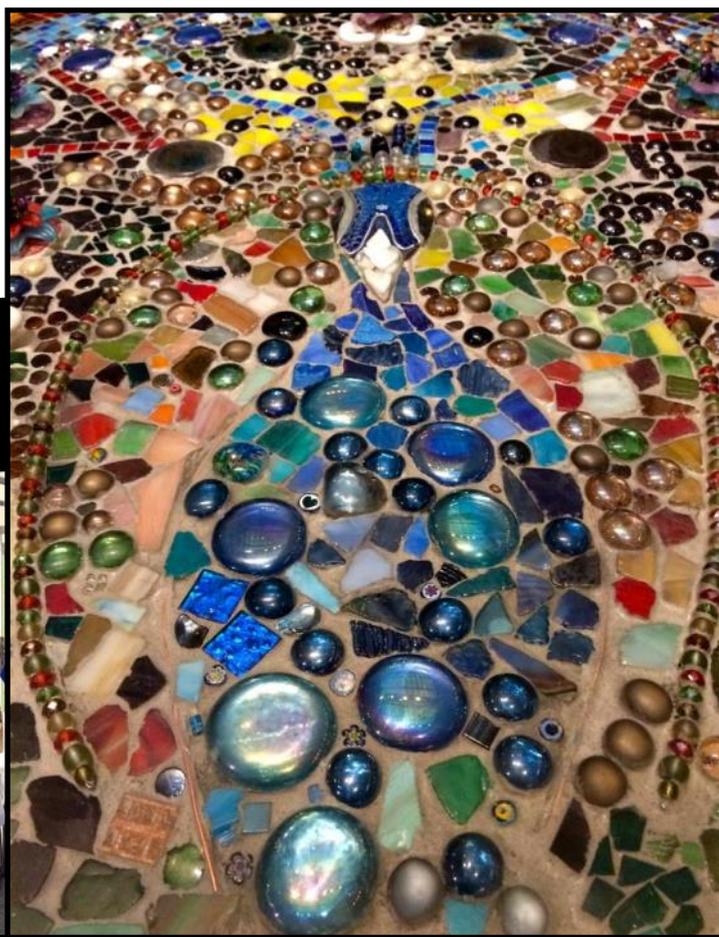
This year's Heritage Open Day focussed on The Big Draw. It was held on Sunday 10 September to celebrate Ruskin's commitment to encourage people to embrace artistic activity and to appreciate the natural world. The full variety of activities, which included metal working, creating a frieze using natural objects pushed into clay, and drawing in various locations, will be reported on in the next issue.

We have now occupied the Hall for a year. Heeley Development Trust is running its Adult Learning classes here throughout the week with over 100 people attending some days. The current visitor numbers match how many people visited the Ruskin Museum in its

heyday. This year has reinforced for us all the importance of saving the Hall for the community—and that our ambitions for it remain valid, as an initial public consultation has demonstrated. We aspire to run a café and provide toileting facilities, make rooms available for meetings and maintain good quality studio space for creative people to make things in. We want to reconnect the Hall with the landscape in which it sits, and celebrate its heritage whilst ensuring its enduring relevance into the future. We know there are still many challenges ahead, and I often think of Ruskin's words, once painted in the Picture Gallery here: 'Nothing that is great is easy'.

Further information about the Heritage Open Day can be found at the *Friends of Meersbrook Hall* website: <http://meersbrookhall.org.uk/>.

**(Below, left) Exploring the history of the Ruskin Museum. (Below, right) 'Make Good Livelihoods': the craft stalls. (Right) The peacock mosaic created by Sarah Coleman & visitors. Photos: Ruth Nutter.**



# AN ANNIVERSARY BROADCAST

*L. Du Garde Peach*

## MEERSBROOK BEFORE 1950



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.

—Isabella Fyvie Mayo (1843-1914), 'Sheffield, yesterday and today' in idem, *The Sunday at Home* (1898-99). [Image from the same book.]



Genevieve Pilley at work on the illuminated vellum scroll presented to King Edward the VIII by the Mayor, Aldermen & Citizens of Sheffield (May 1936). She worked at the Ruskin Museum at Meersbrook for nearly 50 years, and retired in 1949.

On Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1950—the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of Ruskin's death—the writer and occasional broadcaster, Lawrence du Garde Peach (1890-1974), gave a fifteen-minute talk about Ruskin on the BBC's North of England Home Service. A native of Sheffield, du Garde Peach had earned a PhD from Sheffield University in 1921 and, as a playwright, had enjoyed a close relationship with Sheffield Playhouse in the 1920s and '30s. For the purposes of his wireless broadcast, he visited the Ruskin Museum at Meersbrook Park, a place he must surely have been aware of if not familiar with.

By 1950, the Museum was in a state of flux. (Constance) Genevieve Pilley (1878-1858), who had served the Museum in a curatorial capacity for half a century, had recently retired. Moreover, Ruskin's reputation was perhaps at its lowest ebb. Du Garde Peach found that the Museum had few visitors, especially among the local population, and in his broadcast he lamented the fact that Ruskin, whose influence had been acknowledged by so many in his lifetime, was now neglected or forgotten. This decline in Ruskin's reputation was partly responsible for the eventual closure of the Museum, and the removal of the Guild's Collection to the University of Reading. It was not until the 1960s and '70s that Ruskin's significance was once again recognised, as a small group of scholars in the US and Britain succeeded in reviving interest in him.

It is not common for scripts of short radio talks to survive. Nevertheless, as I know from my days working at the BBC's Written Archive Centre in Caversham about twenty years ago, the Corporation painstakingly transcribed what was actually broadcast. Earlier in the day, listeners were treated to Panto-Time from the Empire Theatre, Leeds. At 10.45pm, shortly after Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley and Jimmy Edwards had entertained the nation in *Take It From Here*, some people heard the following announcement:

This is the North of England Home Service.

Tomorrow is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of John Ruskin, the eminent Victorian, whose views on Art, Literature, and Social Reform were once of great influence in England. In this talk, L. du Garde Peach contrasts the immense reputation Ruskin enjoyed in his lifetime with the neglect shown by the present generation.

What follows is the transcript of Du Garde Peach's broadcast from the BBC's Manchester studio. It gives a fascinating insight into the state of Ruskin's reputation fifty years after his death, and it reminds us why we need him still.

**Stuart Eagles**

With thanks to Chris Eagles & the BBC.

NB. Errors in the transcript that follows derive from the original source document.



Last week I visited the Ruskin Museum, in a northern industrial city.

It's housed in a fine old mansion in what is now a small municipal park. Inside the mansion I found the Curator, sitting in a lovely room, with winter sunlight slanting through the windows. He received me with flattering, and to me, surprising enthusiasm. There was no reason, I thought, why I should be received like this. But there was. I was something rare and precious in his experience. I was a visitor. I was someone, at last, 'taking an interest'.

'No one ever comes here,' he said sadly, when I had taken off my coat and accepted a cigarette. 'Except,' he said, 'a few foreigners—chiefly Germans and Americans.'

'No locals?' I asked.

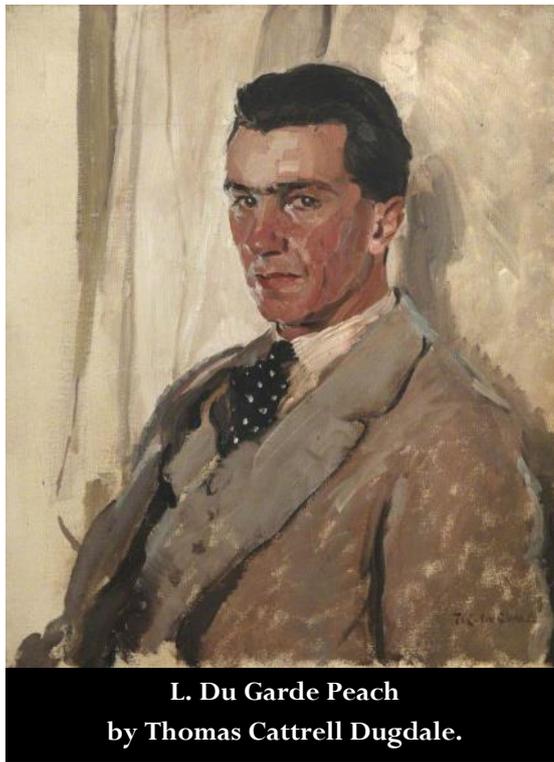
'Locals!' he said. 'No English at all, except a professor of some sort now and again.'

I spent an hour with him. I felt it was his red-letter day, and I was reluctant to end it for him too soon. For an hour I inspected treasures, valued in money at many thousands of pounds—in popular interest, apparently nil.

Yet this was one of only two Ruskin Museums in the country—the other is up in the Lakes. It is a memorial to a man outstandingly great in his century. It is full of pictures and busts of him, of treasures and pictures collected by him, of books written by him. It is only fifty years since he died—the great oracle of art, the seer, the prophet, the high priest of beauty as a moral ethic. And to-day no one bothers to cross the threshold—except for a few Germans and Americans! Why?

In my youth, just after the turn of the century, Ruskin's books were considered second only to the Bible. Their noble and unpractical platitudes formed a sort of background to my life. His books were on the shelves of every cultured home and in many artisan dwellings. No young lady's boudoir was complete without *Sesame and Lilies*, bound in limp suede. Everything he wrote was printed and re-printed. Anthologies of his sayings and writings were published as fast as the printers could turn them out—one of them, dated 1906, was before me as I wrote these lines. What happened suddenly to eclipse the nationwide popularity built up over half a century of tireless authorship and public oratory? I suppose it was World War I, which banished so much of what was good, bad, and indifferent of the Victorian scene to the lumber room of obscurity. To all intents and purposes, Ruskin went with the rest.

The popular neglect of the Ruskin Museum is not the only evidence by a long way. When I left it, I decided to try to find out what people to-day really do know about Ruskin, and I have been asking everybody I met the same question. 'What do you know about Ruskin?' Under thirty they know nothing. One young lady volunteered the suggestion that it was a breakfast food—no doubt led away by the thought of rusks—and a schoolboy believed it a word applied to garden seats. Not one knew that Ruskin was a writer. Not one in fifty knew anything that he had written. Some of the over sixties had the names of his books on the tips of their tongues, but there they remained. The over eighties said their memories were not what they were, but the Queen had thought very highly of Mr. Ruskin—or was it the other way about? In fact it soon became clear that you could drop a shower of meteorites in Market Street, Manchester, on any Saturday night, and be pretty certain of not hitting anyone who



L. Du Garde Peach  
by Thomas Cattrell Dugdale.

had ever heard of him. Such is fame.

Ruskin died fifty years ago tomorrow, and any time during the sixty or so years before that, it was long odds that people were discussing him in the British Isles. And they weren't discussing him calmly, either. Voices were raised—tables were thumped—tempers were lost! That is what John Ruskin did to our grandfathers. His views of art and on architecture—on men and women—on religion—on politics—even on holes in lead piping caused by rats—infuriated men who were normally as calm as they were respectable. The younger generation to-day—if they

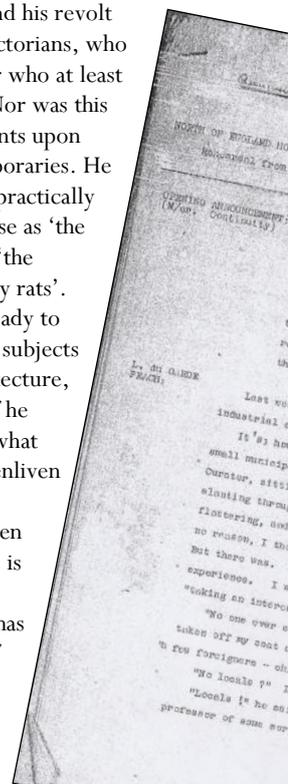
have heard of Ruskin at all—probably think of him as some dreary old has-been with a beard. But he was much more than that. He was an extremely controversial writer, and if he did wrap up his meaning in somewhat pompous and often florid prose, there was always a meaning there. Books like *Sesame and Lilies*, or *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, or *The Crown of Wild Olive* were best sellers in their day.

Lest any of my young listeners should rush to get these works out of the Library under the impression that they are novels, or even mystery stories, I hasten to inform them that the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* do not illumine a murder in a Cathedral, and that the *Crown of Wild Olive* is not in the same literary category as exotic flowers for Miss Blandish.

Why did Ruskin's Victorian contemporaries get so excited about him, when he leaves the present generation so cold? I think it was for all his universality, Ruskin was really extremely topical. He may not have been writing only for his own age, but he was writing *about* it. And he was extremely critical of things of which the Victorians were proud: themselves and their period. We find that difficult to understand, because we have no particular pride in *our* period, and very little in ourselves. Looking back on the Victorians, we find it difficult to realise what they had to be proud about. I suppose the characteristic which most of us ascribe to them is a sort of self-righteous ugliness. They were certainly ugly—ugly in the grand manner. They overlooked nothing. Their houses were ugly, their clothes were ugly, their sprawling industrial cities were ugly, their domestic decorations were ugly, and a lot of their ideas were uglier still. It is true they built up an empire that had accumulated a lot of money, but the ugly black spots of ugly industrial England were the price.

Ruskin hated ugliness, and his revolt against it infuriated the Victorians, who apparently admired it—or who at least thought it didn't matter. Nor was this the only thing, his comments upon which excited his contemporaries. He was prepared to write on practically anything; subjects as diverse as 'the strata of Mont Blanc' and 'the perforation of lead pipes by rats'. But he was always quite ready to turn from such fascinating subjects to modern painting, architecture, poetry, or even politics. If he lived to-day he would be what we call a Columnist, and enliven the Sunday papers.

But the difference between Ruskin's day and our own, is that nobody would really *mind*. Modern journalism has hardened us to that sort of



thing. We have developed immunity. Our papers indulge in attacks, with feverish energy, particularly on the day of rest, against anything and everybody. But we don't get excited about it. And we don't do anything about it. In Ruskin's time it was different. Modern sensational journalism had not arrived to afford his readers immunity, and a new book by Ruskin hit Society with an impact which to-day could only be achieved by the discovery of a new, authentic, and subversive version of the New Testament.

If that. Because, you see, Ruskin knew how to say things. He had a fine gift of language, when it didn't run away with him, and he was a good hater. When he disliked a thing he said so. And there were so many things which he disliked.

Progress was one of them. For instance he deplored the invention of gun-powder and the application of steam to transport, in other words, railway trains. It is a pity he is not alive to-day to give his views on the atom bomb and the jet-propelled plane. I doubt whether even Ruskin could have found words to express what Ruskin would feel on subjects like that. But in his own day, he did pretty well, and he certainly stirred up the Victorians. What is more, he was good for them. They were smug, they were self-satisfied, they were so certain that they were magnificent fellows. Look at the Empire—look at India, look at Kipling: It was all to them so admirable, so safe, and so permanent. It was also of course so obviously under direct Divine patronage. It was solid—it was substantial. And it all made such a lot of money.

Ruskin made a lot of money, but he also had a lot to begin with. That was part of the trouble. His father was a wealthy wine merchant, and although the young Ruskin had a spartan upbringing, he was encouraged to wander about Europe looking at

churches and pictures, with the comfortable knowledge that he would never be faced with the necessity of earning a living. He was too intelligent ever to become merely the amateur with opinions and the money to insist on them, but in one's recollection of his writing there is often something of the querulousness of the spoilt child unable to get its own way.

Ruskin was a spoilt child. But he was also a child with an element of genius, capable of thinking ahead of his age and beyond the influence of his environment. Much of that for which he fought has been won, and if this makes him seem old fashioned and out of date, remember that it was he who contributed largely to his own *out-ing*—it was his insistence which resulted in the change in public opinion, without which that would have been impossible. In fact, Ruskin in his capacity of pamphleteer and prophet, shares the fate of all successful agitators. The spur is discarded when the end of the journey is reached.

But Ruskin was much more than a mere prophet. His interests were extremely diverse, and his interest easily diverted. One line of study was always pretty sure to open up another, which would then be followed, to the detriment, or complete abandonment, of the first. For instance, Ruskin as a young man was a great admirer of the impressionist Turner—and remember, Turner was regarded at one time, much as Picasso is to-day. Ruskin resented the attacks on his friend, and felt that he had a heaven-inspired mission, not only to defend Turner, but to put the public right. That was enough for Ruskin. All his life he never could resist putting the public right!

So he began what he intended to be little more than an extended pamphlet, justifying Turner to the world, but which later became five bulky volumes ranging over the whole field of art in its relation to life—and a good many other fields as well. This was *Modern Painters*—and I wonder whether anyone ever reads it to-day? Certainly, they read it when it first started to appear, Turner read it—and if report is to be believed, read it with more surprise than pleasure. Many men, before and after J.M.W. Turner, have prayed to be saved from their defenders—but Turner had less cause to worry than most. Ruskin's enthusiastic pen was easily led astray, and he soon lost sight of Turner in philosophical speculation. Turner, presumably, breathed freely again, and continued to paint pictures just as well as though he had never been defended at all.

I have said that Ruskin's interests were diverse. It is not possible in the time at my disposal to do more than glance at some of them, but let us glance at them in his own words. This, for example:

You may chisel a boy into shape, as you would a rock, or hammer him into it, as you would a piece of bronze. But you cannot hammer a girl into anything.

What have your modern feminists to say to that?

And Ruskin didn't mean that women

were tough—as a modern writer would, if he'd written the same lines. Not a bit of it. He goes on—

She grows as a flower does—she will wither without the sun; she will decay in her sheath, as a narcissus will, if you do not give her air enough . . .

And so on. I remember watching some girls welding the steel plates of Churchill tanks in an armaments factory during the war. Not much withering about them. And not much narcissus, either.

And here's another passage—also out of *Sesame and Lilies*—which will please the modern girl:

A man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly—while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasure, and in those of his best friends.

On those terms I can imagine, say a professor of nuclear physics, approaching matrimony with somewhat justifiable apprehension!

Or listen to this, out of *Unto this Last*: 'Wealth is the possession of the valuable by the valiant.'

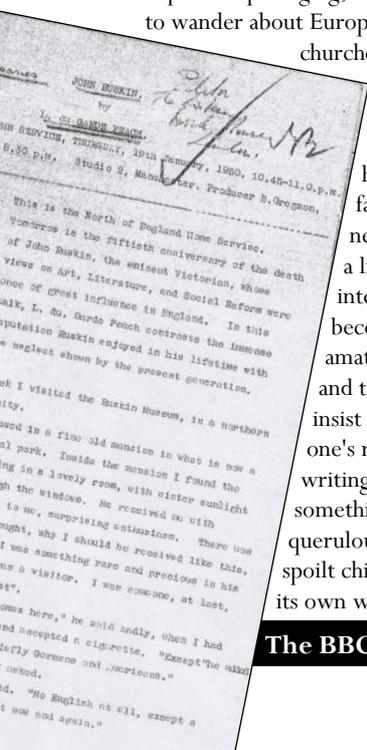
That would please the working man of to-day almost as much as this:

The office of the upper classes is to keep order amongst their inferiors, and raise them always to the nearest level with themselves of which these inferiors are capable. So far as they are thus occupied, they are invariably loved and revered intensely by all beneath them, and reach, themselves, the highest types of human power and beauty.

I know it is unfair to any author to quote him in short passages taken from their context. But I think these are enough to show that Ruskin belonged to another age—an age almost unimaginable to us in the second half of this disastrous century. In that our Ruskin was an oracle. To-day his views are superseded and his principles are antiquated—no economist would accept his ideas on social reform or economics.

The essence of his teaching was that 'life without industry is guilt, but that industry without art is brutality'. His tragedy was that the industrial age in which he lived was an age also of industrial brutality and aesthetic discord.

The fight against it drove him mad, as well it might. But he influenced his age, and he has influenced ours. Things might have been even worse if Ruskin had never lived. Let us remember that, before dropping him back into that semi-obscurity which is so often the lot of writers who, in their own day, have been regarded with exaggerated admiration.



The BBC radio transcript.

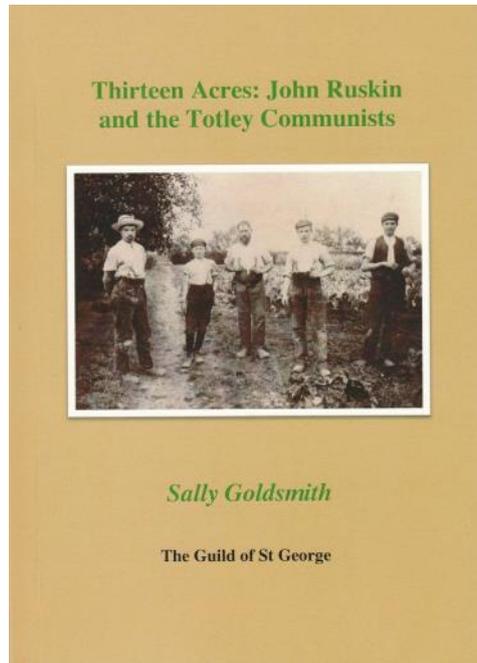
# Goldsmith, Sally: *Thirteen Acres: John Ruskin and the Totley Communists* (York: Guild of St George Publications, 2017).

Sally Goldsmith's *Thirteen Acres: John Ruskin and the Totley Communists* is a valuable contribution to the historiography of the Guild of St George, as well as representing a sterling piece of local history, and a useful addition to the broader study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century land radicalism. As an affordable and accessible volume, it should be particularly welcomed by Companions and general readers. Goldsmith's background in communalism and her strong connection to Totley and Sheffield motivates and enlivens the work.

In recent years, the Guild has become increasingly important to Ruskin Studies: in the index to *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), only J. M. W. Turner accounts for more entries than the Guild, which matches the number of entries for Thomas Carlyle and the Pre-Raphaelites, outstripping even William Wordsworth and Venice as a current focus of scholarly attention. My own work in this field, *The Lost Companions and John Ruskin's Guild of St George: a Revisionary History* (London: Anthem Press, 2014), is generously acknowledged by Goldsmith, who productively builds on this work and previous Guild scholarship. One of the difficulties of my own monograph was the limit that had to be placed on its scope and ambitions. Almost immediately in the research process it became apparent that it would only be possible to cover the Guild's earliest years, from its inception in 1871 to Ruskin's death in 1900. Fortunately, James Dearden's *John Ruskin's Guild of St George* (Bembridge: Guild of St George, 2010) offers a rich account of its subsequent years, but in trying, in my own work, to trace the development of the Guild through its earliest projects (at St Giles, Paddington, Carshalton, and Hinksey) and on into its more complex ventures at Barmouth, Bewdley, the Isle of Man, Sheffield, Totley, and the Lake District, I became painfully aware of how much would have to be left out or treated in less detail than might have been desired. These inevitable compromises also indicate how much is still to be discovered, and mean that there remains ample space for scholars and local historians to pursue the host of important Guild narratives in more detail.

An upsurge in the desire to revisit Guild history has been judiciously promoted by the Guild itself, not least as part of the *Ruskin in Sheffield* project, which under Ruth Nutter's skilful stewardship has forged close links with local historians such as Bill Bevan in providing Walkley residents with various

means to explore the Guild's strong footprint in the area. Similar work is being done at the Guild's other major heartland in the Wyre Forest, while Annie Creswick Dawson, Paul Dawson, and Andrew Russell have shown how much can be achieved in their investigations into



Benjamin Creswick, George Allen, and Henry Swan. *The Companion's* editor, Stuart Eagles, has been perhaps the most indefatigably productive investigator, delving into a host of under-recorded Guild stories, while Marcus Waithe has contributed to our knowledge of the Guild's Sheffield museum.

Goldsmith's volume certainly offers clear evidence of the value of this recent trend in historical investigation, by focusing closely on the formation, development, and afterlife of the St George's Farm experiments at Totley, near Sheffield, and its associations with Ruskin, the Guild, and a fascinating tradition of local radicalism. Perhaps the best tribute that can be paid to *Thirteen Acres* is that it would not be out of place alongside the finest example of local Guild scholarship, *Ruskin and Bewdley* (1989), by Peter Wardle and Cedric Quayle, a work of tenacious and adept scholarship that pioneered the revival of interest in Guild history.

Goldsmith's clear focus permits detailed consideration of the various contexts in which the St George's Farm experiments took place, and of the developments and personalities involved. Goldsmith does not attempt simply to collate previously published information and analysis—and

she rightly points out the difficulties and limitations of the source materials relating to this subject, and of those who have commented on Totley—but instead provides a judicious account of previous work and augments it with an exploration of entirely new historical research.

The volume expands our knowledge in a number of areas—in scrutinising new documents relating to early candidates for involvement with the farm, and in giving more details about those men and women known to have participated in the farm's first phase, which saw an uneasy alliance (via Sheffield museum curator, Henry Swan) between Ruskin and a group of independent-minded communists known as the United Friends. With the help of local historian, Dorothy Prosser, Goldsmith has carefully mined the little information available, and argues that the group, comprising mostly men in their fifties and sixties accompanied by their families, was 'hardly a promising lot in terms of farming and gardening', being artisans and metal-workers, and there was even an optician and a musician (p. 37). It would be of particular benefit if this research could continue, particularly in terms of extending our knowledge of perhaps the most redoubtable and interesting of the early communists, Mrs M. A. Maloy. The volume neatly summarises, but does not much extend, knowledge of the early communist phase of the farm, nor its subsequent phases under the stewardships of William Harrison Riley and David Downs, although it offers some clarifications and additional details, particularly in relation to the unhappy end of Downs's tenure at the farm and his apparent death in poverty. Goldsmith endorses the view expressed in recent scholarship that another element in the failure of the Guild period at Totley was that Ruskin's Tory vision for the farm was at odds with the more communistic and equalitarian aspirations of the various participants.

Goldsmith's work does a considerable service in examining the period following Downs's death, when the farm was taken on by George and Elizabeth Pearson, in association with John Furniss. With long experience of mining, quarrying, and farming, Pearson, Furniss, and their associates were communists of a different sort, deploying their experience in working the farm independently of the Guild. Evidence of the Pearson phase, continuing well into the twentieth century, suggests that earlier problems had not been the result of unproductive land but were due largely to the inexperience of the earlier participants,



**Sally Goldsmith addressing an audience at Weston Park Museum, Sheffield, at the launch of *Thirteen Acres* on 21 May. Photo: Ruth Nutter.**

and the problems of management, personality, and timing. Goldsmith is right to focus on Edward Carpenter's informal involvement with St George's Farm during Riley's time (part of his broader engagement with radicalism locally), and on his role as a 'bridging figure who helped usher in a new era of success' by recommending the Pearsons as tenants (p. 76). Furniss and the Pearsons have been known to Guild scholars for some time, but *Thirteen Acres* distils and extends what we know, drawing on archival sources and personal links to the Pearson family. Goldsmith corrects some earlier errors in coverage, while shedding light on Furniss and Pearson's closely-related Moorhay Farm tenancy, and the account is deftly situated in the social and economic contexts of Totley during this period. While there is some coverage of Furniss's time in New Zealand, it is a pity that the author has not drawn upon thrilling correspondence in

the Sheffield Archives detailing Furniss's epic 18-day, 266-mile journey from Rangiwahia to Huntly in 1907. In an argument that has not been clearly made before, *Thirteen Acres* suggests that the sale of St George's Farm to the Pearsons in 1930 was part of the Guild's ultimately wise decision to use the proceeds to support and deepen the organisation's work at Bewdley by purchasing Unclly's Farm and further tracts of the Wyre Forest. In this way, the generous £2200 investment Ruskin made in Totley in the 1870s—an investment that almost caused the Guild's trustees to resign in protest at the time—ultimately reaped an unexpected dividend.

One of the difficulties of working on this kind of project is that available sources are limited, and as it often proves impossible to resolve key questions it is perhaps no surprise that one of the commonest words

in *Thirteen Acres* is 'perhaps': those who have engaged in historical or genealogical research will fully understand the tantalising nature of incomplete information and the urge to speculate about figures from the past who have, as it were, entered one's life in a way that is at once vivid yet fuzzy. This volume is judicious in its approach, offering many theories but never presenting them as fact, and only occasionally does Goldsmith's enthusiasm lead her into less fruitful or less clearly-grounded conjectures.

There is certainly some untidiness in presentation at times, as in the inconsistent formatting of apostrophes and quotation marks, and the earlier sections are sometimes disjointed in their attempts to summarise a range of important contexts, but the book works handsomely, closing with a welcome pursuit of other important figures relating to land idealism in the region and thoughts on the social and historical changes that have taken place since the establishment of the farm in ways that are both measured and touching. In thinking about the obvious value of this volume to Companions as readers, it seems to me that it also provides a spur to any of us who want to find out more about links on our own doorsteps or in our own regions of the country. If Goldsmith's work motivates a desire in any of our readers to ascertain whether more can be discovered about the many early Companions who remain largely unknown to us, for example, it will have done another service. I would be happy to share the information I have collated to get any such research started, as well as to give advice on how to proceed. I expect I can also speak in this regard for our esteemed editor, who could be assisted by Companions actively engaged in researching the history of the Guild to expand the relevant sections of the excellent Guild website which he has so painstakingly been developing for our benefit over recent years.

*Mark Frost*

## RIVELIN VALLEY ARTISTS

An exhibition at Weston Park Museum, Sheffield, shines a spotlight on a remarkable yet little-known community of amateur and professional artists established after the First World War in the Rivelin Valley, in the west of Sheffield.

The paintings and watercolours they produced provide a unique portrait of the valley at the time, and reflect both its natural beauty and industrial heritage. The area remains strikingly unchanged today.

This display in the museum's [Picturing Sheffield](#) gallery brings together 14 works by artists including Ben Baines, W. R. E. Goodrich, Robert Scott-Temple and Vernon Edmonds. Much of the collection has been amassed by Ben Baines's grandson, the award-winning writer, broadcaster and environmentalist, Companion Prof Chris Baines. The works in exhibition have been generously loaned by Chris, Andrew and Winifred Baines. The exhibition runs until 26 November. *SE*.



# COMMEMORATING A CENTENARY: FANNY TALBOT IN BARMOUTH

*Stephen Wildman*

On 21 June a service of celebration and thanksgiving for the life of Fanny Talbot (1824-1917) was held at St Bodfan & St Mary Church, Llanaber, Barmouth. Organised by the National Trust in Wales, this marked the centenary of her death on 22 June 1917; her gravestone in the churchyard has been newly cleaned and the grave tidied.

The first donor of a piece of land to The National Trust, in 1895—four acres of a steep hillside overlooking Barmouth known as Dinas Oleu ('Fortress of Light')—she was also a significant figure in the early history of the Guild, one of the seven signatories to the Memorandum and Articles of Association in 1878, a Companion and its first benefactor. She wrote in December 1874 offering land and cottages at Barmouth, Ruskin declaring it 'the kindest and most wonderful and most pretty beginning for me that could be.' He went to Barmouth and saw the cottages in July 1876, en route for Venice, while she paid a visit to Brantwood in January 1879. A typically rueful comment in the *Notes to Letter 56 of Fors Clavigera* records that 'It will be a curious point in the story of the founding of the St. George's Company that, at any rate during the five years, only one woman of the upper classes gave me any help.' *Dearest Mama Talbot*, Ruskin's letters to her, edited by Margaret Spence, was published in 1966; they end with one of 14 June 1889, including the lyrical hope that 'I have myself got back to something like hopes of being able to paint—in the sky—with ray of real sunset—on the real clouds.'

The service, conducted in Welsh and English, included addresses by Edmund Bailey, H.M. Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd, and Peter Nixon, Director of Land, Landscape and Nature for the National Trust. Both mentioned Ruskin briefly, as friend and correspondent, but concentrated on Mrs Talbot's later benefactions to Barmouth, in which she was linked with the like-minded philanthropists Frances Power Cobbe and Blanche Atkinson, an early Companion who in later years shared Fanny's house, Tyn-y-Ffynnon. In a dominating position overlooking the town (and the Guild cottages), the house burned



**(Left to right) Peter Nixon (National Trust Director of Land, Landscape and Nature), Edmund Bailey (Lord Lieutenant), Meirwen Owen (Meirionnydd National Trust Association), Rhodri Wigley, Revd. Miriam Beecroft. Note the gorse, oakleaves and wildflowers from Dinas Oleu on the restored grave of Fanny Talbot. Photo: National Trust.**

down in 1961, and during the day it struck me that I must have seen it during a family holiday in the previous year.

After lunch, National Trust staff led a walk up the dauntingly steep but recently repaired paths to the top of Dinas Oleu, returning via the cottages. These were

transferred to Barmouth Urban District Council in 1972, and are now a mix of private dwellings and holiday homes, in better repair than Ruskin had found them in 1876, with 'rain coming through roofs, and wind through walls.' Just above them, on a tiny shelf of flat ground carved out of the steep rock, is 'Frenchman's Grave', as it is still known, the resting place of Auguste Guyard, the eccentric Guild tenant described by Mark Frost as 'an expatriate Frenchman, herbalist, and social reformer', who brightened Ruskin's otherwise somewhat miserable visit.

This is noted in the excellent Barmouth Heritage Trail online: <http://barmouthheritagetrail.org/03>.

The day ended with a further more general talk by Peter Nixon and one on Fanny Talbot by Dr Astrid Swenson of Brunel University, London, author of the entries for Fanny Talbot and Founders of the National Trust for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.



**The 'Frenchman's Grave', the resting place of Auguste Guyard, high above Barmouth. Photo: Stephen Wildman.**

# ‘OUR POWER TO BEQUEATH’: THE COMPANIONS’ DAY AT WESTMILL (24 JUNE 2017)

*Stuart Eagles*



An early shot from the TV series *Thriller* (1973) showing School Cottages, Westmill.

When you mention Westmill to people, the thing they often say is that the television series *Foyle’s War* was filmed there. But so, too, was an episode of *Thriller*, a popular drama serial created by Brian Clements, the man behind *The Avengers* and *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*. Broadcast in 1973, in the days of ‘event television’, it told the story of newly-weds (played by Bryan Marshall and Alexandra Hay) who received the warmest of welcomes in the idyllic English village to which they had just moved and set up home.

The early shots of the episode show the couple driving north in their open-top sports car past what we know to be (New) School Cottages in Westmill, a pair of semi-detached houses owned by the Guild, situated on the lane that leads from the comically named village of Nasty. They proceed around the Village Green, past Dial House, which the Guild used to own, and Vine House, the Guild’s only commercial property, run today as the Village Tea Rooms, but formerly the Village Stores and Post Office. Eagle-eyed viewers even glimpsed the Village Hall and nearby

almshouses, all cared for by the T(homas) and M(ary) Greg Trust.

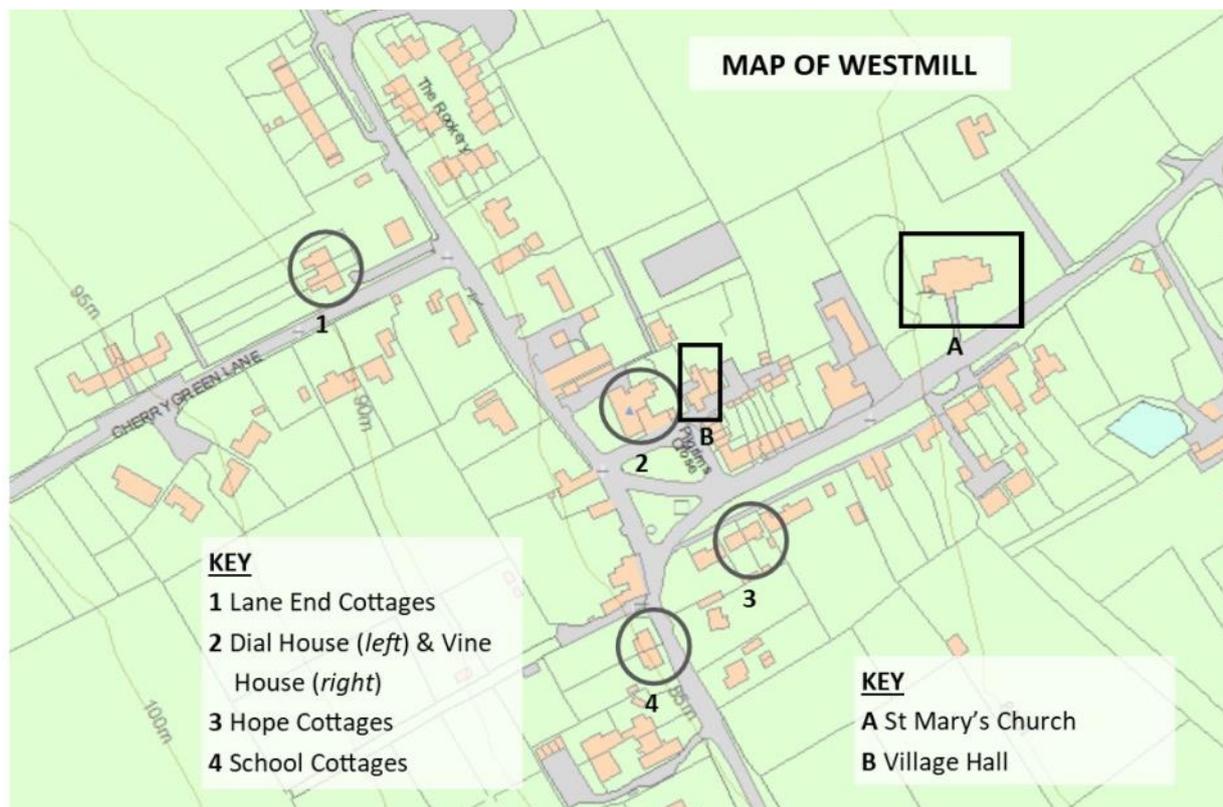
Fortunately for the two dozen Companions of the Guild and their guests who gathered in the village on 24 June, the smiles with which the villagers greeted us did not turn to menaces as they did in that horrifying episode of *Thriller*. That screenplay was called ‘A Place to Die’, a reversal of the obvious truth that hits any real-life visitor to Westmill, namely that it is a place to *live*. The village’s beautiful collection of arts-and-crafts houses looked all the more attractive in the glorious sunshine. In addition to the three properties already mentioned, the Guild owns another pair of semi-detached cottages, to the south of the Green, and three cottages in a terrace just to the north-west, on Cherry Green Lane (see map).

They were all bequeathed to the Guild by Mary Hope Greg (1850-1949), a woman of such uncommon generosity that she remains the only person to be honoured as a ‘Companion Extraordinary’. She had inherited much of the village on the death of her husband, Thomas Tylston Greg (1858-1920), whose family was the proprietor of

Quarry Bank Mill at Styal, in Cheshire. The widowed Mrs Greg dedicated the final three decades of her long life to the preservation of his legacy, ensuring the integrity of her own bequests. She did so by donating numerous items the couple had collected—from pottery to dolls’ houses, children’s toys to items of everyday household use—to a bewildering variety of regional museums, from Manchester and Liverpool, to Bethnal Green and New Zealand.

Her most impressive achievement, without doubt, was her loving dedication to the village of Westmill. She set up the Greg Trust, and bequeathed so many properties to the Guild, in order to preserve the traditions of village life: to protect it from unsympathetic developers and greedy landlords who would alter the character of the village by destroying its beautiful houses and pricing those of modest means out of the village. She was a dedicated reader of *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin’s 96 letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain, which articulated the Guild’s charitable aims and objectives.

Mrs Greg judged that it required an organisation founded on Ruskin’s principles to protect English rural life in all its beauty





and variety. Specifically, she had been impressed by Ruskin's support of Octavia Hill's pioneering social housing work in London. She believed that Hill's commitment to a personal form of landlordism that privileged the importance of getting to know her tenants, so that she could take account of their individual circumstances, was vitally important. And so was Ruskin's insistence that a landlord, though he was perfectly entitled to make a modest profit on his property, should make so much money on it and no more. At a time when the market expected a landlord to demand 12 per cent, Ruskin asked only for five. He accepted that most landlords could not afford to lose money, being businessmen and not philanthropists, but he was always clear that *he* did not share the market's estimate of a fair percentage.

Ruskin believed, as Hill did, that a fair rent was an affordable rent for both tenant and landlord, and that the equitable bargain on both sides helped a relationship of trust and mutual respect to flourish. He expected Miss Hill's tenants to exercise the discipline of paying their rents on time and in full, but in Marylebone, for instance, he rewarded them with communal spaces and an annual festival of music, song and dance in celebration of May Day. Ruskin's example, and Hill's, inspired Mrs Greg, through the Greg Trust, to preserve Westmill's open spaces—allotments, a children's playground and a Village Hall.

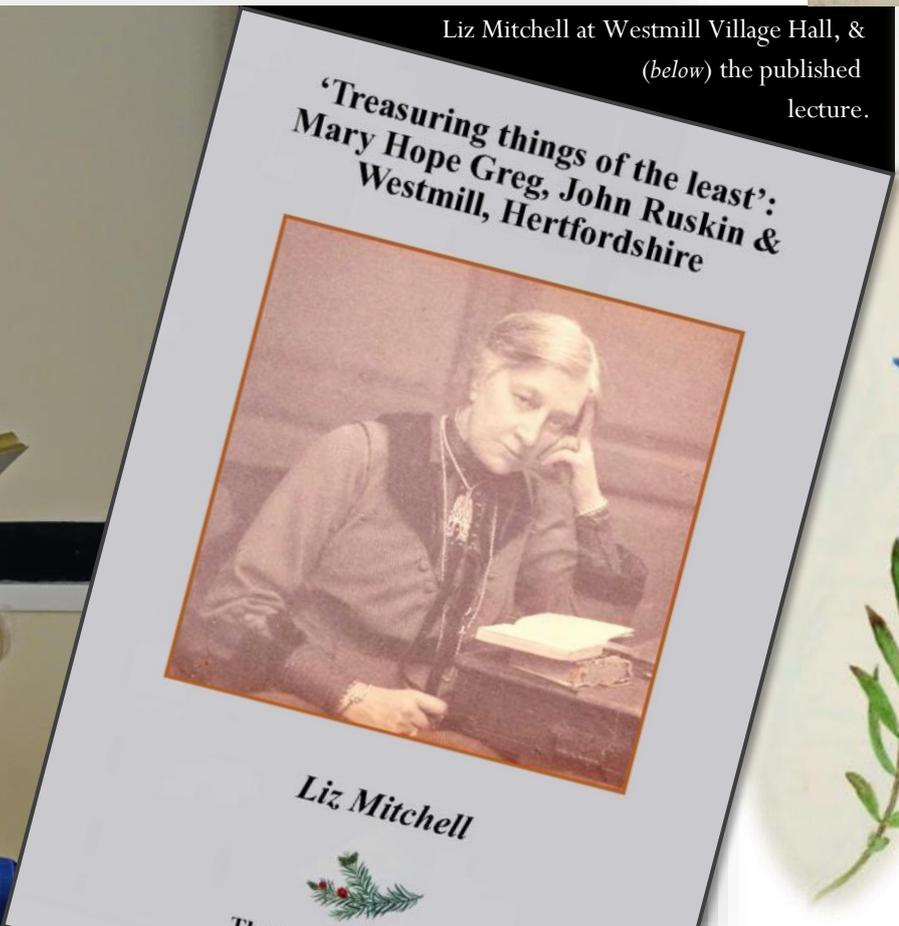
The Hall provided the ideal venue for a series of presentations for Companions' Day. Michael McRae, representing the Greg trustees, outlined the history of the

village, and the development and purpose of the Trust, in a warm and welcoming introduction that launched the events that he had worked so hard to help organise. Clive Wilmer followed with a memorable summary of the Guild's origins and its work today.

The day's main speaker, Liz Mitchell, was a former Manchester City Gallery curator, who is the world authority on Mary Greg. Her fascinating talk, which combined a depth and breadth of knowledge with heartfelt enthusiasm for her subject, kept the fifty villagers and Guild Companions spellbound for an hour. At one time Mrs Greg had run a Village Museum, to which she encouraged all villagers to contribute objects, and many did. The Museum closed after her death, and its objects were absorbed into the collections at Stevenage



Liz Mitchell at Westmill Village Hall, & (below) the published lecture.





(Left) the group at the Village Hall (photo: John Iles); (middle) enjoying lunch in the marquee (photo: Greg Trust); (right) Alec Hamilton in St Mary's Church (photo: Greg Trust).

Museum. It had served as a practical expression of her faith in 'treasuring things of the least'. This evocative phrase of Mary's served as the title of Liz's talk—which, in the customary manner, had been published by the Guild in advance. Cherishing the everyday things is part of our 'great entail', as Ruskin put it, to behave as responsible custodians, passing on to future generations a legacy worthy of our inheritance. It was in recognition of the fact that former Guild Director, Robert Wilson, had successfully embodied that ideal during his ten years of service in caring for our Westmill properties, that many of us gratefully signed to him a copy of Liz's published lecture, though it was sad that, owing to his unavoidable absence, we were not able to present it to him in person.

Mrs Greg's Ruskinian dedication to life in the village of Westmill, Liz told us, encompassed its flowers and plants, its trees and hedgerows, its fungi, insects and birds, all of which she recorded, in notes and drawings, in two delightful nature diaries that she gave to what we now call the Guild's Ruskin

Collection. These are remarkable examples of amateur endeavour, love poems to the natural world that embody the lofty idealism and reverential tone of Romanticism, and the detailed observation and artistic sensitivity of Ruskin.

The origins of Mrs Greg's admiration for Ruskin probably lie in her younger self.

Born into the philanthropic, nonconformist Hope family of Liverpool, after whom Hope Street is named (but not the University), she appears to have been educated at Winnington Hall, near Northwich, in the 1860s, when Ruskin was a regular visitor and teacher there. This was the period when he wrote both *Sesame and Lilies* and *Ethics of the Dust*. Although Mary's connection with Winnington cannot be proved, because comprehensive pupil lists have not survived, her gift to the Guild of a letter from Ruskin to someone he addressed as

else might she have come to own such a letter and feel morally entitled to give it away, were she not its original recipient? It is a fascinating connection about which we can only hope to find out more in the years to come.

There was, then, plenty to talk about over lunch, which was served at the Children's Playground. A selection of sandwiches and scones was provided by the Guild's tenants at the Tea Rooms, in a marquee supplied by Michael Thody, whose team of volunteers uncomplainingly erected and dismantled it on the day. The almost equal balance of villagers and Guild Companions added to a sense of coming together, of new friendships, of renewed connections, and of shared future endeavours.

The afternoon session, which began back at the Hall, was dedicated to a friend of the Gregs', the arts-and-crafts architect Charles Spooner, who, like his wife, Dinah, was a Guild Companion. Spooner's life and career were quickly sketched out by his biographer, Alec Hamilton, who then led us outside for a guided tour

that was witty, engaging and full of interesting facts. The Hall itself had been converted from an old barn to its present use by Spooner himself, who in essence served the Gregs as a sort of estate architect. Characteristic examples of Spooner's work were pointed out on various buildings, but the highlight of the



Alec Hamilton addressing the group in the garden at Dial House. Photo: Greg Trust.

'Ray' (Ray of Hope, Liz asks?) is at least strongly suggestive of a connection. Written when Mary was in her thirties, when she was neither working nor married, it touches on issues likely to have been on her mind, and suggests an intimacy that would explain her lifelong dedication to Ruskin's philosophy. How

tour came when the owner of Dial House, Mrs Marsh, whose late husband had been a Companion, invited us all in to see Spooner's work on the magnificent eighteenth-century staircase which forms the centrepiece of the house. A volley of enquiring questions and erudite responses followed afterwards in the beautiful garden, where the group relaxed into a wide range of smaller conversations.

The tour ended, and the day drew to a close, at St Mary's Church, where Alec pointed out further examples of Spooner's work, as well as the Spooners' grave. The memorials to Thomas and Mary Greg, outside the Church and in, were pointed out by the Churchwardens who had thoughtfully mounted a small but extremely interesting exhibition that

focused on Mary Greg, who had herself served as a Churchwarden in the first half of the twentieth century.

It truly was a day of companionship, one which underlined the importance of looking to the future, informed by the past. The care with which we must exercise 'our power to bequeath' has seldom been more effectively demonstrated. We must heed Ruskin and Mrs Greg. If we are not careful then we risk being menaced by something far worse than was imagined on Saturday night TV in 1973.



(Left to right) former Guild Secretary and Director, Cedric Quayle, Michael McRae of the Greg Trust and Companion the Hon. Mrs Catherine Edwards.

Photo: Greg Trust.

With special thanks for a wonderful day to Michael McRae, Alan Gibson and the T. & M. Greg Trust.



(Above) looking north across the Village Green towards (left to right) Dial House, Vine House and the barn which became the Village Hall. (Photo from Alec Hamilton, Charles Spooner (1862-1938): Arts and Crafts Architect (2012).

(Right and centre-fold) images from the nature diaries of Mary Hope Greg, in the Guild's Ruskin Collection (Museums Sheffield).

Oct 13 into the Welkin & as we watched, the colours changed into softer greys but clearer strong a clear gold between the bars & finally became dull deep soft grey with one bright line of fading gold below dividing earth from heaven! It was a wonderfully beautiful sight  
 — The gleam —  
 — The shadow — and the peace supreme!  
 'Tis past the visionary splendour fades;  
 And night approaches with her shades."

Oct 15 The clouds that made the sunset so beautiful last night brought a very dull day & heavy rain came on about midday lasting till late evening. The damp however brought out the autumn tints more beautifully & they were wonderfully rich & fine against the grey background.

Oct 17 a foretaste of St Luke's 'little summer' on this the eve of his day - clear soft beautiful day with a balmy feeling after the post of several days though it is still colder than normal at this time I walked quickly up to Cole for joy of the beauty of leaves & sky & fresh clear light. Before lunch I saw the last of the late martins skimming past



# RUSKIN IN WYRE: SHARING, CELEBRATING AND ENHANCING JOHN RUSKIN'S LEGACY IN THE WYRE FOREST

*Jenny Robbins*

**R**  
RUSKIN  
LAND

An exciting new project has begun to explore Ruskin Land, the area of the Wyre Forest in Worcestershire cared for by the Guild and managed by the Wyre Community Land Trust. The two-year programme got under way this summer and will conclude in 2019 when the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth will be celebrated.

The project aims to explore the story of what has happened in Ruskin Land, how Ruskin's ideas have been incorporated into the modern forest, and what can be done to reinterpret his vision today in meaningful, creative and productive ways.

We seek to deepen the links between the local community and the forest through a wide range of events and activities. Making—of all kinds and varieties—will be central to the project.

Events will include the Big Draw and Apple Day in October and a lantern-lit walk in the forest in February. Activities will be designed to include the young as well as the more mature, attracting people with a broad range of abilities and experience to find satisfaction in working with their hands.

The £80,000 project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Guild, and will be delivered in partnership with the Wyre Community Land Trust based at St George's Farm.

The official launch took place on Monday, 24 July at Bewdley Museum, where an exhibition, *An ABC of Ruskin Land*, organised by Companion Lynne Roberts, showed from 1 July to 3 September. We were delighted to see more than 80 guests from local and national organisations at the launch party.

Companions will be welcome at events and will be kept updated as the project develops. News and further information can be found on the project website at <https://ruskinland.org.uk/>.



Looking at the exhibition during the launch party.



(Left to right) Tim Selman (Managing Director, Wyre Community Land Trust), Rachel Dickinson, (Chair of Ruskin in Wyre Project Steering Group) Clive Wilmer (Master of the Guild), Jenny Robbins (Guild Director for the Project) and Peter Miller (Project Co-ordinator) at July's launch.

# RUSKIN LAND BIG DRAW PRIZE

*Jenny Robbins*

The Wyre Community Land Trust, based in Ruskin Land in the heart of the Wyre Forest, was thrilled to receive the National Community, Participatory and Libraries Award for The Big Draw 2016. The Guild launched The Big Draw, as the Campaign for Drawing, in 2000, and it became an independent arts education charity in June 2006.

The 2016 *Big Draw and Apple Day at Ruskin Land* took place around St George's Farm over three days last October. Easels were placed in woodland pasture and charcoal was made on bonfires. Over 100 people attended, aged from two to 83, and they drew lots of beautiful pictures. Duke the horse, who helps extract felled timber from the forest, was on hand as well. We celebrated Apple Day by juicing apples—identifying and drawing them, too.

The WCLT works closely with a local primary school, [Birchen Coppice](#), and the schoolchildren visited with their families to join in the fun.

When we heard we had won the prize, we invited Dylan and his family from Birchen Coppice to join us in London and attend the ceremony. Dylan really enjoyed the trip, which included a voyage on the Thames. He even spoke at the ceremony, thanking Lynne Roberts for all her hard work in making the 2016 Big Draw in Ruskin Land an event to remember. We would all like to join him in thanking her, too.

The Big Draw and Apple Day 2017 will take place on 28 & 29 October as part of our HLF *Ruskin in Wyre* project.



(Above) Milly with her drawing, in front of Duke the horse.

(Below) Dylan celebrating the Big Draw award with a piece of cake.



## FAREWELL THANKS TO NEIL SINDEN AND LYNNE ROBERTS

Neil Sinden and Lynne Roberts, who have done so much to build on the work of John and Linda Iles in Ruskin Land, have left St George's Farm to live in London. We are immensely grateful to them for their huge contribution over the past couple of years, notably in working



Neil (left) Lynne (right).

in the Wyre Forest with deprived schoolchildren and other marginalised groups, and in welcoming so many Companions and other guests to stay with them at the farm. The photographs show them talking about their work at the Companions' Day in 2016. They have considerably improved the farmhouse itself, and have also researched previously unfamiliar aspects of the history of the surrounding area and its settlers. They have shared this, and their experiences, on the excellent *News from Ruskin Land* blog. Whilst their presence will be missed in Worcestershire, they will continue to work with us as the dedicated Companions they have always been, and we hope there will be many fruitful collaborations ahead. *SE*.

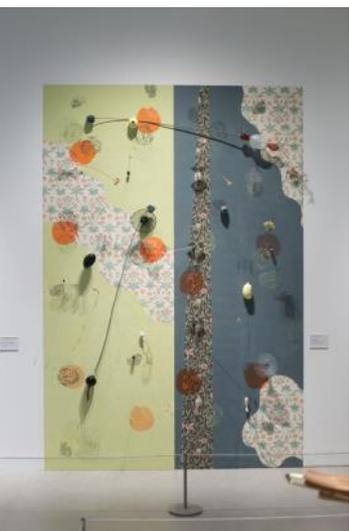
# THE GUILD AND THE BIG DRAW

*Stuart Eagles*

This year has seen a special collaboration between The Big Draw and the *Ruskin in Sheffield* project, with events in Walkley, the Manor and Meersbrook which will be reported on in the next issue.

Many thanks to all of you who joined the large crowd that gathered for the Private View and awards evening for The John Ruskin Prize 2017 on 20 June (photo, right). The exhibition of shortlisted works, *Master of All Trades*, is open until 8 October at Sheffield's Millennium Gallery.

Congratulations to the winners of the Prize this year:



(Artworks pictured above, left to right)

1st Prize: Rosa Nguyen (£3000);

2nd Prize: Bethan Lloyd Worthington (£1000):

Student & Graduate Award: Fi Smart (£1000).

A full report on the Prize and a review of the exhibition will be published next time.

The Big Draw is led with purpose and vision by Kate Mason and we thank her and her team for all the support they give the Guild in advancing Ruskin's legacy today, in particular in supporting emerging artists and encouraging each and every one of us to give ourselves a chance to draw.

The founding Director of the Campaign for Drawing was Companion Sue Grayson Ford, and it was a special honour to join a large party of well-wishers last year who gathered to mark Sue's retirement from The Big Draw. Nobody who knows her will be surprised that she has embarked on a new career as a Blue Badge Tour Guide. It is impossible to measure, let alone communicate, Sue's achievements. The former Master of the Guild, Julian Spalding, and the current Master, Clive Wilmer, attended Sue's leaving party and both gave eloquent, touching and moving tributes. The former Guild Secretary, Cedric Quayle, was also there to thank Sue personally, as were Annie Creswick Dawson, Stuart Eagles and several other Companions. Fittingly, this all took place in the Electricians' Shop Gallery, the London location of past John Ruskin Prize exhibitions, at the Big Draw's beautifully located headquarters at Trinity Buoy Wharf. Boasting the last surviving lighthouse on the Thames, the Wharf looks over at the Millennium Dome, and enjoys long views down the River. It is well worth a visit in its own right if you are ever in this part of London. In thanking Sue for all the great work she has done to promote art in Britain over the years, we wish her every future joy and success.



Masterly tributes: Julian Spalding (left) & Clive Wilmer pay tribute to Sue Grayson Ford.

# AMERICAN NOTES

Sara Atwood ([NAbranch@guildofstgeorge.org.uk](mailto:NAbranch@guildofstgeorge.org.uk)) and

Jim Spates ([spates@hws.edu](mailto:spates@hws.edu))

‘[R]eading and writing are in no sense education unless they contribute to this end of making us feel kindly toward all creatures’ (*Works*, 22.244).

## A California Gathering

North American Companions gathered in California for two events sponsored by the Ruskin Art Club of Los Angeles (RAC) at the end of August last year. On Wednesday, 31 August, Sara Atwood gave a talk to students and faculty at the Leven Center for Humanities and Ethics, University of Southern California (USC) about the importance of hand-work in education, “From the King’s son downwards”: Modern Education and the Wisdom of the Hands’. On 1 September, Sara delivered the RAC’s annual Ruskin Lecture at the Doheny Library, USC. Her lecture, “A pile of feathers”: sValuing Education in a Market



**Dr Sara Atwood giving Ruskin Art Club, LA’s Ruskin Lecture.**

Economy’, considered the implications of the market’s influence upon schools, universities, and educational reform initiatives. In recent years, Sara argued, the market has extended its reach ever more alarmingly into schools, universities, and educational reform initiatives. More and more, education is equated primarily with national and global economic success. Increased emphasis on testing, standardisation, and measurement, a reduction in the number of fine arts programmes, and a growing tendency to treat students as consumers, point to a disturbing shift in our understanding of the value of education. At the same time, she pointed out, there is a growing lack of preparedness, curiosity, and cultural literacy amongst students. Today, disagreement persists about access, curricula, standards, teacher training and other subjects. Sara went on to consider how Ruskin’s ideas might productively inform our educational debates.

Both talks were well attended and led to stimulating discussion. The Ruskin Lecture was preceded by a fascinating exhibition (at the Doheny Library) of the Ruskin Art Club’s collection of Ruskin-related books, manuscripts and letters. Sara and Jim Spates were both hosted by members of the Ruskin Art Club, whose generous hospitality and warm welcome made for a lovely and memorable stay.

While in Los Angeles, Jim Spates, Gabriel Meyer (Executive Director of the RAC) and Sara Atwood attended another meeting at the Huntington Library, San Marino, to discuss a Ruskin conference and exhibition proposed for the bicentenary. The meeting was encouraging and we were delighted to hear recently that the Huntington has agreed to host a Ruskin conference in 2019.

The Los Angeles visit ended with a day-long retreat, organised by Gabriel Meyer and held at the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center in Palos Verdes, outside LA. The RAC’s board meeting was held at the end of the day, and the retreat programme was intended to engage board members more deeply with Ruskin’s ideas and vision. Jim Spates gave an excellent and lively talk on *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, urging the importance of re-learning Ruskin’s Seven Lamps and reintegrating them into today’s architecture. Sara Atwood discussed Ruskin’s ‘Of Kings’ Treasuries’, drawing the group’s attention to a number of passages for close reading. We shared an enjoyable lunch together following these talks. Gabriel Meyer reported that the board members had been very interested by the week’s events and by what they had learned from Jim’s and Sara’s talks at the retreat. Gabriel felt that members had developed a deeper interest in Ruskin and a renewed commitment to the RAC’s mission.

## North American Toronto Symposium

The Toronto symposium, ‘*The hand, the head, and the heart*’: Ruskin, Morris, and *Craftsmanship Today*, was held at the University of Toronto, St George Campus on 3 June 2017. For a full account of the event, please see Sara Atwood’s report on pp. 45-46.

## Forthcoming Event

The next NA Guild symposium, *How We Live and How We Might Live*, will be held at the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco on 23 September 2017. Given the present divisive social and political climate, we believe it is important to consider what we might learn from an exploration of the sort of society Ruskin proposed. George Monbiot recently wrote in a *Guardian* article that ‘Those who tell the stories run the world. Politics has failed through a lack of competing narratives. The key task now is to tell a new story of what it is to be a human in the 21st century’. Our objective is to show that Ruskin offers us a narrative—not ‘a new story’, but perhaps an eternal story, that might lead us to a better place. Speakers include Companions Clive Wilmer, Jim Spates, Nicholas Friend, Amy Woodson-Boulton, and Sara Atwood. Thanks are due to Companion Junchol Lee, who has generously offered to work with us in organising this event. On 22 September, as a prelude to the symposium, Companion Tim Holton will host a poetry reading by Clive Wilmer at his Berkeley studio and gallery.

The date for the September symposium was chosen with the intention of linking the event to the annual Ruskin Lecture, hosted by the RAC, and held during the first weekend in September. This year the Ruskin Lecture provided an introduction of sorts to our symposium theme, and laid down lines of thought that we might subsequently take up. It was given by Companion Amy Woodson-Boulton, who spoke on the subject of ‘Ruskin’s Truths in the Age of Alternative Facts’ (see below for more about Amy). Gabriel Meyer and other LA-based Companions plan to travel to San Francisco for the Guild’s symposium. The gatherings in San Francisco and Berkeley will also provide an opportunity for North American Companions to meet and discuss the further development of the Guild in North America and more general Guild matters.

## The RAC Ruskin Lecture 2017

As previously mentioned, Companion Amy Woodson-Boulton gave the Ruskin Art Club’s 2017 Ruskin Lecture on 14 September. Amy is associate professor of British and Irish history and until recently

chair of the history department at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. She earned her doctorate from UCLA in 2003. Her work concentrates on cultural reactions to industrialisation, particularly the history of art museums, the social role of art, and the changing status and meaning of art and nature in modern society. She has received funding from a number of institutions, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Huntington. She became interested in John Ruskin through her study of the city art museums in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, published as *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012). Her work on Ruskin and Victorian 'Aesthetic Ideology' also featured in a volume that she co-edited with Minsoo Kang, *Visions of the Industrial Age, 1830–1914: Modernity and the Anxiety of Representation* (London: Routledge, 2008). She has written essays on the social role of Victorian art, frequently engaging with the impact of John Ruskin, for *Victorian Studies*, *History Compass*, *The Journal of British Studies*, *Museum & Society*, *Victorian Review*, and the BRANCH online collective (Britain, Representative, and Nineteenth-Century History). She teaches courses on Britain, Ireland, modern Europe, world history, historiography and methodology, history and detective fiction, public history, and a history seminar, *The Artist and the Machine*. She is currently working on a book-length study of the relationships between ideas about 'primitive art' in modern anthropology and art criticism, tentatively titled *Explaining Art: Anthropology, Culture, and Primitivism in the Age of Empire*.

**NORTH AMERICAN COMPANION PROFILE**

**R. Dyke Benjamin:**

**The Formation of a Private Collection for the Public Good**

Editors' Note: With this column we begin a new feature of 'American Notes', an annual profile of a Companion of the Guild who lives in North America. We hope you enjoy the series.

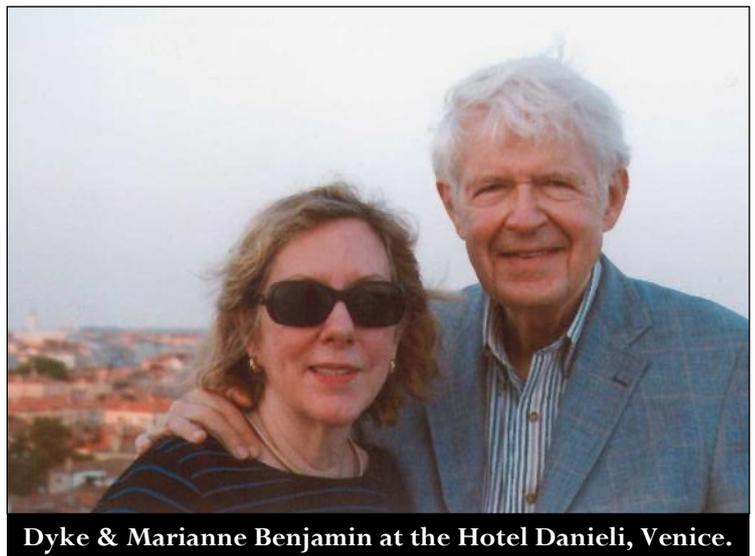
When Dyke Benjamin's wife of fifty years, Marianne, presented him with a John Ruskin letter on the occasion of their first Christmas together, Dyke felt that he had received a fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Unaware before that moment that many Ruskin relics were yet languishing in various antique dealers' inventories, the gift stimulated him to undertake a fifty-year odyssey devoted to finding and preserving Ruskin's letters, manuscripts, books, art, and memorabilia. Along the way, Dyke reports that he also collected an array of compatible souls, among them Jim Dearden, Jim Spates and

more than a few fine friends at Harvard's Houghton Library.

Some time before he received his gift, in true *fors* fashion, Dyke had discovered Ruskin in a Cambridge, Massachusetts bookstore. One day, while a graduate student at the Harvard School of Business, he walked into a bookshop in Harvard Square that specialised in older books. There he came across a ten-cent (!) copy of *Sesame and Lilies* bound in red leather. After he had read that slim volume's pair of lectures, he returned to the bookshop and bought an American edition of Ruskin's works. From that point on, the great Victorian became his guide to art, architecture, and social reform. Knowing he would soon embark on a career in business, Dyke was especially struck by Ruskin's doctrine of fairness as an essential component of the profit motive, and he determined to make the principle the central element of his own business practice. It remains so today. In the New York City investment firm where he works, Dyke oversees a seminar, the theme of which is 'Business for Good'.

Each week, the participants assemble to listen to speakers or discuss topics which require those dealing in financial matters to consider how business can be done honestly and ethically.

Over the years, Dyke's collecting has put him in the way of some very special treasures, not the least of which is Ruskin's remarkable copy of Cimabue's *St Francis*, composed while he was living at Assisi in the



**Dyke & Marianne Benjamin at the Hotel Danieli, Venice.**

1870s. There are some who see a likeness to Ruskin himself in this picture. It is no exaggeration to say, given his acumen as a collector and the amount of time he has devoted to assembling a collection, that Dyke now possesses one of the most important private collections of Ruskiniana on the western side of the Atlantic.

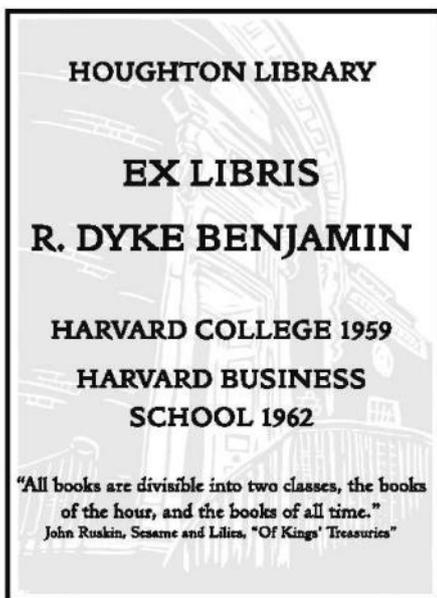
Some years ago, wanting to memorialize the centenary of Ruskin's death in 2000, Harvard's Rare Book Library and Fogg Art Museum asked Dyke to collaborate with them in creating an exhibit they were preparing for Harvard's Houghton Library. Dyke agreed and contributed to the show some of his major Ruskin artefacts. The exhibit then moved to New York's prestigious Grolier Club. To enhance this, Dyke wrote and produced a play entitled, 'The Catalogue'. The play, which included



**Ruskin's copy of Cimabue's *St Francis*, in Dyke's collection.**

Ruskin's 'Story of Ida' and the music of Jenny Lind, was also presented at the Century Association and The Lotos Club in New York. Dyke is now in the process of ensuring that his Ruskin collection remains a public and scholarly resource in perpetuity. Ruskin always said that collectors—and he was an avid one—are only the *temporary* caretakers of important items; in the end, all such riches should be available to all.

It is a principle to which Dyke subscribes without hesitation. As part of their forthcoming bicentennial celebration of Ruskin's birth in 2019, Harvard's Houghton Library will proudly display some of the most important artefacts from their newly assembled 'Houghton Library/Dyke Benjamin John Ruskin Collection'.



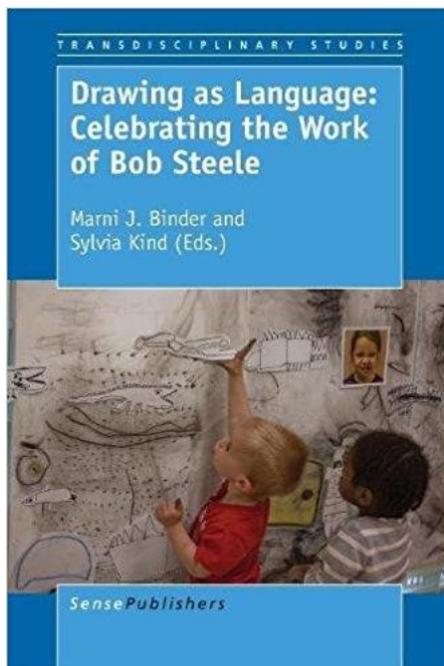
The bookplate for Dyke's Harvard collection has been carefully designed to reflect his abiding admiration for the man he calls the Master. The quote he has chosen is from *Sesame and Lilies*, the volume that was his introduction to Ruskin half a century ago in that Harvard Square bookshop: 'All books are divisible into two classes: the books of the hour and the books of all time'. Significantly, these few words of Ruskin's point back in time even as they show us the way forward, reminding us of the broader vision which was already a central motif in the awareness of the child living at 54 Hunter Street, of the four-year old who, one Sunday afternoon, mounted a footstool and proclaimed the message he would teach all his life: 'People be good!' It is the message which has guided Dyke Benjamin as well.

#### News from NA Companions

Kay Walter reports that she has been officially promoted to full professor and was a finalist for the Outstanding Faculty Award this year at her university (University of Arkansas at Monticello). Kay has been writing a lot—for the National Council of Teachers of English national blog, for *Arkansas Libraries*, and for the *Arkansas English Journal*.

Bob Steele has recently been honoured by a book, *Drawing as Language: Celebrating the Work of Bob Steele* (Sense Publishers, 2017), a collection of essays by former students, academics, teachers and parents edited by Marni Binder and Sylvia Kind. Bob is

currently working on another book with an old friend and colleague in which they will argue that the arts and a reformed Physical Culture should be given equal status with STEM subjects in a balanced curriculum.



Jim Spates is preparing a book, *Availing toward Life: The Radical Social Thought of John Ruskin*, intended to introduce Ruskin's social criticism to a modern audience. His blog, *Why Ruskin?*

(whyruskin.wordpress.com), is similarly aimed at making Ruskin's ideas more generally available. His article, 'Remembering Ruskin: Of Love, Hope, and Admiration', was published in the Spring 2017 edition of the *Friends of Ruskin's Brantwood Newsletter*.

On 9 June 2017, Jim spoke about 'John Ruskin and the Future of Civilization' at the Roycroft Campus, East Aurora, NY. Jim's talk was part of the lecture series, 'Ruskin, Morris, and Elbert Hubbard for Today'. On 12 April 2018 he will give a talk entitled 'Ruskin's *Unto this Last: The Third Essay, "Qui Judicatis Terram"*' at Axiom Capital Management in New York City, as part of their 'Financial and Investment' seminar series, 'Business for Good' (referred to in the profile above).

Jim gave a number of talks in 2016. On 22 September, he spoke at Brantwood about 'Travels with Van: Twenty

Years on the Road with Van Akin Burd, the World's Most Renowned Ruskin Scholar'. Audio of Jim's tribute to his great friend and their years together is available on the Guild's website at [www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/north-american-companions/van-akin-burd/](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/north-american-companions/van-akin-burd/).

On 27 August 2016, Jim presented 'For the Love of Beauty: Ruskin, Switzerland and the Alps: A Visual Presentation', at Roycroft as part of a conference focused on 'Ruskin, Morris, and Beauty—and the Continuing Values of the Arts and Crafts Movement'. The Master of the Guild was also in attendance, speaking on 'The Fortunate Fall: John Ruskin, William Morris and the Revival of Craftsmanship'. Other speakers included Alan Nowicki and Companion Joe Weber (Roycroft Campus) discussing 'Ruskin, Morris, Hubbard and the Beautiful Printed Word'.

Jim was at Roycroft earlier in the year as well, speaking on "'Of Kings' Treasures": John Ruskin's Greatest Lecture', on 17 May 2016 and on '*Unto this Last: The First Two Lectures—"The Roots of Honour" and "The Veins of Wealth"*' on 10 February 2016. These two lectures and the August event were part of the ongoing Roycroft lecture series, 'Ruskin, Morris, and Elbert Hubbard for Today'.

We are delighted to announce that the Guild and Roycroft are entering into a new partnership. Roycroft will provide the Guild with a base on the East Coast. More soon.



(Above, standing) Joe Weber and Jim Spates at Roycroft, August 2016.

(Below) Jim Spates talking about Van Akin Burd at Brantwood in September 2016. Photo: Paul Dawson.

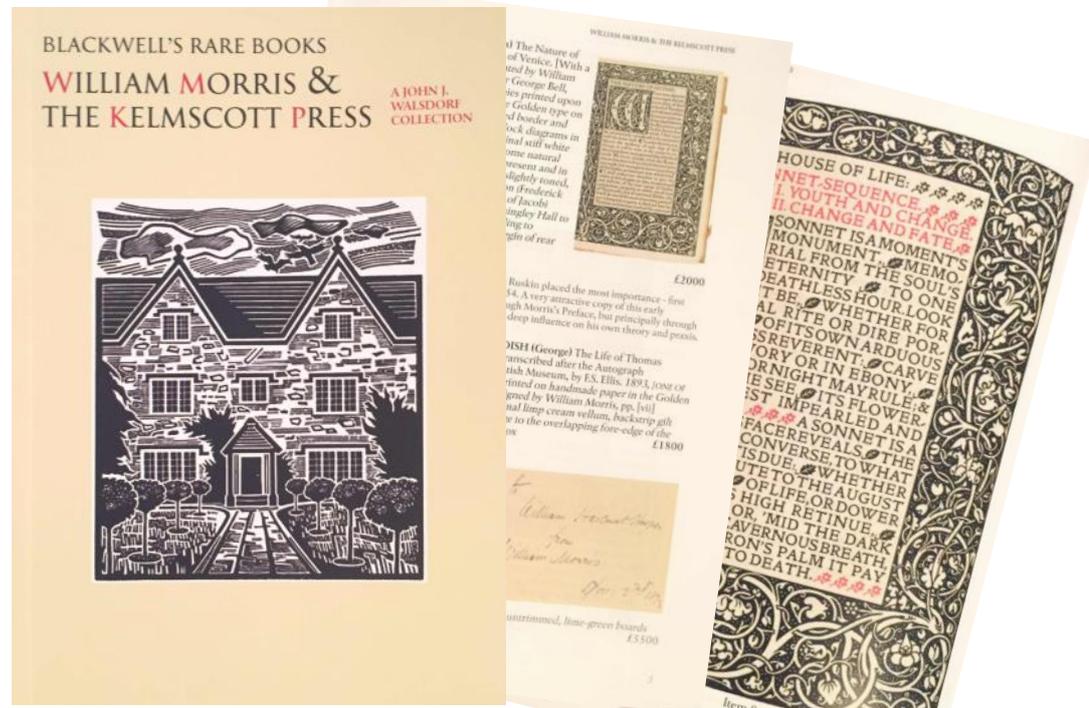


# ‘THE FUN IS IN THE HUNT’: JOHN J. WALSDORF ON COLLECTING WILLIAM MORRIS

Sara Atwood

Not long after I moved from Arizona to Portland, Oregon in 2015, I heard about a Portland-based collector of William Morris books and ephemera, John J. (Jack) Walsdorf. Jack was a past President of the William Morris Society of North America and served on its Board until his death. He collected Morris for more than fifty years and sold four major collections of Morris material, one of which went to the University of Maryland. The most recent sale was to Blackwell’s of Oxford (2016), which resulted in a handsome catalogue, *William Morris & The Kelmscott Press* (see photos, right). Jack was also an author whose publications include *Julian Symons: a bibliography* (1996), *Printers on Morris* (1978), *Elbert Hubbard: William Morris’s Greatest Imitator* (1999), *The Yellow Barn Press: a history and bibliography* (2001), and *On Collecting William Morris* (2006). He also published records of his collections in *William Morris in Private Press and Limited Editions: A Descriptive Bibliography of Books by and About William Morris* (1983), *William Morris and the Kelmscott Press* (1994) and *Kelmscott Press: William Morris & His Circle* (1996).

I was able to contact Jack through the William Morris Society and after a brief correspondence by email he kindly invited my family to his home in North Portland to see his Morris collection (and some of his other impressive collections as well). We were warmly welcomed and spent a lovely evening looking at some of the many remarkable items Jack owned. I was reminded of the comment made by an early visitor to Ruskin’s St George’s Museum in Walkley; here indeed was ‘much treasure in a little room’—or in this case, rooms. I was awed by the extent of Jack’s collections. While his primary interest was Morris, he also collected (among other things) books issued in box cases, editions of *A Christmas Carol*, book dealer’s catalogues, as well as fine press books by Yellow Barn Press, Prairie Press of Iowa, and Adagio Press. Jack also owned a significant collection of Roycroft publications and objects. A small upstairs room contained his trove of Elbert Hubbard books. Jack was drawn to Roycroft and Hubbard as a collector of American Arts & Crafts, particularly Roycroft hammered copper pieces. He had a large collection of copper, wood furniture, and pottery, as well



as perhaps 250 books and pamphlets published by or relating to Hubbard and the Roycrofters. Indeed, throughout Jack’s house there were shelves upon shelves of books—nearly 6,000 of them. Over the years, Jack commissioned several pieces of artwork that complemented his collecting interests, including Morris quotes rendered in beautiful calligraphy. We admired these as we made our way to the room where Jack had set out items from his Morris collection for us to view.

Alas, scheduling conflicts on my part meant that our visit took place two weeks after a Blackwell’s representative had arrived to pack up the 88 Morris books and items destined for catalogue sale. Imagine my chagrin when I discovered what I’d missed: 25 major Kelmscott Press publications, many of them in limp vellum with silk ties, with ephemera and secondary material from the press, and an outstanding Morris letter, written in defence of his lecture ‘Art under Plutocracy’ . . . important and uncommon Morris works, including Doves Press and Elston Press editions; publications celebrating the centenary of Morris’s birth as well as modern private press editions and other marvellous things.<sup>1</sup> Included amongst the Kelmscott Press volumes were Ruskin’s *The Nature of Gothic*, Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere*, *Poems by the Way* and *The Wood Beyond the World*, and Rossetti’s *Hand and*

Pages from the Blackwell’s Catalogue of Jack’s Morris collection.

*Soul*. All this and more I was not to see—and yet there were still so many treasures left to show us. On a large table in an upper room, Jack had thoughtfully laid out some of these, such as: an autograph Morris letter, single leaves from Kelmscott Press publications, private press editions of Morris, and much more. Suddenly the hours left in the evening seemed far too few and passing all too quickly. While my husband, declaring an interest, retired to the Hubbard room, I stayed to take in the richness of the Morris material, eventually making my way to an adjoining book room to explore Jack’s collection of books about Morris, the Pre-Raphaelites, book collecting and more. Throughout our visit, we enjoyed delightful conversation with Jack, who told us the stories of the various items he’d shown us, as well as the story of his collecting life.

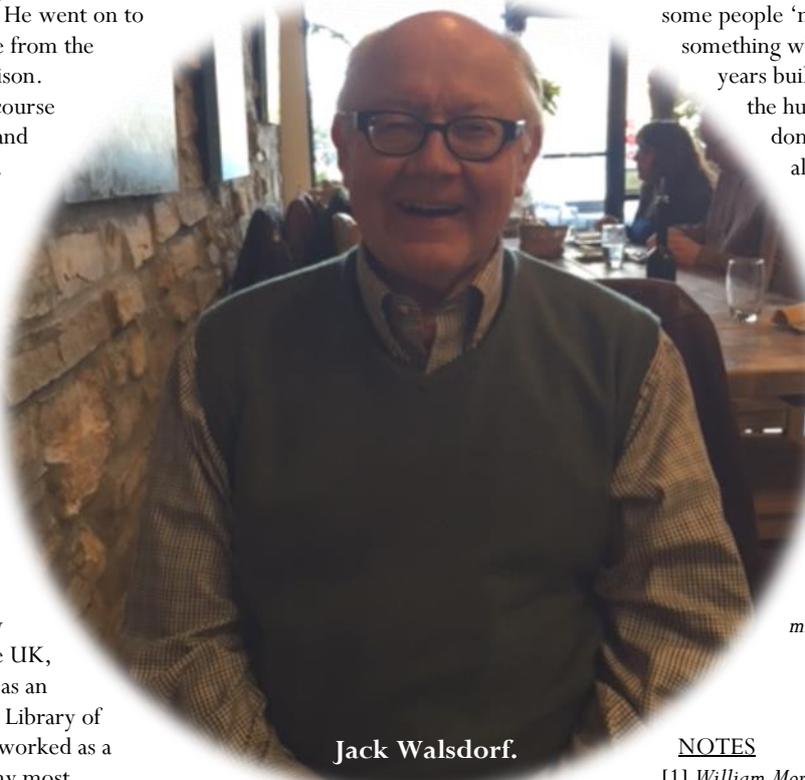
Born and raised in Wisconsin, Jack was a talented athlete during his school days. He excelled at (American) football in particular and was the star of his school team (he remained a football fan and we spent a bit of time discussing the NFL). Jack said he wasn’t much of a scholar at this stage—a situation exacerbated by poor eyesight that went unrecognised by his teachers—and was

instead focused on sport and the possibility of playing football at college. As an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, he went out for the football team, but quickly realised that talented though he was, he wasn't suited to college-level play. Having begun to focus more seriously on school—and realising that he was rather good at it—he graduated with a degree in English literature. He went on to earn an MA in Library Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. While at Madison, he took a course called 'The History of Books and Printing', taught by Rachel K. Schenk, which proved to be a decisive experience. As Jack tells it, 'Miss Schenk owned one of the early, smaller Kelmscott Press books, which she brought to class and passed around. It was Miss Schenk who first opened my eyes to the world of Morris and fine private press books'.

Following graduate school, Jack spent two years working as a reference librarian in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin library system. He then moved to the UK, where he had been appointed as an exchange librarian to the City Library of Oxford. Whilst there he also worked as a reference librarian. 'One of my most memorable patrons', Jack remembers, 'was J.R.R. Tolkien, who used the city library regularly as he would come in to pick up a book for his wife. Mr Tolkien was a kind man, who inscribed a copy of *The Hobbit* for my wife and wrote me a letter to go along with the book.'

Jack was only resident in Oxford for 15 months, but when his term in the library had

run its course he was hired by Blackwell's, a job he held for 31 years (Jack's post was based in the US). Jack became friends with Basil Blackwell, who shared stories with him about meeting May Morris and publishing her book *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist* at the Shakespeare Head Press in 1936.<sup>2</sup>



Jack Walsdorf.

In a 2013 interview for the blog *The Morrisian*, Jack described the delightful surprises that sometimes happen to those who own thousands of books. Pulling a book off the shelf one day, he recalled, 'I found a letter from Jane Morris—in the back of a Morris book'. We should all be so lucky! Another time he rediscovered a

number of Sydney Cockerell letters he had purchased years previously and stuck in the back of a book relating to Cockerell.<sup>3</sup>

Talking with Jack, his knowledge, expertise, and experience were immediately apparent. So was the immense pleasure that he took in collecting. With regard to the four major sales of his Morris collection during the previous 50 years, Jack told me that although some people 'might think it is sad to sell something which one spends 10 or more years building up, for me the fun is in the hunt. I love book hunting, and I don't think I will ever stop. All in all, I expect I have bought well over 7,000 books relating to Morris, and still have a library of perhaps 500+ books on Morris and I will never stop collecting.'

*He didn't. Sadly, Jack Walsdorf passed away suddenly on 9 July. He was generous, kind, and a delightful person with whom to spend time. He was also deeply knowledgeable and interesting. He will be greatly missed.*

#### NOTES

- [1] *William Morris & The Kelmscott Press, A John J. Walsdorf Collection* (Oxford: Blackwell's Rare Books, 2016), p. 1.
- [2] The Morrisian Interview Series, #2: John J. Walsdorf, April 2013. <http://themorrisian.blogspot.com/2013/04/the-morrisian-interview-series-2-john-j.html>
- [3] Ibid.

## WEBSITES

Do please check out the Guild's website at [www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk). Not only does it carry news of forthcoming and recent events, but it also has an extensive archive. You can now contact the Guild directly through an online form. You'll find an up-to-date catalogue of our publications, and a comprehensive list of useful links. Among the latest links to be added are two interesting but very different websites to which I'd like to draw your attention. Peter Lock, son of Companion Jeanette Lock, has kindly set up for us a searchable database for Bewdley's Ruskin Library of books that once belonged to former Guild Director Anthony Page. We thank Peter warmly for doing us this service. The site has now been transferred to our servers and can be found at <http://ruskinlibrarybewdley.org.uk/>. The other site is the John Ruskin Manufactory at <http://www.johnruskinmanufactory.co.in/>, an intriguing and promising enterprise in New Delhi initiated by our only Indian Companion, Arjun Jain. Arjun wrote to me last year after reading my lecture *Ruskin and Tolstoy* at Tolstoy's estate, Yasnaya Polyana. When Arjun was living in England he visited Neil Sinden and Lynne Roberts at St George's Farm and familiarised himself with the area around Ruskin Land and the work the WCLT and Guild do there. Now back in India, he is determined to apply Ruskin's principles to some of the pressing problems of modern life. We warmly welcome him as a valued member of the Guild's growing global community and wish him good fortune in his endeavours. **SE.**

Welcome	
RUSKIN IN SHEFFIELD	
2017	
RinS 2016	
RinS 2015	
The Ruskin Lecture	
Guild AGM	
RUSKIN IN WYRE	
Rural Projects	
Symposia & Seminars	
Guild History	
The Guild Today	
Ruskin Collection	
Triennial Exhibitions	

**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.

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.



# ‘THE HAND, THE HEAD, AND THE HEART’: RUSKIN, MORRIS, AND CRAFTSMANSHIP TODAY

Sara Atwood

The North American Toronto symposium, jointly sponsored by the Guild and the William Morris Society of Canada (WMSC), took place at the University of Toronto on 3 June 2017. Organised by Companions Ann Gagné and Sara Atwood, it focused on the influence of John Ruskin and William Morris on craftsmanship in their own time and on those who honour that legacy in their work today. Speakers were David Latham (York University; editor, *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*), Companions Rachel Dickinson (Manchester Metropolitan University), Kateri Ewing (artist and teacher), Ann Gagné (George Brown College), and Sara Atwood (Portland State University). The one-day event attracted an audience of fifty which included WMSC members, graduate students, and members of the general public. It was a stimulating and enjoyable day. The five talks were well-received and led to lively discussion.

David Latham led the proceedings with his talk, “Noble Grotesques”: From Ruskin to Morris to Toronto’. David began with an exploration of Pre-Raphaelite art in order to draw the connection between the natural and the ornamental, and how this relates to craft. He used the example of the natural versus the ornamental garden, setting Bacon’s prescriptive notion of gardens against Addisonian ‘imaginative diversity’ and the (artfully) wild, natural garden. David then used examples of art and poetry in Toronto to demonstrate the tension between the natural and the ornamental and to emphasise the importance of pleasure in art and work. A slide of Daniel Libeskind’s addition to the Royal Ontario Museum, the ‘crystal’, illustrated the jarring incongruity created by mismatched architectural styles. Against this ignoble grotesque, David set examples of the noble grotesque and what he called its ‘mysterious truth’. One such example was J.E.H. MacDonald’s poem ‘A Word to Us All’ (1900), addressed as a ‘message to all Canadians’. The published volume bears a strong resemblance to the design and the Troy typeface of a Kelmscott Press edition, but a closer look reveals that it has instead been done in ink and gouache on paper—an anti-imperialist message clothed in Arts and Crafts design. Moving forward in time, David introduced the work of Elaine Waisglass, a Toronto photographer whose book, *A Year in my Arts and Crafts Garden*, explores the Arts & Crafts movement’s

aesthetic and the quest for natural beauty. In her photographs of the Eden Smith-designed Arts & Crafts house and garden that she painstakingly restored, Waisglass is keen to express what she considers to be the defining concern of the Arts & Crafts movement: ‘the mutable moment arising from the desire for beauty quickened by the sense of death’ ([www.elainewaisglass.com](http://www.elainewaisglass.com), accessed: 10 June 2017).

Sara Atwood followed, with a talk entitled “Syllable by syllable”: Ruskin and the Art of Language’. Sara’s focus was on the craftsmanship of the writer, Ruskin in particular, and the importance of cultivating the knowledge and skill that good writing requires. As we rediscover the value and pleasure of craft and encourage a revival of interest in making, she argued, we should remember that writers are makers, too. As Ruskin reminds us, the word ‘poet’ has its roots in the Greek *poiein/poiein*, ‘to make, create, compose’, so that poetry means ‘the making of a thing’. Sara pointed out the need to define our terms. What do we mean, she asked, when we talk about the craftsmanship of writing? How do we recognise it when it’s present? Beginning with an example from Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* and progressing to passages from Ruskin, Sara invited the audience to work with her towards an answer, via the sort of close reading that Ruskin recommended. The chosen examples worked to establish an idea of craftsmanship as mastery of the technical aspects of language, the tools necessary for clear expression. Combined with invention or vision, what Ruskin called ‘good emotion and work of the heart’, literary craftsmanship is elevated into art. As Sara demonstrated, Ruskin’s technical command of language, structure and form reveal him as a consummate craftsman. Yet we also find in Ruskin’s writing the imaginative vitality necessary to art. Ruskin’s intense focus at the level of the word and the sentence enables him to weave a complex web in his own writing that is both technically *and* imaginatively brilliant.

In an age in which language is increasingly devalued and divisive, Sara argued, it is necessary to remember that words *matter*. It is important, she urged, that we recognise the significance of craftsmanship in writing, that we respect the skill that it

requires, and that we value the greatness that results from the union of craft and imagination.

After breaking for a pleasant lunch, during which attendees and speakers enjoyed conversation and good fellowship, we reconvened for the afternoon programme. Kateri Ewing’s insightful and inspiring talk, ‘Learning to See’ was an account of her development as a self-taught artist (see pp. 3-4)—from her decision to experiment with her daughter’s art supplies, left behind when she went to college in 2013, and her discovery (surely the work of Fors) of Ruskin’s *Elements of Drawing* in an internet search for drawing manuals—to her present life, four years on, as an art teacher and practicing artist. It was a personal story about Ruskin’s inspiration and teaching, but also about the often surprising possibilities and potential in our lives. Kateri described her artistic practice and the Ruskinian values in which it is rooted. She began with a slide of her first attempt, under Ruskin’s guidance, to draw a leaf; successive slides showed the remarkable development that resulted from her persistence. The series of images, from her first, faltering leaf to her most recent attempt, sensitively and delicately rendered, were a reminder of Ruskin’s assurance that ‘If you can paint one leaf, you can paint the world’. Kateri emphasised the importance of paying close attention to the most intricate and ordinary details of the world around us. She expressed her belief that everyone can—and should—learn to draw, and that doing so teaches us to see the world from a different perspective, to notice what others might overlook. The images of her work that accompanied her lecture testified to her powers of perception and her habit of attentive looking. Kateri quoted the poet Jane Hirschfield’s Ruskinian understanding of art:

One way we praise a work of art is to say it has ‘vision’. Good art and good seeing go together almost always. Yet before art’s more ground-level seeing can liberate itself into that other vision we speak of, a transfiguration is needed. The eyes and ears must learn to abandon the habits of useful serving and take up instead a participatory delight in their own ends. A work of art is not a piece of fruit lifted from a tree branch: it is a ripening collaboration of artist, receiver and world.\*

Kateri explained that as an artist she looks always for ‘the luminous particular’, a phrase she discovered in an essay by Jane Kenyon, and which has come to define her approach to her work.

Kateri was followed by Rachel Dickinson, speaking about ‘Ruskin, Morris and the Fabric of Craftsmanship’. Rachel began by showing us images from the John Lewis ‘Ruskin House’ Collection, in which home decoration is ‘given a cosy feel’ and shoppers are meant to imagine ‘the heart of the Cumbrian countryside, [where] a log fire burns bright’. Rachel went on to show images of the ‘Ruskin’ and ‘Swinburne’ dresses (this last given incorrectly as Swinburn on the company’s website) made by Barbour as part of the company’s William Morris line. The dresses come complete with a tag bearing a photo and potted biography of Morris. Rachel discussed the ways in which these modern marketing campaigns appropriate a clichéd version of Morris’s and Ruskin’s ideas intended to convey an ideal vision of cultured English comfort and taste. The images served a dual purpose, making us laugh at the absurdity (indeed, the effrontery) of selling mass-produced articles under the name of Ruskin or Morris, but also providing the perfect introduction to a thoughtful consideration of Ruskin’s response to the damaging effects of nineteenth-century labour on the land, workers, communities, and social values. ‘Your business as manufacturers’, Ruskin told an audience in Bradford in 1859, ‘is to form the market as much as to supply it’. Rachel proceeded to demonstrate how Ruskin’s writings about dress exemplify his views of labour, economics, and social responsibility. Dress-making was to be an important part of the curriculum in Ruskin’s ideal schools, for its practical and social value in developing craftsmanship, self-sufficiency, self-respect and, by extension, social order. Clothes were in Ruskin’s view a sort of object lesson, both creating and revealing morality. Ruskin’s close study of Carpaccio’s cycle of St. Ursula paintings, Rachel argued, confirmed his sense of the connection between outward and inward grace. In the pictures, he wrote, ‘every figure—and there are hundreds—is refined in feature and beautiful in dress with a purity as perfect—though as various as wild flowers. There are old & young—Kings and poor labourers—saints and rough soldiers—but they are all different only as violets and ivy or roses and meadow grass—all lovely and human and pure’. One of the most striking elements of Rachel’s paper was her account of Ruskin’s ‘silk-worm letter’, written to his cousin Lily Severn in 1881. This simple, charming story about the silk-worms whose labour has provided the raw material for the child’s birthday dress, can also be read as a lesson



(Left to right) David Latham, Kateri Ewing, Ann Gagné, Rachel Dickinson and Sara Atwood, in Toronto (June 2017).

about ethical labour and consumption: the industrious silk-worms work fair hours, sustained by nutritious food and proper shelter (both of which they craft themselves) and sufficient rest. They are thus able to spin threads for beautiful ladies who will wear them wisely and well. In conclusion, Rachel shared her commitment to Ruskin’s principles in her own life, whether by spinning yarn on her hand-crafted spinning wheel, wearing a dress of her own making in a Morris print, or buying handmade shoes that are both beautiful and well-constructed.

After a short coffee break, Ann Gagné brought the day to a close with her talk on ‘Craft, Maker Culture, and Repurposing Materials in Toronto: Morris and Ruskin in Practice’. Ann explored the influence of Ruskin on Morris in relation to handcraft and architecture and went on to demonstrate how that influence is continuing in the regeneration of craft and maker culture in Toronto. The emphasis, she explained, is on repurposing, upcycling, and establishing a connection to the makers/manufacturers who use creative means to develop and design their work. Foodstuffs like locally produced, small-batch bread and cider encourage engagement with place and tradition. Handcrafted jewellery and household goods, meanwhile, repurpose materials in a way that ‘highlights the hands that both make the materials now but also the hands which have touched the materials previously’. Ann described the vibrant maker culture that has developed in Toronto and the ongoing creation of

‘maker spaces’, designed to encourage creativity and a sense of community. Ann pointed to Guild Park, in the Scarborough district of Toronto, as an example of architectural repurposing. From 1932 to 1978 Guild Park was the home of the Guild of All Arts, an artists’ colony founded by Rosa and Spencer Clark in the spirit of the medieval guilds (a project that bore a decidedly Ruskinian-Morrisian character). The Guild supported fine arts and crafts, including sculpture, painting, weaving, metalwork, ceramics, and wood-carving. Today, the 88-acre park is home to the remnants of fifty of Toronto’s heritage buildings, most of them demolished during the city’s building boom in the 1960s. These architectural elements are repurposed in line with the motto of the Guildwood suburb: ‘let us mingle the beautiful with the useful’. Ann used the example of the Guild to consider what Ruskin and Morris would think of repurposing architectural elements in this way. She suggested that this sort of preservation is a way to ‘protect, not perfect’.

The day gave those in attendance much to think about and discuss. We felt that we had made a meaningful connection with the WMSC and hope that we might collaborate with them again in future. Thanks are due to both the Guild and the WMSC for their sponsorship and support.

#### NOTE

\* Jane Hirschfield, *Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World* (New York: Knopf, 2017).

# TEACHING RUSKIN IN RURAL ARKANSAS

*Paul Dawson*

At the entrance to the impressive State Capitol Building of Arkansas situated in the city of Little Rock, made famous by its former governor Bill Clinton, is a plaque bearing Ruskin's words adapted from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. It was placed there to demonstrate the city's pride in its architecture and reads:

When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for the present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time will come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, "See! this our fathers did for us."

It has been read by thousands of visitors, few of whom have had any knowledge of its author. But in the last two years that has changed somewhat. It has been noticed, photographed, and commented upon by a few visiting students. How and why those students are beginning to recognise the author of those words is part of a remarkable story, to which the credit must go to Dr Kay Walter. Companions will know of Kay not only as a dedicated Ruskin scholar, but also as Professor of English at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. My first contact with Kay was in 2013 when she submitted to me the article 'Chivalry in John Ruskin' for the newsletter of the *Friends of Ruskin's Brantwood*. An email occasionally passed between us in the following years and in 2015 she wrote of her plan to bring a small group of her English Literature students to the UK for a three-week study tour. We discussed the practicalities of visiting Brantwood and the possibility of my being able to join the tour at that stage and speak to the students. I was happy to do what I could to arrange a welcome meeting at Brantwood, and to speak to them at some point about John Ruskin.

In due course the full itinerary of the trip arrived, and I

discovered that seven days before the Brantwood part of the journey the visitors would be travelling through Sussex to visit Batemans, the home of Rudyard Kipling near Burwash. As this is just minutes from my own home, and the students' visit would be taking place on the very weekend that Companion Annie Creswick Dawson was due to visit me in order to look over the page proofs of the *Benjamin Creswick* book then in preparation, it seemed that Fors was dictating that we meet up.

Annie and I met up with the party at Batemans and brought them back to my home in Etchingham where Annie spoke to them in my garden under the spring sunshine about her great grandfather, Benjamin Creswick. After a very English experience of tea and cake they visited my own library at the top of the house. One week later I met up with the party again in Cumbria to introduce them to Brantwood. As this was a working study visit, lessons were taught and papers written along the

way, and I had the privilege of sitting in on a class held around the large table in the Brantwood Café, where I was deeply impressed with the students and the knowledge they had gained as well as the eloquence with which they expressed it.

It is important to know something of the University of Arkansas at Monticello, often referred to in its short form, UAM. The Monticello campus is the southern-most of the principal sites of the university. It serves a rural area where the prime industry is lumber. The pine forests that are planted and harvested in a 30-year cycle provide a very different and attractive landscape to the one I had expected to see. To find cotton fields, you must travel further east to the delta and the rich alluvial soil that originated from the Mississippi river. In the south, around Monticello, it is forested land. The university's own School of Forestry & Natural Resources is one of the country's most respected research institutions in that field.

The lack of industrial, manufacturing, and engineering works, combined with the relative isolation of communities from the few large cities (the nearest of any size is Little Rock, 90 minutes away by road), means that career opportunities are limited. With a low prospect of meaningful employment, incentives to complete education are few and the drop-out rate from school without even the basic General Equivalency Diploma is high.

UAM is remarkable in offering their students an opportunity to take an intensive course in order that they may pick up their studies from where they left off, and work to gain that missing basic certificate of education. But conditions must be met. Regular attendance at class is essential, completed homework projects must be delivered on time, and students must achieve the grades required. Having established the success of this scheme, the university offers places on its degree courses to students who by their hard work and determination achieve that first goal. The firm rules remain in place. Help, encouragement, and mentoring are available along the way, but students are well aware that neglecting their part of the deal will end in failure. They



(Above) Annie Creswick Dawson speaks to Kay Walter and her students in the garden at Etchingham.

(Below) Paul Dawson shows some treasures from his collection to Kay Walter and her students.





Paul Dawson lecturing in Arkansas: (left) ‘The Nature of Gothic’ (2015) and (right) ‘Researching Ruskin’ (2016).

work and learn alongside students who have entered university by more conventional routes, and my own experience on meeting with the visiting group was that everyone present—irrespective of their background or means of obtaining their education—was articulate, eloquent, and knowledgeable.

Following that student visit, I was invited to go to the University of Arkansas at Monticello in the autumn of 2015 to speak to the students and give a presentation to the faculty and staff. It was an invitation I just could not refuse, so interested had I become in this wonderful programme that was so Ruskinian in its creation and intent, developed and advanced successfully by Kay Walter. In her English Literature and World Literature courses, she introduces Ruskin early on, so that her students become as familiar with his name as with that of Shakespeare or Dickens.

For these events, I prepared a general introduction to Ruskin and a presentation on Ruskin and ‘The Nature of Gothic’. Fortunately, I was able to incorporate the American perception and adoption of the Arts & Crafts as part of the second topic as I have been a regular visitor to the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, which has a rich Arts & Crafts history. It was the first American town to preserve and protect a large area of historic homes from developers in the 1960s. My many visits to the local history shelves at the Grand Rapids Public Library, and countless hours of walking and photographing in the streets of Grand Rapids, had paid off!

The welcome I was given, the numbers that attended, and the response I received was beyond any expectation. When asked to return in March 2016 to address a further student intake, I was easily persuaded to do so. On this occasion I prepared three lectures, of which two were repeated to other classes. At times I went straight from one venue to another to deliver the lectures without a break. Notably, in one of the classes, five students had written proposals

to base their studies on various aspects of Ruskin’s social teachings. Such is the way Ruskin speaks to these young people.

On the first visit I had also had the opportunity to spend time in the Remedial Class, part of another remarkable programme the university supports. Here I met students whose learning has been so compromised by social circumstances that the level of their educational attainment is many years below their actual age. There is often evidence of the lack of basic social skills and of difficulties with personal interaction that add to the problems of illiteracy, but patience balanced with firmness on the part of their teachers is giving these students an opportunity to make up the shortfall. I was warned that some students might walk in or out during the class, and others were there under sufferance and had no desire to learn. I have to admit that I felt intimidated at the idea, but there was a core of students whose attention I caught and managed to retain. It was said that visiting speakers never came to this class, but I believe that Ruskin would have strongly approved of these efforts by the university to bring in those otherwise excluded or lost by the educational system. UAM gives them a further opportunity to work hard to gain their education. There were for me no plaudits or feelings of self-gratification from this work; it is humbling and hard, but so very worthwhile.

In the summer of that year three of those first visiting students graduated. The photograph (right) shows Hali Philips, Dr Kay Walter and Merell Miles. Dianna Baxter also graduated but was unable to attend the ceremony, and others were still studying.



The following May (2016) a further group of students arrived in England and the successful formula was repeated. Once more Annie and I met up with the student party at Batemans and brought them back to Etchingham. I travelled up to Brantwood the following weekend to introduce them to Brantwood’s Director Howard Hull and the gardening team of Dave and Ruth Charles. On this occasion the students carried out a ‘service learning project’ at Brantwood in which they worked in the gardens and grounds, as reported in detail elsewhere in this publication (see pp. 50-51). Once more, Ruskin and Brantwood made a deep impression on each student. A few days later we drove south to Oxford where we first met up with Annie and then connected with Stuart Eagles at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Stuart led the party on a guided tour through the city including some of the colleges where he had made special arrangements for us to see the Morris Rooms at Exeter and, perhaps most notably, the wonderful library at his old college, Queen’s. For first-time travellers outside the southern states of America this trip was a very special experience.

A third visit to UAM in the autumn of 2016 gave me the opportunity to meet further groups of new students, including the Freshman Class. Still finding their feet in their first term they had taken in many topics that were completely new to them but,



(Above) Paul Dawson addressing the freshman English class.



**(Left to right) Kay Walter, Pamela Jones, Annie Creswick Dawson, Stuart Eagles, Caleb Hayes, Brandi Mize and Amanda Moore at Corpus Christi, at the end of two exceptional days in Oxford.**

under Kay's guidance, and like classes before them, they had been given the opportunity to discover Ruskin.

For this new intake, three books with strong Ruskinian links featured on the reading list: James Dearden's *John Ruskin*, Annie Creswick Dawson's *Benjamin Creswick*, and Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*. My visit coincided with their reading of the *Benjamin Creswick* book and I was interested to witness their absorption of Ruskin's teaching on 'how to see' and their understanding of the concept of Creswick's faithful following of Ruskin's direction.

This class had prepared a number of questions for me to address about Ruskin, Creswick, and the book's author Annie Creswick Dawson, and when I asked if the class would pose for a photograph for Annie,

each holding their copy of her book, the response was unanimous.

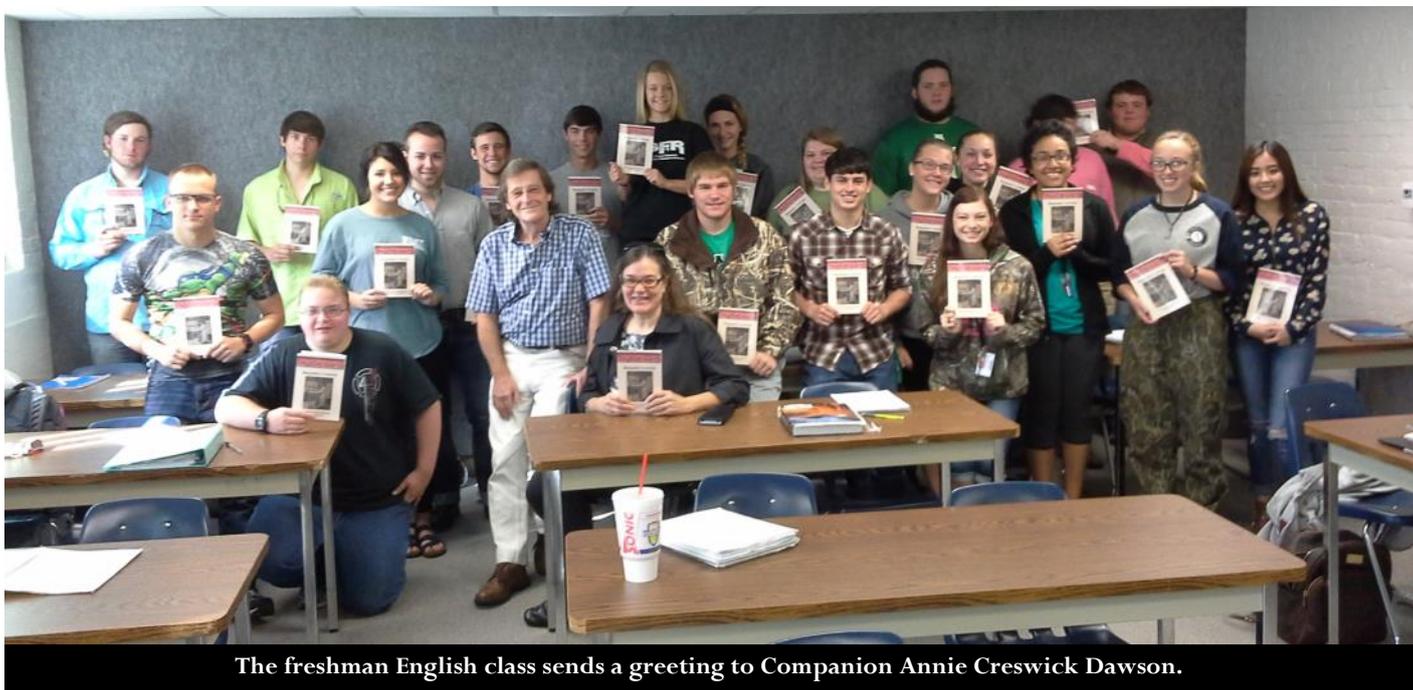
We should remember that these students live in a very different world to ours, and their history has been defined by entirely different circumstances. Their grasp of Ruskin may come slowly, but it proves to be meaningful to them. These young people from rural Arkansas could teach many of our own students a great deal—perhaps because their education is not taken for granted but has to be worked for—and any benefit resulting from this effort is valued as treasure. Often they are the first in their family to attend university, and the students visiting the UK are the only ones in their family ever to possess a passport. Simply applying for that document is to them a major step in their

personal growth and an acceptance that such an apparently daunting task can be achieved.

As part of my third visit I was invited to speak on Ruskin at a Rotary Club Lunch in Monticello. During a previous Rotary meeting one of the 2016 visiting students, Brandi Mize, gave a presentation on the group's visit to England that featured Ruskin and Brantwood quite prominently. Mary Heady, the Special Collections and Reference Librarian at the university and a strong advocate for the students in their studies and overseas learning, kindly arranged for me to address this audience. I chose to concentrate on Ruskin's social teachings and could detect definite interest among those gathered which—as I discovered afterwards—included the Mayor of Monticello.

It is difficult to convey adequately the depth of enthusiasm which all these audiences show on hearing Ruskin, whether it is his artistic, architectural or social teachings. Certainly, having an English visitor travel to see them makes an impression on them, but the attention they show, the questions they ask, and the responses to Ruskin that they share could not fail to impress the visitor. Kay Walter's influence is clearly evident, and the visiting students—as Annie Creswick Dawson and Stuart Eagles will attest—have been wonderful ambassadors of their university.

Ruskin has a new and important audience in this rural area of the United States where they feel that his words speak to them and their situation. For communities with so low an expectation of meaningful employment and such little incentive for staying in education, this international link and our support is very important. We, and the university and its students, owe much to our Companion, Dr Kay Walter.



**The freshman English class sends a greeting to Companion Annie Creswick Dawson.**

# ARKANSAN INTIMACIES WITH JOHN RUSKIN

*Kay J. Walter*

For two weeks from mid-May 2016, I experienced ‘the best trip ever’, as my students declared it. Four students from rural Arkansas went with me to Great Britain for a travel seminar in British Authors. This upper-level university course afforded my students intimate learning opportunities which traditional classroom lectures cannot. They explored the homes, villages, birthplaces, workspaces, inspirations, and gravestones of many authors they knew from their studies. Not all of the authors’ names were familiar to them, though, and every day the students made new connections and experienced first-hand the organic nature of learning to develop vital networks of understanding. Increasingly the students became aware of new associations that inspired them to proclaim that they had enjoyed ‘the best day EVER’, but called upon to pinpoint a highlight of the trip at the end of it, they enthusiastically declared a new-found fondness for John Ruskin and the time they had spent studying him.

Students in my classrooms inevitably hear of Ruskin. Somehow his words, ideas, experiments, or humour find their way into every course I teach. His comments in ‘Of Queens’ Gardens’ about the flaws inherent in Lady Macbeth come up in my Shakespeare course. His views about Pre-Raphaelite art and his environmental concerns colour my students’ understanding of Victorianism in

‘World Literature’. His comments on the nature of Gothic culture as expressed in architecture inform my students’ views on medievalism in ‘British Literature I’. My drama class learns about the importance of reading ‘letter by letter’ from ‘Of Kings’ Treasuries’ and how focused and careful reading can aid comprehension. This enables them to share their understanding with an audience through the dramatic re-enactment of the plays we study. In every case, attention to detail yields not merely comprehension but an awareness of what is meaningful and an appreciation of the utility of understanding. This idea forms the foundation of my approach to teaching students what to read and how to learn.

Even my freshmen are charged with an assignment to read *The King of the Golden River* aloud to an audience and reflect on the challenge of presenting Ruskin to children. Most of my young learners are encountering Ruskin’s name for the first time, have no experience reading literature aloud, and grow up in homes without books. For some of them, this lesson is the first step towards reading as a habit. I rely on these students to help me share Ruskin with the world—one story at a time, one child at a time. For some, this fertile start bears fruit in future research projects and the choice of further coursework and fields of study.

Last fall, one such student decided to add a major focus in English literature to his course of study in Computer Information Systems. This dual programme is an example of a course that combines the traditional study of literature with the electronic and technological. But the classroom wasn’t enough to satisfy this young scholar. He wanted an intimate experience with the writers he hoped to learn about. In particular, he wanted to ‘experience’ John Ruskin as directly as possible.

My university is very keen on the concept of ‘service learning’, a new name for a very old method of learning, and an idea Ruskin would recognise and encourage. It involves volunteering time and effort to advance understanding of the material studied or eliminating challenges that complicate the chances of a group of people, in need of extra assistance, mastering that material. Such projects are often undertaken by education students training to teach young children. In such cases, service learning projects may take the form of reading books to classes of Primary school children, helping Secondary school students with homework after classes end for the day, or planting flowers near the door of a school for Special Needs students. Other fields of study occasionally take up the cause of service learning, but the study of English literature rarely includes it in any form.

I am convinced this is a pedagogical mistake. My students benefit greatly from any opportunity to manipulate the material they study. Attention spans are shorter among students of the current generation, and reading skills are less practiced. Students often struggle to acquire information solely by decoding text on a page. The more important the knowledge they must acquire, the greater my efforts to support and enhance their mastery must become. If I can invest their efforts to learn with personal relevance, and particularly if the efforts involve more than their eyes as pathways for learning, the likelihood of mastery increases. When they are thinking and moving and working with their eyes and ears and hands and hearts, such likelihood becomes a probability, and this is a concept Ruskin understood instinctively.

After all, the example of the young Oscar Wilde and Hardwicke Rawnsley, in cricket whites, building a road through the muddy swamp between Upper and Lower Hinksey, is a form of the same emphasis on manual labour that my students undertook at Brantwood. Ruskin intended the experience



Dave Charles (crouching) demonstrates how to build plant supports from natural materials to (left to right) Caleb Hayes, Brandi Mize and Amanda Moore in the gardens at Brantwood.



**UAM students don gloves for gardening work at Brantwood.**

work-day did not end there, though. They were allowed a tea break in the private area of the house and then taken out to the garden to learn about building plant supports from natural materials. Birch bracken and bamboo shoots were shaped into forms that would hold the coming blooms upright and tall, as budding plants blossomed

informed that my students accomplished in an hour what would have taken the Gardening Team a whole morning to do.

I suspect Ruskin would very much approve and that all education benefits from a service learning element. In the same way that teaching something enhances the understanding of the teacher, service learning will enhance the understanding of the learner by providing a context for comprehending its relevance and for recognising its needfulness. The service my students provided to Brantwood's ongoing efforts to promote the work of John Ruskin involved their hands as well as their intellects in embracing new ideas. Just as reading aloud provides additional input to assist students in learning their lessons by including the eyes and the ears in the teaching, involving the hands offers tactile sensations that also enhance the material we study.

However far removed my students are from Coniston, however unprepared they are to read Ruskin for themselves, however

detached they feel from academic, cultural, and international causes, they

are young learners that Ruskin in his Christian traditions would have insisted we champion. 'Suffer the little children,' Christ tells his disciples, and the Guild's interaction with my young scholars in Arkansas is much the same. While they are not

all 'children' in a technical sense, they are intellectually very young, and they are eager to undertake the

study of Ruskin.

to connect the lads to the needs of the villagers, to dirty their hands with the redemptive toil of manual labour undertaken on behalf of those in need and to focus their energy and attention on work resulting in material good.

When my students undertook a service learning project at Brantwood, it was not so grand an effort as roadbuilding. We did not have much time because we had only one day to spend at Ruskin's home. We were in no way able to undertake skilled labour. My students were inexperienced foreigners. However, they were enthusiastic and willing. Ruth and Dave Charles, the Gardening Team at Brantwood, were very kind in taking time out to oversee the effort of my learners.

Not all my students were teenagers. Members of the group ranged in age from nineteen to fifty-two. Some were healthier than others, or had more sedentary habits, or were more familiar with nature, or had more background knowledge and ability. Ruskin's idea of education always begins with health, so putting my learners out into the grounds of Brantwood seemed a perfect start. Tidying litter from the foreshore initially sounded to them like 'make work' meant to occupy their time and hands but otherwise unimportant, but Companion Paul Dawson, Chairman of the Friends of Ruskin's Brantwood, provided them with information about the historical significance of the harbour to Ruskin's ideas for his home and emphasised the ongoing need for its upkeep. We discussed Donald Campbell and the key role Brantwood's foreshore had played in his efforts to claim the world speed record. Dave passed around gloves and explained the prevailing wind patterns and the nature of water flow that results in debris from the lake finding its way to the shores of Brantwood. At this point, my learners were eager to don their work-clothes and take an active part in maintaining a space integral to the history and wonder of Brantwood. Their

in the early summer. Correctly assembled, the birch weaves into a stand nearly invisible beneath the bright blooms, showing the garden in its loveliest splendour. The bamboo bends into edging that fades from notice and accentuates the brightness of the plants inside its arches. My students took great pride in weaving the bracing webs of birch. Afterwards, they stood back and admired their handiwork with dirty gloves complemented by joy and pleasure obvious in their smiles.

Just before they flew home, Companion Nicholas Friend took them on a tour of the National Gallery which included lessons on the paintings of J.M.W. Turner. When he asked them about highlights of their trip, they declared their day at Brantwood the summit. Their hands-on efforts in Brantwood's gardens gave their lessons about John Ruskin and his ideas immediacy, and their manual labour gave them a feeling of ownership, a physical contribution to their learning which resulted in an intimacy and a fondness that sometimes that sometimes a page fail to produce. While I do not expect the Brantwood Gardening Team always to make time for my students' service learning, I was



**Student Pamela Jones.**



**(Left to right) UAM students Pamela Jones, Amanda Moore, Caleb Hayes, and Brandi Mize learn about Turner's paintings from Companion Nicholas Friend.**

# AMERICAN ART STUDENTS RESPOND TO JOHN RUSKIN AND MARCUS WAITHE: A REPORT

*Jane McKinne-Mayer*

**NOTE:** Companion Jane McKinne-Mayer is an art historian in the faculty of the Visual Studies Program at California College of the Arts (Oakland and San Francisco). Some quotations have been lightly edited for correctness and clarity.

For the last ten years at California College of the Arts (known as California College of Arts and Crafts until 2004) I have taught an annual seminar, ‘The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and the United States’. The course is open to third- and fourth-year students and invites enrollment from all divisions in the college—Humanities and Sciences, Design, Fine Arts, and Architecture. As we study many international expressions of Arts and Crafts, I encourage my students to think about Ruskinian and Arts and Crafts values that may still be present in their own areas of study and practice, and to share their reflections and responses in both class discussion and written form.

This year I added to my syllabus Companion Marcus Waithe’s fine Ruskin Lecture of 2015, *Ruskin and Craftsmanship*, published by the Guild. My request to reproduce the publication for educational use was met with enthusiastic permission and an invitation to share my students’ responses in *The Companion*.

The first reading assignment of the semester has always been Ruskin’s ‘The Nature of Gothic’, but this year I paired it with Dr Waithe’s talk, in order to give a contemporary perspective on Ruskin’s notions. In class, students summarised the main points of the readings and had a lively discussion that clearly expressed their appreciation of the two thinkers’ ideas. To ensure that each student (not just the talkative ones) engaged seriously with the reading, a follow-up assignment asked them to write a thoughtful two-page response about their own experiences as students of the arts, articulating what speaks to them and why. I was particularly gratified this year to find that, across the board, regardless of their diverse fields of study, students could relate to issues brought up by these two authors.

Here are some of the highlights from those papers, organised by topic. Students are identified by their major programs of study.

## **On imperfection**

### Animation major:

‘Ruskin greatly favored imperfection, thus adoring Gothic over Greek craftsmanship ... I do agree there is beauty in imperfection and the belief is still alive today in the art field, like the sayings “happy accident” or “turn that mistake into something great”. Making a mistake is unavoidable so it is impossible to dodge Ruskin even in modern life. However, Ruskin moves on to critique stern teachings and turning [the] artist into a machine who knows nothing but what they are taught even if they do it perfectly. And by deviating from teachings, the artist makes a

### **Ruskin and Craftsmanship**



### **Marcus Waithe**

**The Guild of St George**

handful of errors but he is made a man—he is humanized again. I have experienced this in illustration [class] recently when another student asked our instructor why he does not go over planning out successful rough sketches beforehand but only after we’ve done them. He told us it was because he wanted us to draw blindly and trust our own judgment before he steps in to give us extra help. So in Ruskin’s defense, yes, this is common in the art field and I agree with his statement. ... If there is anything that will continue to stick with me, it is Ruskin’s main belief and Waithe’s ending sentence about using our weaknesses and imperfections to bolster our strengths. At a certain point I will no longer have a teacher to rely on to tell me what to do and will have to trust my own judgment, but to do

that with confidence, I must fail a handful of times.’

### Graphic Design major:

‘To Ruskin it is more about the process and the effort of creating something than to aim for a perfected outcome. He also criticizes Renaissance artisans for creating work to become famous. These issues Ruskin is addressing relate to some of the issues graphic designers discuss. Some graphic designers follow a mold of what is considered desirable in the market. Some of these designers are paid large wages but are constrained by the people they work for. Other designers seek creative freedom to focus on projects that they would want to put 100% into; however, some are not always compensated very well for their work. I feel it relates to the idea that if workers have more freedom to create in any environment, their happiness will increase and thus their work will improve.’

## **On the machine**

### Glass major:

‘... I find Ruskin’s viewpoints to be a confirmation of the efforts I have been making in my own practice. I believe that no good art comes without revealing a level of craft and that the subject of a piece of art depends on the construct of the object. The two go hand in hand. In an era where mechanization has leveled the playing field, I lean towards Ruskin’s more “old school” belief that machines cause the soul to become mechanical. This contrasts [with] Waithe’s more contemporary opinion that there is a craftsmanship of operating a machine, and the craftsmanship of the building of a machine. While I agree to Waithe’s points that Ruskin disregards certain machinery that in fact helped the craftsmanship of specific trades like the loom or the potter’s wheel, the amount of technology that is now used for design and craft-based activities has caused anyone savvy enough to learn how to operate a machine to become a craftsperson. This leveling of the playing field due to the mechanical perfection of the machine denies the individual skill of the hand to develop and distinguish itself from other practitioners of the same craft.

... When [Ruskin] claims that machinery causes the maker’s soul to become mechanical, Waithe argues that many crafts

have benefited from the use of machines and points out the potter's wheel and weaver's loom as examples. I personally depart from Ruskin and agree with Waithe on this point ... It is undeniable that some technology is essential in evolving a craft to a higher level; however, the reliance on certain machines has caused a slippage in the skill of the hand. I see this in the field of design where 3D modeling and CNC/laser cutting type machines have allowed designers with no understanding of actual making to create complex objects with little to no real material sensitivity. ...'

#### Animation major:

'While Ruskin was all about idealizing and romanticizing the crafts, Waithe was a little more level-headed when it came to critiquing Ruskin. He acknowledged Ruskin had great influence but also knew Ruskin was still developing his ideas as he wrote about them, and also considered that we live in different times .... Waithe admits that Ruskin was wrong about machinery ... I agree with Waithe that machinery has done more good than harm to an artist's skill set, but I also agree with the both of them that steam is a problem as well.'

#### Photography major

'I, being a photographer who works with both film and digital formats, agree with what Waithe is stating. While a digital camera is technically a machine and lacks certain qualities that make film magical, it still has its own advantages and charms. And in a professional sense, a photographer is more likely to use a digital camera compared to film for one[']s work. Both of them have their own advantages and disadvantages to take into account.'

#### Film and Glass major:

[Regarding Waithe's discussion of planishing metal by hand versus machined imitations]: 'It is not enough to simply imitate the handmade. It misses the point entirely. It is in the consumer's best interest to have a work [made] completely by hand so that they can have the fulfillment [of] knowing they supported a system that celebrates true craftsmanship. ... a machine-produced object that simply mimics the handmade is a lie in the worst sense of the word.'

#### **On fact and design**

##### Photography major (minor in Visual Studies):

'In his section ... on Naturalism, Ruskin states that the ideal artist uses both fact and design to create a work. ... I agree that works of both fact and fiction are compelling because they often have a layer of mystery that allows the viewer to interact and have their own interpretation [of] the work. If

everyone were making work that was technically perfect, art would be boring and bland. An individual's creativity should be expected and praised regardless of technique mastery or lack thereof. Within my own work, I like to create narratives in photographs that are strange or unclear. I like when people have to wonder and work through the work, as opposed to understanding it within the moment of first seeing it. I use the technical skills I have to make these works, but I rely more on my creativity to make the photographs interesting.'

#### **On the designer as maker**

##### Glass major:

'Ruskin states that design should not be separated from the act of making, ... "the architect should work in the mason's yard with his men," meaning there needs to be a hands-on relationship between the concepts of what is being made and the actual construction of that idea. ... in my own practice I seek to reveal a higher level of craft that serves to illuminate any ideas I am also looking to convey.'

##### Film and Glass major:

[Regarding Ruskin's comparison of the repetitive production of glass beads versus the invention of glass cups and vessels]: 'In working glass myself I completely understand where he is coming from. ... Even today there is the conversation amongst glass blowers between the craftsperson and artist being two different things. There are whole shops completely devoted to producing works drawn by the "artist" and produced by the "craftsmen." Who is who in this? Truth be told, the person doing the designing *and* producing is held on a higher pedestal than those doing one or the other. ... it is in the craftsman's best interest to have created the work in its entirety. The fulfillment that person gains is ... from the heart inevitably.'

##### Graphic Design major:

'Waithe points out that Ruskin felt that craftsmen should be both designer and maker, otherwise it becomes a form of slavery for the makers. Something I have noticed in the graphic design world today is also this separation of designer and maker, especially in web design. A graphic designer's role is just to design what a website would look like or the concept of its functionality but the actual building of the website is coded by a programmer. Graphic designers have not learned the coding languages to actually create these sites so their vision can be quite limited on the possibilities of web design. Whereas the programmer's only job is to code,

having no creative involvement in the project. Looking from an Arts and Crafts perspective and using some of the ideas Waithe had mentioned, the gap between web designer and programmer should be filled in order for quality work to be made and to make web design more enjoyable and [of a] better quality.'

##### Graphic Design major:

'In *Ruskin and Craftsmanship*, Marcus Waithe claims that changes can be embraced when there is a mistake in a design[. He writes about] "a design that can be altered because the head remains engaged with the hand" (p. 25). This is an interesting idea which I find myself questioning often. In design practices (in comparison to fine arts) there are a lot of things that are very clearly right or wrong. This is especially true in typography. I can imagine that it would be even more so in architecture. In my experience, instructors only approve of straying from the rules when it is very obviously intentional, and there is reason to do so. This follows Ruskin's thought process of giving reason to every decision, however it almost seems as though it works backwards from his ideal situation. Rather than giving freedom from the get-go, we begin with rules and stray from them only under certain circumstances, usually becoming more free in the work after establishing rigid structure.'

##### Illustration major (minor in Visual Studies):

'Looking at Ruskin through a more contemporary lens with Waithe really frames how important the integrity of labor and craftsmanship was to Ruskin. He celebrated the Goths' and Saxons' "impulse to fabricate", often citing their ability to be flexible with their materials and environment through their design. However, the commercialization of goods removes the human aspect that makes craft and design enjoyable (both to produce and use). Waithe comments on Ruskin's argument for architects to "work in the mason's yard with his men", concluding that "manual labor is no degradation when it is governed by intellect" (p. 12). ... To me this further reinforces that work should involve more than just the hands, that it requires one's passion and thought. If more people could be truly invested in their work, the value of goods would be enough to maintain a strong economy. While this is a nostalgic, romanticized view of craftsmanship, there is merit to believing in honest invention and creation. As an art student, I greatly understand Ruskin's desire for society to become less apathetic about the materials and aesthetics of everyday life. A combination of discipline and forgiveness would benefit modern modes of design, as well as moral and political aspects of society.'

# ‘A DIFFERENT SPIRIT’: THE OPENING OF THE HORSFALL, MANCHESTER

Stuart Eagles

One of the most fascinating figures to emerge from my doctoral research at Oxford on Ruskin’s social and political legacies, was the philanthropist, Thomas Coglan Horsfall (1841-1932). My friend and fellow editor, Companion Sara Atwood, suggested to me years ago that I should write more about him for a free online encyclopaedia of informal education for which she had herself already written on Ruskinian topics. I took her up on it. And a couple of years later, I was asked by the Editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* to contribute Horsfall’s entry to that august publication—of course, it did help that he was also my thesis supervisor.

A couple of years further on, and Julie McCarthy (herself now a Companion) was appointed by 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to run its creative programmes. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street is a charity located on the corner of Great Ancoats Street and Jersey Street in the Ancoats area of Manchester. It supports the mental health and wellbeing of 11 to 25-year-olds, putting them at the centre of its therapies and activities. Julie’s inspired idea was to explore the district’s heritage as a means of stimulating creative activity and interest in the arts among the young people who go to the charity for support

Not for the first time, Google played a key role in what happened next, and Julie, having found my articles online, began a conversation with me about Thomas Horsfall and his Ancoats Art Museum, and we discussed how both could influence people’s lives today. I don’t claim any great credit for what has followed, but the opportunity to provide some historical context and moral support for such a worthy contemporary enterprise has been one of the great privileges of my life.

The main reason Horsfall had interested me is that he took practical steps to bring art and culture into the lives of ordinary people—and he

provided opportunities for them to experience the beauty of the natural world. He had read *Fors Clavigera*, and was directly inspired by Ruskin’s creation of the St George’s Museum in Walkley, above Sheffield. He recognised that the lives of many of the people who worked in his own cotton card factory were pretty miserable, and he took action to better them. He corresponded with Ruskin and William Morris. Ruskin told him that Manchester could not be redeemed, though he admired Horsfall’s effort nonetheless and supported his work.

The Art Museum attracted much popular support almost as soon as it opened in the mid 1880s. It was always more than a place in which to display exemplary works of art and craft (or copies, anyway). Short visits to the Peak and Lake Districts were organised from time to time—lectures, readings, poetry recitals and musical evenings, too. In many ways, the Art Museum was a mini Toynbee Hall for Ancoats, so it is hardly surprising that it eventually amalgamated with the Manchester University Settlement, which was also based in the district. At one time,

the arch-Ruskinian, John Howard Whitehouse, was Warden at the Settlement, and there were dozens of people involved with both institutions who actively built on the Ruskinian origins of Horsfall’s pioneering work. Julie McCarthy has expertly gathered a team around her and has led a major project to revive the ‘different spirit’ of Ancoats’s

Ruskinian heritage (to borrow Horsfall’s own phrase). My proudest achievement in this story has been to bring the Guild, so central to Thomas Horsfall’s early inspiration, well and truly into 42<sup>nd</sup>



The Horsfall.

Street’s orbit. Readers of this magazine have read in earlier issues accounts of Guild-sponsored visits by 42<sup>nd</sup> Street’s young people to Grizedale Arts in the Lake District, and the work of other groups to photograph Ancoats’s heritage. The Guild also played a part in Companion Amy Woodson-Boulton’s visit to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street last year with her students from Los Angeles, California. Their help in researching aspects of the life and work of Thomas Horsfall and the history of the Art Museum has resulted in a splendid website, and I commend it to readers who want to explore the rich context in which 42<sup>nd</sup> Street’s creative programme sits: see <http://horsfall.history.lmu.build/introduction>.

The Guild has also been on board from the start as a key supporter of the charity’s major project to bring a decaying and empty corner-shop on their site into use as a new creative centre. It couldn’t be called anything other than The Horsfall.



Julie McCarthy.



Getting creative at The Horsfall.

It is testament to the vision, dedication and nerve of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street's trustees and managers that, when they commissioned the design of a bespoke building from which to operate their vital services, they chose not to demolish 87 Great Ancoats Street. The history of that building is fascinating. The shop was used for many different purposes in its 200+ year history. Most intriguingly, Ancoats Valvona ran the Colroc Biscuit Company from the premises, and registered a patent in 1902 for apparatus to bake 'biscuit cups' for ice cream—the edible successor to the glasses in which the 'penny licks' were often unhygienically served.

The Horsfall combines the inspiration of Thomas Horsfall's Victorian museum with 42<sup>nd</sup> Street's modern-day sense of purpose. Added to that is the energy and drive of Julie McCarthy, the unhesitating support of myriad well-wishers, and vital funding from

Horsfall now rises as a beacon of creative hope. It offers opportunities for young people to participate in, enjoy—and often to lead—a range of arts events and creative activities.

The official opening in January this year was a magical occasion. This modest former shop on three storeys burst dramatically back into life with crowds of people packed inside to see, and celebrate, what had been achieved. There were displays exploring the history of the district, the site, the charity and the project, and dozens of young people got involved in



**The Master addresses the crowds.**

partially refurbished using green oak from the Guild's woodlands in Ruskin Land in the Wyre Forest. Whilst that didn't work out, for reasons not worth going in to here, there is a heartening postscript, the full weight of which will be measured in a forthcoming issue of the magazine. Thanks to the generosity of the Benjamin Creswick Fund, provided by Companion Annie



**Celebrating the opening of The Horsfall.**

the Heritage Lottery Fund. It has breathed new life into an old place, and it follows in a strong Mancunian tradition of buildings re-purposed to suit modern needs.

Comprehensively renovated—one of the four walls had to be reattached to the rest of the building, and staircases that had been missing for years were reinstated—The

hands-on activities. The energy that flowed from this creative confluence of past inspirations, present concerns and future ambition filled us all with an energising sense of hope.

The Horsfall promises a creative future for the young people whose challenges take them to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in the first place.

It offers a community embracing new opportunities a chance to tackle numerous local disadvantages. That is surely why the venue was shortlisted this summer for the Spirit of Manchester awards—recognition for the places and people that make a difference to a city cruelly devastated earlier this year by an attack at the heart of one of its most iconic music venues, packed at the time with young people and their families.

It had been hoped at one point that The Horsfall could be

Creswick Dawson, a group of six young women from 42<sup>nd</sup> Street spent four days in September living the outdoor life in Ruskin Land. Demonstrating true creative purpose, and channelling Creswick's Ruskinian faith in hand-craft, they made—with the help and support of the Wyre Community Land Trust, volunteers and experts—a wooden pergola and garden furnishings to transform the courtyard of The Horsfall into a haven. The area, which is set back from the busy main road and separated from it by a wall that often doubles as public art space, links the old building to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street's modern centre.

The peaceful and beautiful new garden will doubtless bear spiritual fruit for the many young people who will be able to benefit from it in the years to come. The Ruskin Land oak provides a material link to the Ruskinian heritage and inspiration of Thomas Horsfall's Art Museum, and of the new and enduring relationship between 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and the Guild of St George.

*All images: thanks to 42nd Street.*



# A REMARKABLE FRIEND: WILLIAM TOWLER KINGSLEY (1815 - 1916)

*Clive Wilmer*

In my other life, as many of you know, I teach at the University of Cambridge where I'm a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. Soon after my election to a Fellowship in 2004 I became aware that at least one other Ruskin enthusiast had been a Fellow of Sidney before me: a man named William Towler Kingsley who was at the College from 1836 to 1859. By the world at large, Kingsley has been unjustly (if unsurprisingly) forgotten, but he really was an extraordinary person.

Not the least remarkable fact about him was his longevity. In 2015 the College celebrated the bicentenary of his birth and the following year, 2016, the centenary of his death. Born when his grandfather was fighting at Waterloo, he died as the Battle of the Somme was running its dreadful course. From a humble family, he went up to St John's College in 1834. He was a *sizar*: that is to say, a poor person who paid for his education by working part-time as a college servant. He migrated to Sidney in 1836 and on graduation was elected to a Fellowship. In 1859 he resigned his Fellowship in order to get married and was granted the living of St Wilfrid's Church, South Kilvington in North Yorkshire. This was one of the parishes in Sidney's gift and Kingsley remained the Rector there until his death in 1916. Already in 1908 he was being referred to as 'England's oldest living rector'. That might suggest that the post was a sinecure, but all reports suggest that Kingsley, despite being profoundly deaf (which he had been from his teens), was vigorously active in the parish and popular with his parishioners.

What drew me to Kingsley was his friendship with both Turner and Ruskin. It was as collectors of Turner watercolours that Ruskin and Kingsley got to know each other. There is a lot of evidence that Ruskin held Kingsley in high regard, listing him in *Praeterita* as one of his inner circle of 'old and tried friends'—a friend to whom I always have recourse when I want to be precisely right in any matter.' The matters they discussed were not only artistic ones; more often than not they would be discussing geology or botany or, indeed, any number of things.

In 1878, Ruskin suffered his first full mental breakdown. At the time, he had been preparing to exhibit his substantial Turner collection at the Fine Art Society in Bond Street. Too frail to complete the catalogue, he asked Kingsley to finish it for him. The



Lionel Fawkes, Portrait drawing of William T. Kingsley (1902).

trust and respect expressed in such a decision derived in large part from the taste he discerned in Kingsley's own collection. It is disappointingly difficult to find out precisely which pictures Kingsley owned, but at least three of them have been identified: 'Prudhoe Castle, Northumberland' (c.1825), now in the British Museum;

'The Red Rigi' (1842), in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne; and 'Dawn after the Wreck' (c. 1841) in the Courtauld Institute Gallery in London. The latter typifies the work of Turner's last decade, when his paintings were defended by Ruskin against adverse criticism in the press. It is also recorded that Kingsley gave Ruskin a Turner drawing of a jay. This may be 'Dead Jay' (c.1815-20), a watercolour in the Leeds City Art gallery.

I am also interested in the history of the other Cambridge university, Anglia Ruskin (ARU). I spent a period teaching there when it was the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology (CCAT) and in its early years as a University I was elected one of its Honorary Fellows. As it happens, it has connections not only with Ruskin but with Kingsley too, for it has one of its origins in the Cambridge School of Art, founded in 1858 as part of a national drive to reform British design. Kingsley was one of a small group of young dons, led by William Beamont of Trinity, who favoured the new institution. My guess is that it was Kingsley who persuaded Ruskin to give the new School's inaugural lecture—a considerable achievement, for the Cambridge Inaugural, which reflects on the character of good design and how it can be taught, is one of the most important of Ruskin's lectures.

Did Kingsley have anything to do with the



J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), *Dawn after the Wreck* (c.1841).  
Watercolour. 251 x 368 mm.

School's location? It began in Sidney Street, not far from the College, in what had previously been the Mechanics' Institute. After the lecture, Ruskin was Kingsley's guest, and the two of them were joined for dinner—I presume in his Sidney rooms—by a mutual friend, the brilliant Master of Trinity William Whewell, who was also a Turnerian. This gathering of three exceptional polymaths must have made for dazzling conversation. As for the School, it subsequently merged with the Technical Institute on Cambridge's East Road to become what I remember from the 1960s as the Cambridge 'Tech' and from the 1980s as CCAT. Three further mutations led to the birth, in 2005, of Anglia Ruskin University.

If Whewell and Ruskin were polymaths, they were as nothing compared to Kingsley. His recreations are listed in the *Who's Who in Yorkshire* for 1912 as 'gardening, fishing, drawing, astronomy, microscopy and boat building.' That is a very bald summary. A highly musical man, Kingsley built the organ at St Wilfrid's himself. Fascinated by microscopy, he learned how to grind lenses. Like Ruskin, he was interested in the conservation of art works—one of the many concerns the two friends shared—and restored watercolours. He was a keen enthusiast for photography and, as Richard Humphreys remarks in his history of Sidney

Sussex, it may well have been Kingsley who, in 1843, brought William Fox Talbot to the College, where he took a photograph of Chapel Court.

He seems to have been successful as a don. He was Taylor Lecturer in the University and became Tutor at Sidney in 1843. He was involved in the teaching of natural science, then a new subject in Cambridge. With a talent for art as well, he was for many years employed by the army as an examiner in technical drawing.

So he seems to have been fulfilled and was clearly very popular as well. But he did have two tragic experiences. The first was as a young Proctor in 1846. A nineteen-year-old girl named Elizabeth Howe from one of the villages was identified to him as a prostitute. The Proctors are the University's Disciplinary Officers and one of their duties in the mid-nineteenth century was to protect undergraduates from immoral behaviour, so Kingsley had Elizabeth Howe arrested and imprisoned in the University's house of correction. Her cell proved to be damp and cold with neither heating nor window-glazing. As a result, she caught a rheumatic fever and quickly died. The Proctorial system was denounced by the Coroner and Kingsley specifically named. We don't know how he responded, but the evidence

of his life does not suggest a man who took such matters lightly.

The other tragic circumstance concerns Kingsley's love life. He seems to have fallen deeply in love with Alicia, the daughter of William Wilkins, architect of (in Cambridge) Downing College and the screen at King's and (in London) of the National Gallery. He proposed to her in 1853, and because Fellows had to be bachelors, he applied for the living of South Kilvington. The current incumbent was elderly and expected to die soon, but he held on till 1859. As soon as Kingsley heard the news, the couple married, but ten days later, on their honeymoon, Alicia died.

Kingsley was now committed to Kilvington and set off for his new position in a state of considerable gloom. But he soon found many activities there to engage him and developed relationships with his parishioners. He made music and drew pictures. He started building boats and gardening, he carved sculptural decoration in the woodwork of his church and added a conservatory to his Rectory. In 1864 he married again and his subsequent life seems to have been happy. He became a famous figure in the North Riding and, on his hundredth birthday, the villagers hoisted a flag on the Kilvington village green and the bells at nearby Thirsk were rung in celebration.

## RUSKIN MILL IN BIRMINGHAM

On Friday, 16 June, the Hive Café officially opened on Vittoria Street in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter. Part of Ruskin Mill Trust's development of the New Standard Works, the café is managed by Companion Gareth Pert, formerly of Gerry's Bakery in Walkley, Sheffield.

One of the key features of RMT's educational programme is to encourage students to learn about our relationship with the land through hands-on involvement in planting, growing and harvesting. The students then wash, prepare and cook the wholesome food in the kitchens for consumption by others. The site is still being developed, but in addition to the kitchens and café, it has craft rooms and workshop areas, and the most magnificent roof garden with a large poly-tunnel. It crowns the building and very much symbolises the revitalisation and re-purposing of the buildings of Birmingham's industrial past.

The café, which is open to the public and forms an important community resource, is run with the assistance of the students themselves. Ruskinians will be delighted by wall decorations and displays in the café which explore Birmingham's heritage, with a particular focus on Ruskin's legacy, thanks to the work of Ruth Nutter, Producer of *Ruskin in Sheffield*, who is a consultant to RMT's Birmingham project.

The Guild sends its heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the team at RMT, notably Companions Aonghus Gordon, Janine Christley and Gareth Pert. *SE*.



# ON THE ALBAN MOUNT: RUSKIN AND GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

*Jim Spates*

My soul hung tranced in joy beyond all measure,  
And yearning for yet more as I moved on  
Through those the first fruits of eternal pleasure.

—Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Purgatorio*, XXIX: 31-33 [John Ciardi translation].



**This Ruskin watercolour—‘Arricia, near Albano’ (1841)—was painted at or very near the rest stop mentioned during the family’s return trip to Rome a few weeks later. It can be viewed at Abbot Hall, Kendal.**

6 January 1841. Rain is falling as the family—a twenty-two year old John Ruskin, his father, John James, his mother, Margaret, his cousin (and the older Ruskins’ unofficially adopted daughter) Mary Richardson—depart from Rome. They are traveling south, on the first leg of what will become a journey of 120 miles, an excursion that will deliver them in three days’ time to Naples, its beautiful Bay, and, in due course, to Vesuvius, Pompeii, the Amalfi Coast, and Paestum. As usual, John James has hired the best local driver, Guido, and he has diligently collected information on the best hotels and rest stops, much of it gleaned from conversations with fellow travellers whom the little company has met as, over the months which have elapsed since they left England in September, they made their studious way to and through most of the cultural sites of France and the Italian northwest. Earlier journeys in 1833 and 1835, like this punctuated by extended stops, had taken them to Switzerland and the Alps. The excursions had so enthralled the youngest Ruskin that, as his next half-century elapses, he would again and again travel these roads, eventually christening them, with reverence, his ‘Old Road’.

But on this day, his road is hard going. The rain, which fell almost without a break during the last weeks of their stay in Rome, has transformed the road, never a happy passage at the best of times, into a congeries of ruts and mud-slicks that, in some places, are all but impossible to navigate. About ten miles from the metropolis, the downpour relents and, after brisk winds have dispersed most of the lingering storm clouds, the long-sequestered sun makes an attempt to regain control of the sky. Still, by the time five more arduous miles have slid beneath their wheels, every member of the entourage—including four horses—is in serious need of a rest. As they make a right turn into a road which promises a steep descent, John James leans out of the compartment to inform Guido that he has heard that a fine rest stop lies ahead. Guido nods and replies that, once they reach the bottom of this hill, it will be but a half mile on; it is a fine tourist house, highly regarded for its food and drink. Situated on the flat campagna (countryside), it boasts lovely views of the ancient hillside town of Albano above and the Mediterranean—today an entrancing cobalt blue—to the west.

The repast proves to be as delicious as Guido promised. But, as it nears its end, it is clear that young Ruskin is bored. Admiring the view of Albano above, he thinks that, if he can but gain a better prospect, he will have an exceptional view of the entire region, which is now shimmering in the sunshine. Sensing that everyone else will be content to rest somewhat longer before they resume their journey south, he asks his parents if they mind his taking some little time to climb the mount leading toward Albano. He is well-aware, of course, that they *will* mind, as they always do when, for any length of time, their treasured son is out of their sight. With reluctance they agree, but not before issuing their standard warning that he take *extraordinary* care on his walk and securing a promise that he will return within the hour.<sup>1</sup>

Before 15 minutes have passed, the fit, light-footed Ruskin is halfway up the mount. As he climbs, he delights to discover that, with each step, the view becomes more entrancing. He pauses to take it in. As he does, he is all but overwhelmed by an experience so powerful that he will include a description of it in a book taking shape in his mind, a book he will call *Modern Painters*, which, when it is published two years later, will create—in significant measure because of the many passages which echo the one describing his experience on the Alban Mount—a sensation throughout the literary and artistic worlds of Britain and America.

At a distance of nearly 175 years, it is difficult to express how electrifying the reading of *Modern Painters* was for its readers. One reaction serves as summary for many. Vida Scudder, Professor of English Literature at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, wrote in 1901 that the first volume of *Modern Painters* was ‘written in a language such as people had never heard before, a language between poetry and prose—supple like prose, yet with the imaginative fervor of poetry. It was full of passages of description where the melodious sound seemed almost to present physical images to the senses. It glowed with color, throbbled with music.’<sup>2</sup>

No one in England or America, surely no one in the small touring party that had

paused that cool January day on its bumpy road to Naples, has any inkling that, halfway up a not especially noteworthy hill in central Italy, one of the most splendid passages in English literature is about to be born, a passage so exquisitely crafted that those reading it will be utterly charmed by Ruskin's ability to create in their imaginations, in the way that only the greatest writer can, the beauty he has seen.

It had been wild weather when I left Rome and, all across the campagna, the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct, lighting up the infinity of its arches like the bridge of chaos.<sup>3</sup>As I climbed the long slope of the Alban Mount, the storm swept finally to the north and the noble outline of the domes of Albano and graceful darkness of its ilex grove, rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber, the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep palpitating azure, half ether and half dew. The noonday sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia<sup>4</sup> and their masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it colour. It was conflagration. Purple, and Crimson, and Scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle. The rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life, each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every blade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset, the motionless masses of dark rock—dark though flushed with scarlet lichen—casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound. And over all, the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and orbed

repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding luster of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea. (*Works*, 3.278-280)

Ruskin's description of these few minutes was so captivating that, when reviews of *Modern Painters* appeared, it was noticed by many as a prime example of his ability to make nature 'come alive' in a way no other writer *ever* had. Reacting to this praise in the early 1880s as he composed his autobiography, *Praeterita*, Ruskin said that, in truth, what had happened on that day was not unusual. 'Everything', he wrote, recollecting the years of his childhood and youth, 'came blissful to me'; he liked 'small things for being small, great for being great, the weak for their weakness, and the strong for their strength ... I had also a sensual faculty of pleasure in sight, as far as I know, unparalleled' (*Works*, 35.619).<sup>5</sup> 'That [Alban Mount] passage', he noted elsewhere, 'is merely the description of one of the thousand thousand sights and scenes which were then the delight of life to me ...' (*Works*, 35.625).<sup>6</sup>

Hindus and Buddhists call such moments 'experiences in God-Consciousness', instants when, of a sudden, the veil that usually obscures our sight lifts and we are able to 'cross the bridge of chaos' to find ourselves in 'God's tabernacle', surrounded by 'rejoicing trees' whose 'every separate leaf quivers with buoyant and burning life'; from which marvellous vantage-point we can see, glancing toward the horizon, a 'crystalline sea', 'the waves of which break over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars', see 'the white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where the campagna melts into the blaze of the sea', and, should we take a moment to look down, see that 'every blade of grass burns like the golden floors of heaven'. It was a moment so amazing that Ruskin noted in his diary that he 'got quite sick with delight'.<sup>7</sup>

Over two hundred years ago in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), William Blake, who often had visions like Ruskin's, wrote (creating one of his most notable metaphors), 'If the *doors of perception* were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is: Infinite. For man has closed himself up and sees all things through the narrow chinks of his cavern'. God Consciousness: that extraordinary moment when we discover, as a renowned Eastern thinker described it, 'the already existing thing that has been so long hidden' and absorb the truth of the great mystical saying, '*I am that; thou are that; All this is nothing but that; and never has been anything but that*'.

A few people in all cultures at all times

report such experiences. Analyzing such accounts a century ago, William James affirmed not only their reality, but suggested that, eventually, they might prove to be 'the truest of insights into the meaning of life'.<sup>8</sup> Rarely do these episodes last long. In minutes, often in moments, the wonders which are immediately ineffable and which, in memory, become transcendental, fade, and are gone. The doors of perception close, the veil descends again, and we find ourselves on an ordinarily lovely hill, gazing out at an ordinarily lovely scene, near an ordinarily lovely ancient Italian town. Following this retreat, almost always a feeling of depression comes, a melancholy caused not so much by our inability to go on perceiving the magnificences previously hidden, but by our awareness that the magnificences are still *there*, just beyond the veil. It is like having a cold in the soul.

Colds have a unique ability: the power to temporarily disable some of our senses: taste, smell, hearing, sometimes even sight.

Experiencing such dullness, we *know* our impounded sensibilities are still functioning, still performing their excellent and helpful tasks. But, like our failure to appreciate the sun's beneficence after it dips beneath the horizon, our faculty for experiencing such pleasures is vitiated. No attempt to halt the senses from numbing, or to entice them to return once they have numbed, matters a whit. We can only wait for that moment when the virus loosens its grip. So it is—all the experiential literature suggests—with these joyous moments in God-Consciousness.

Twenty minutes later, just as his allotted hour is up, Ruskin is back with his parents and Mary. Other than saying that his ascent to higher ground was 'most pleasant', he says nothing of what happened. Previous experience has taught him that, when he tries to tell others of these experiences, his listeners can't really grasp what he is talking about. But he is not especially bothered about it. He knows that the moments in God-Consciousness will recur, although he can never predict when or where. While they are not as frequent as when he was a child, for the most part, everything still does come blissful to him: he will again cross the bridge of chaos, see the rejoicing trees whose every leaf quivers with buoyant, burning life. Perhaps on the Amalfi Coast?

Minutes later the small party proffers its thanks to the pleasant rest-house keeper, assuring him that, on their return trip, they will dine there again. Then, with a well-rested Guido in charge, they climb to their usual seats in the coach and resume the jarring trip south, during most of which the young man who not long ago had descended from the Alban Mount, keeps more to himself than usual, lost, or so it seems to the others, in reverie and wonder.

## NOTES

[1] For a brief description, see *Works*, 38.229. The whole of the Library Edition can be read online and downloaded from <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/ruskinlib/Pages/Works.html>.

[2] Vida Scudder, *An Introduction to the Writings of John Ruskin* (Boston: Sibley, 1901; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn) p. 25.

[3] An image from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book X, Line 312) signifying the causeway

separating heaven and hell.

[4] A local name for the Alban Mount.

[5] This is a passage which was not published but found among Ruskin's notes for *Praeterita*.

[6] Another unpublished passage found with the *Praeterita* notes. For our subject's 'on site' (and considerably more prosaic) descriptions, see the diary entries for 6 January and 20 March 1841 in *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, eds Joan Evans and J. H.

Whitehouse (3 vols) (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 1956): 1.135-137, 168; hereafter, *Diaries*.

[7] *Diaries*, 1.136.

[8] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longman, 1902) p. 420. This remains, in my view, the best study of the topic. For his analysis of experiences in 'God-Consciousness', see chapters xvi and xvii.

## Hanley, Keith, & Hull, Caroline S. (eds): *John Ruskin's Continental Tour, 1835: the written records and drawings* (London: Legenda, 2016).

I must declare an interest. I began to transcribe Ruskin's 1835 diary in 1948—sixty-nine years ago. My transcription was never completed because I was side-tracked into extracting from the 1853 diary references to Ruskin's visit to Glenfinlas and the painting of Millais's Glenfinlas portrait of Ruskin. Many years ago I began a list of 'Suggestions for possible articles and research'. High on the list was Ruskin's 1835 Tour.

My next real contact with the Ruskin diaries was in 1958. Returning from our honeymoon, my wife and I had to call in at the Oxford University Press offices to retrieve the diaries from where they had been lodged after Joan Evans had finished with them, in order to return them to Bembridge. In the introduction to her edition of the Ruskin *Diaries*, Evans expresses her thanks to three ladies who had 'helped in the deciphering or elucidation of the Diaries'. Whether or not Joan Evans, as sole editor (Whitehouse's name appears on the title page as editor purely out of courtesy) checked the secretaries' transcripts against the originals, I know not. However, the present editor, on page 39, notes that in the new edition he is 'occasionally correcting the only previously published version ...'. However, in the text he fails to indicate where his transcription differs from the previous edition. In an academic edition this is a strange omission.

At the beginning of June 1835 the Ruskin family—mother, father, John, Mary Richardson (who by then was living with them), and Ann Strachan (who would act as Margaret Ruskin's maid)—left Herne Hill to undertake a tour of Europe which would occupy them until December. They travelled through France and Switzerland into Italy. On arrival on the continent, they were met by Salvador who acted as their courier throughout the journey.

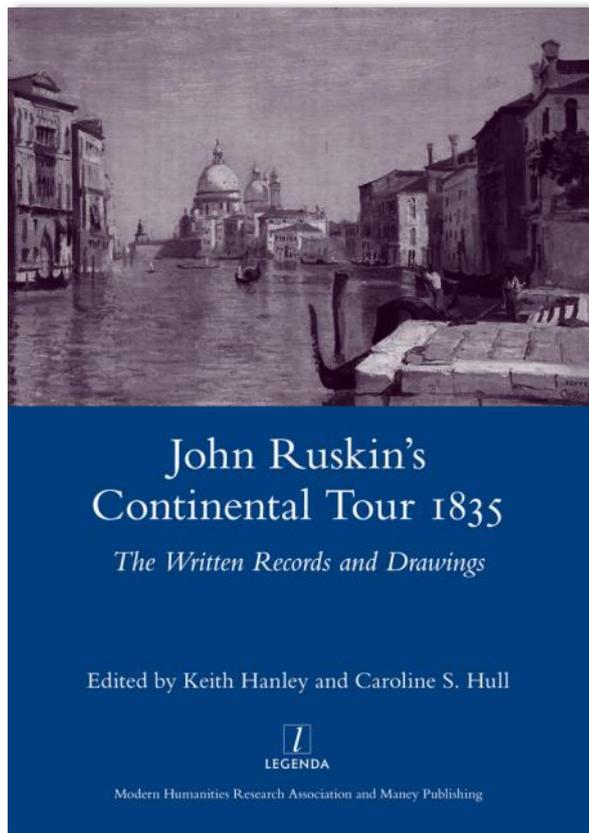
Sixteen-year-old John kept a very detailed diary of the tour. He recorded the weather and the shade of blue of the sky, and the landscape and its geology. In addition to writing his diary he made an extensive series of drawings recording both landscape and

architecture.

Ruskin also wrote a very long poetical account of 'A Tour through France to Chamouni'. There is also a long rhyming account of the tour, sent as a letter to his friend Richard Fall, and another to Willoughby Jones. All of these are included in the present volume. There is also a group of shorter poems subsequently generated by the tour. John James Ruskin, Ruskin's father, also kept a partial diary of the tour, covering the journey between Poligny (30 June) and Venice (6 October)—RF MS 32 at the Ruskin Library, University of Lancaster, but I don't know when or how it came into the Whitehouse Collection.

Bibliographically speaking, Ruskin's 1835 diary is described in the 'Textual Notes' as being written in a 'red leather notebook'. It does not mention that the volume is preserved in a blue calf slip case—and this is important. The final footnote to the transcript of the diary says that 'There is a sketch of an unidentified building at the foot of the back cover'. What it omits to mention is that there are two blank pages following the final diary entry. This final entry in itself occupies more than one page of the manuscript, and the diary probably stopped there because Ruskin knew there was insufficient space for the next day's entry.

I can't believe that the meticulous young Ruskin, having recorded the tour in such detail, gave up because he ran out of space. I am sure that another notebook would have been bought to continue the record of the tour. That this second volume is now 'lost' is evident. Presumably it was lent to someone and not returned, or lost in the move from Herne Hill to Denmark Hill, or Denmark Hill to Oxford or even Brantwood. All we can be reasonably sure



of is that it was not at Brantwood in February 1892 when W. G. Collingwood catalogued 'The Drawings and Papers at Brantwood' (a manuscript now in my collection). A few years later, many of the papers at Brantwood were bound or put into slip-cases at the behest of Alexander Wedderburn. He almost certainly had the case made for the 1835 Diary—confirming that there was only the single volume then at Brantwood. Perhaps one day the second volume will emerge.

In her catalogue of the 1835 drawings, Caroline Hull lists 124 examples—*plein air* pencil sketches, or pen-and-ink or watercolour versions worked up from the originals—executed either in their hotels in the evenings, or later at home. Of all these drawings, she reproduces a mere 43 examples. In a book of this significance, I would have expected the publisher to have been more generous!

The drawings are a nice mix of landscapes to complement the diary, and architecture, largely missed by the diarist. Among my favourites are the on-the-spot pencil drawing (No. 43) of 'Mount Pilatus from [the tranquil] Lake of Lucerne' and the watercolour reproduced in colour on the cover of the book, of the same subject whipped up into a turbulent thunderstorm (No. 44).

Two others are of a street scene in St Gall (No. 84, the pencil sketch, and No. 85, the worked-up pen-and-ink version). Of the two, I prefer the pencil sketch; the ink version is much more rigid. But here I must take issue with the catalogue and cataloguer. No. 65 was certainly owned by J. H. Whitehouse ('by 1938'). This is the publication date of Whitehouse's *Ruskin the Painter and his works at Bembridge*, in which the drawing is listed. A search of the Stevens and Brown files at Lancaster may have revealed an accurate acquisition date. More importantly, the provenance of No. 84 is given as 'W. G. Collingwood, Sotheby's

February 1966; J. H. Whitehouse; Ruskin Library'. Whitehouse had been dead for eleven years when I bought this drawing for the Bembridge collection. It would have been better listed as 'Whitehouse Collection'—although that phrase wasn't coined until the collection moved from Bembridge to Lancaster.

No. 1 in the catalogue is 'Dover from the sea' and Nos. 3 and 4 are 'Calais from the sea'. I wonder what evidence there is that Dover was drawn on the outward journey, and not on the return?

This catalogue of the 1835 drawings is incomplete. Many of the drawings, for example, are listed as being in the 'Morgan Library, New York (Viljoen Box 5; 1974.49.318)'. I am almost certain that all of the 1835 drawings in Helen Viljoen's collection were bequeathed to her by F. J. Sharp who bought them either directly from Violet Severn at Brantwood before the dispersal sales, or from local dealers following the 1931 sale. I know that Sharp would have condemned this lack of

completeness, but would have welcomed the inclusion of his name in the provenance. After all, it was the lack of any acknowledgement of letters which Sharp made available to Whitehouse for use in the latter's *Vindication of Ruskin* that resulted in Sharp refusing permission for the 1830 Diary and the Brantwood Diary (both in his collection) to be included in Joan Evans's edition of the *Diaries*.

The present volume is a useful gathering in one place of everything so far available relating to this important tour. Additionally there is Keith Hanley's introductory essay on Ruskin's early travels. (The sea voyage to Scotland in 1822 began from Hunter Street — they didn't move to Herne Hill until the following year.) Published for the first time is Ruskin's father's diary. And the Catalogue of Drawings is valuable. Everyone trying to put together a complete Ruskin collection will need this book.

James S. Dearden

## Nichols, Aidan: *All Great Art is Praise: Art and Religion in John Ruskin* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017).

I have it on trustworthy authority that Aidan Nichols writes beautifully. The fact that he has previously written much important research, particularly on Hans Urs von Balthasar, and that The Catholic University of America Press produced the current volume, argue loudly in its favor. Though I am an easy sell for books with Ruskin's name in the title, the quotation from Stuart Eagles that graces the back of its dustjacket ultimately convinced me to read *All Great Art is Praise*. From personal experience, I can only say that this is certainly a well-written book in the sense of being a thorough, carefully-researched, and heavily-documented tome about John Ruskin. Its thesis is presented overtly and early on, and the point is rehearsed often throughout the text. Its structure is clearly chronological. Its organisation is obvious and logical. In short, it is not a bad book though not one, I think, of which Ruskin would approve the prolonged study that reading it in its entirety demands.

In 'Of Kings' Treasuries', Ruskin divides 'the books of the hour' from 'the books of all time'. Nichols's book is a good book of the hour, and Ruskin's essay insists on the importance of such books in our everyday reading. That I take issue with Nichols's ideas is of no real consequence. His lengthy and comprehensive attempts to summarise Ruskin's works indicate clearly that he has read widely in the Library Edition and through such related reference books as

came readily to hand. Nevertheless, Nichols's insistence that 'the weight of evidence, as [he sees] it, puts the burden of disproof' of his thesis on his readers seems a petty attempt to justify an ultimately insupportable idea (p. xii). It reveals a serious limitation in Nichols's reading of Ruskin. Although the author realises fully, insists even, on Ruskin's nonconformity in other matters, he cannot seem to grasp that this quality extends to Ruskin's spiritual beliefs, particularly in matters of religion. What seems contradictory to Nichols would in no way challenge the faith of one raised with an Evangelical bent, converted to Anglicanism, rescued from agnostic temptations, and ultimately at peace with a spiritual journey.

Instead, Nichols tries to read Ruskin's entire life—even his marriage—as tending toward Catholicism. His acceptance of the notion that Ruskin and Effie avoided consummation early on solely to avoid pregnancy during Alpine climbs troubles me not nearly so much as obvious mistakes such as Nichols's claim that on Ruskin's 1876 visit to Venice he was 'close to [his] first episode of [mental] unHINGING' (p. 323). This breakdown was, in fact, Ruskin's second. Ruskin's first collapse had actually occurred five years earlier in Matlock. Though all Ruskin scholars admire the work of Cook and Wedderburn, the idea that they were 'all-seeing editors's seems to dismiss the value

of ongoing research and undermines the author's ability to convince me of the validity of his interpretation (p. 533). Furthermore, Nichols is very exacting in his square bracketing of initial letters where the use of upper or lower cases are altered from the original text. This habit suggests he is particular and exact in quotations, but he is not.

On p. 147, Nichols incorporates Ruskin's words thus: 'This is how he puts it'—but it isn't. What follows is a paraphrase accented by some of Ruskin's exact wording but enclosed in quotation marks as if it were a direct quote. The long quote on p. 148 includes this mistake, 'that there have a been a pause'. I noted four other errors in the quotations on this page alone. The troubling division of the word 'our' on p. 150 ('[o]' at the end of one line and 'ur' to start the next), the strange insertion of a superfluous comma on p. 151 ('not only the companions but the successors, of our pilgrimage'), and the obvious typo on p. 154 ('But the consideration that weights [sic] more') seem glaringly apparent to even a hurried reader pressed for time. The typo on p. 178 ('If the question of architectural structure were as straightforward as Ruskin claims in [sic] to be in his first lecture ... ') would be readily forgivable if it did not make me suppose that there are many more such errors, more difficult to spot and of much greater consequence to the ideas. Such difficulties undermined my confidence

in Nichols's authority to speak about Ruskin at all.

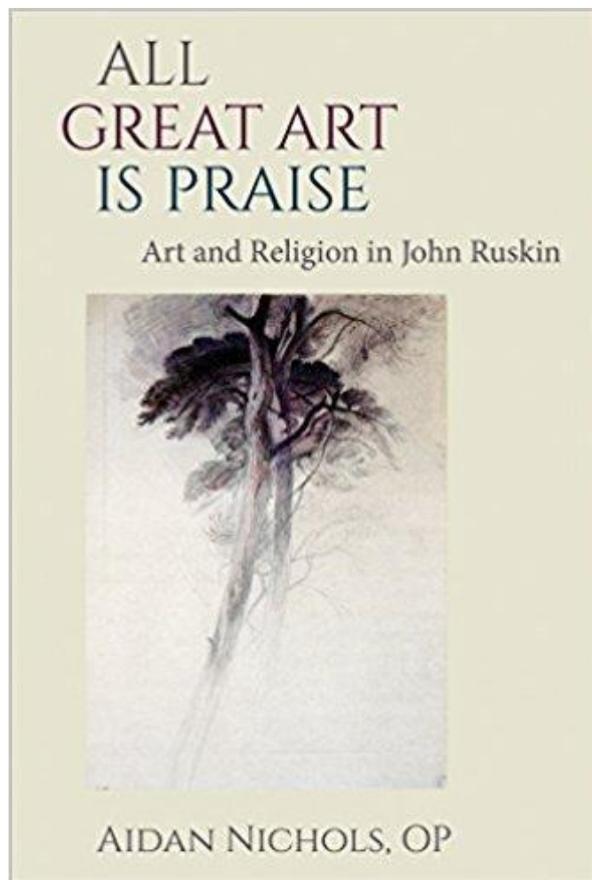
The book's genuine strength is its reliance on quoting Ruskin. Many pages include lengthy in-set quotes, which are a joy to read. Unfortunately, they are printed in a smaller type than the text. The book is cruel to my eyes. Almost every page ends with multiple footnotes, many of which refer the reader to the Library Edition of Ruskin's *Works*. And yet, even the wonder of Ruskin's words is clouded by constant summarisation of context. This book may make some readers curious to learn more about conversion to Catholicism; I cannot believe it will make anyone curious to learn more about Ruskin.

Nichols's attempts to trace Ruskin's development are too pedantically exact and particularly narrow to be truly useful to the Ruskin scholar. They are even less helpful to a student with casual interest in Ruskin-related studies as they introduce such errors as a curious misspelling of the name of the famous and honoured American scholar of Ruskin, Van Akin Burd, and the odd idea that Turner outlived Ruskin by 51 years: '[Turner died on December 19, 1951]' (p. 447). The myth that Ruskin destroyed Turner's erotic works is perpetuated as fact. Quotations from the Library Edition are frequently inexact and sometimes even mislabeled, such as the ones on p. 187 in which Nichols misquotes Ruskin's suggestion that the Pre-Raphaelites work 'in' rather than 'on a larger scale' or on p. 188 where Nichols misquotes Ruskin's bat hovering 'above' rather than 'about' and misquotes Ruskin's quotation of the biblical text from the Psalms by having a 'mover' rather than a 'mower' rejecting wild grass. On p. 189, the quotation footnoted as 162 is found not on p. 329 of the Library Edition as Nichols claims but on p. 330, and it too is inexact.

I did not, of course, check every quotation in the book, but the prevalence of errors encourages me to wonder how many mistakes I might find with a thorough study. The revision here seems careless, such as on p. 198 where the abbreviation for Matthew suddenly changes from 'Matt' to 'Mt'. Such

inconsistencies do not worry me in themselves, as I am as capable as most Christians of determining which book of the Bible 'Mt' denotes. But inconsistencies, typos, and punctuation errors indicate a lack of polish. Nichols's task seems unfinished here.

The biggest limitation I found in Nichols's text is its bulk. The book is a



daunting 600+ pages in length, weighty in tone as well, and eye-torturingly spidery of font. One would expect no fewer words from a practiced and successful researcher such as Nichols, but the target audience will therefore be quite a small one: those with young eyes, limitless time, and a strong book stand. General readers might have benefitted more from a less enthusiastic attempt to explore Nichols's hobbyhorse so comprehensively—or a more sensible font and a separation of the text into three or four volumes. Ruskin tells us, 'If the person who wrote the book is not wiser than you, you need not read it;

if he be, he will think differently from you in many respects'. Nichols's word choice alone assures me he is much wiser than I am, as his book has dramatically increased my vocabulary and expertise in using a dictionary. And he certainly thinks differently from me about Ruskin. But the carelessness of his proofreading, the frequency of his errors, the weakness of his index, and the datedness of his sources cry for further revision.

Much of my trouble with this book may lie in unrealistic expectations. I had hoped to find a careful and attentive effort to read and explain Ruskin in a new way. Instead, I found it a cumbersome volume which struggles at the idea that art and faith are constant companions in Ruskin's life and work. Indeed, anyone who reads and loves Ruskin takes this fact as a given. No understanding of Ruskin can ignore the Biblical grounding which came to him simultaneously with his mother's milk. Who has ever doubted that Ruskin's faith and spiritual journey permeated the entirety of his life?

When he reads Ruskin, Nichols seems utterly insensitive to Ruskin's instructions for reading: 'looking intensely at words, and assuring yourself of their meaning, syllable by syllable—nay, letter by letter'. Trying to read Nichols's book in this way was a painful task. Nichols's goal, to prove that Ruskin's spiritual path pointed toward Catholicism, defies Ruskin's command to 'go to the author to get at *his* meaning, not to find yours'. Nichols identifies many echoes of Catholic faith in Ruskin's words, but he misses Ruskin's meaning. Ruskin's insistence that to read 'you must love' may be the root of Nichols's misstep. When my students submit writing as fraught with error as Nichols', I suspect that their hearts have not been in their efforts and suggest to them that further thought and revision are needed. I would like to think that this book was in fact an early, unedited draft, which had been mistakenly published. A volume of about 180 pages might have been very intriguing. That is the one I wish Nichols had given us to read.

Kay J. Walter

The Guild's AGM will be held on Saturday, 4 November in the Arundel Room, Millennium Gallery, Sheffield. The Ruskin Lecture will focus on two artists Ruskin engaged for St George's work: Frank Randal and William Hackstoun. The speaker is Louise Pullen, Curator of the Ruskin Collection. The Companions' Dinner will once again be hosted at Channing Hall. A visit to the Ruskin Collection's former home at Meersbrook Hall will take place on Sunday, 5 November.

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# ‘HOUSES BUILT WITHOUT HANDS—FOR OUR SOULS TO LIVE IN’: SWAN SONG

*Stuart Eagles*

The quote is from Ruskin’s *The Eagle’s Nest* (1872) and this Eagles has it written on the wall of his eyrie. These Ruskinian houses are ‘fairy palaces’ built of ‘beautiful thought—proof against all adversity’:

Bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us[.] (*Works*, 22.263)

Few writers come close to Ruskin in supplying us with the spiritual material with which to build such secure homes for life. Ruskin’s countless disciples, now as much as in his own lifetime, write of his ideas as revelatory, enriching and liberating. That has been my experience, too.

Few things could be more precious than an opportunity to serve Ruskin’s legacy by working for the charity that he set up. It’s a discipline I call *Applied Ruskin*: the privilege of promoting Ruskin’s ideals and values in the modern world. As one of the Guild’s Ruskin Lecturers (back in 2010), then as an editor of Ruskinian Wikipedia content and of this magazine, then as Secretary of the Guild, and latterly as its Communications Officer, I have been given a chance to play my part, thanks to the indulgence of the Guild’s Master, Directors, and Companions. As I leave, I take the opportunity to say thank you.

Not one day over the past five years has been the same as any other. There have been some routine tasks, of course, from bookkeeping to paying invoices, answering phone-calls and emails, regularly updating databases and overseeing the website, writing e-newsletters, posting messages and pictures on social media, and sending welcome packs to new Companions. A lot of the work has been editorial—not only of the textual variety (copy editing, proofreading) but I have also edited photos, audio streams and video files. I’ve compiled the magazine and the AGM reports, created forms,

approved press releases, fact-checked reports and assisted in the production of our booklets. There has been design work, ranging from a simple bookmark and stationery letterheads to posters, flyers, brochures and this magazine. I’ve even sat in front of a radio mic, sold books and rebuilt the website after a hacking attack.

There have been Board meetings, symposia, lectures and

Companions’ Days to programme, dinners to arrange, bookings to take, lists to keep, payment systems to set up, and donations to encourage and receive. I have occasionally written short speeches for others, and sometimes I have made one myself.

There were insurance brokers to speak with, Charity Commissioners, the auditor, the solicitor, Companions (actual and potential), scholars and casual enquirers. I’ve filed papers, folded things, printed and pasted labels and stamps, sealed envelopes, and carried a few tonnes of mail to the Post Office. I’ve given reports in writing and in person, recorded more minutes than I care to remember, and although I have done much of this work from home, boy have I got some rail miles under my belt. I’ve dug up some forgotten facts and found not a few previously unfamiliar images.

There were artists, writers, printers, crafts-and-trades-people to work with, including all those people helping us to maintain our properties, some of them comically named like Terry the Fence in Buntingford—even the bank threw us Mr Faker and Mr Child, our business account managers, as if they had come straight out of the pages of a Dickens novel.

I’ve learnt a great deal, I’ve given up a room in my house to Guild papers, I’ve made many friendships, I’ve experienced some frustration, but I’ve also had a lot of chuckles along the way. Yes, you know

who you are!

Even before I took on the job, when I was Secretary of The Ruskin Society, an email showed up in my inbox from the son of the late Anthony Page, a member of the Society and a Guild Director who for years looked after our properties in Westmill. The message asked if I might be able to find a worthy home for Anthony’s Ruskin book collection. Several phone-calls and emails later, it was decided to put the collection in Bewdley and make it available to Companions, volunteers, visitors and the public alike. In a neat twist of *fors*, one of my final tasks for the Guild has been to transfer Peter Lock’s online catalogue of the collection—see [ruskinlibrarybewdley.org.uk/](http://ruskinlibrarybewdley.org.uk/)—to the Guild’s care (see WEBSITES, p. 44 ).

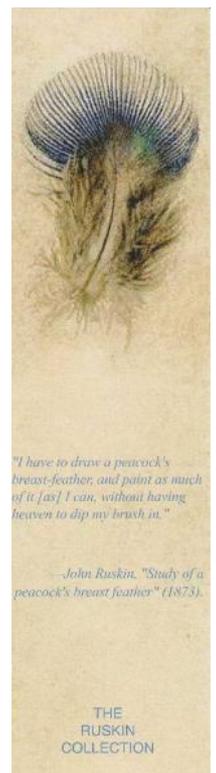
A few years later, I was contacted out of the blue by a Liberal, Quaker couple who, coincidentally, lived, as I do, in Reading, asking me if the Guild might be interested in purchasing two sets of botanical books that had once belonged to Ruskin and his mother. As you’ll know from Companion Professor David Ingram’s articles and Guild book of last year, we duly took them up on their offer, and the books are now part of the Ruskin Collection at Sheffield.

Then there’s my first passion, history.

Having spent more years than I care to divulge elbow-deep in archival documents dug out as I have rooted around in family trees, I keenly volunteered to look into the matter of whether Henry Swan, Ruskin’s choice of Curator at St George’s Museum, Walkley, might have living descendants who could object to the Guild’s plan for his grave in Walkley Cemetery. Readers will recall that we restored the gravestone and added a plaque memorialising Swan’s contribution to the Guild’s early history. Together with Mark Frost, I concluded that Swan probably has



Stuart Eagles.



“I have to draw a peacock’s breast-feather, and paint as much of it [as] I can, without having heaven to dip my brush in.”

—John Ruskin, “Study of a peacock’s breast feather” (1875).

THE RUSKIN COLLECTION



**St Mary's Chapel, Northgate Street, Devizes, as it is today. Photo: Cedric Eagles.**

second life-saving act of bravery, however, is recorded in the *Wiltshire Independent* on 18 January 1838. 'An accident, which, fortunately, was not attended with loss of life', the newspaper reported in its Devizes column, 'happened Monday last to Master Winter Randell, son of Mr. Jas. Randell, of this town'. A little digging in the archives suggests that this was Cornelius Winter Randell, born on 8 January 1826, a close contemporary of Henry's who was baptised at the same independent chapel as he was.

no close living relatives. In the meantime, I had unearthed an enlightening little tale.

Henry Swan (1825-1889) was baptised, like his father, John, his older brother, and younger brother and sister, at St Mary's, an independent nonconformist (mostly Congregationalist) chapel in Devizes, Wiltshire. John Swan appears to have been some sort of commercial traveller, and his life took him from Wiltshire to Hackney, and eventually to St Helier in Jersey. It has often been observed that the absence of any photograph of Henry is remarkable given that he was himself, for a time, a photographer of some note. His older brother, Francis, was a lithographer who became a photographer, too. We must content ourselves, then, with a different type of picture of him, one painted by words rather than light.

Master Henry, it turns out, saved not one person from drowning, but two—on separate occasions. His first act of heroism was to save the life of one of his brothers, but no details of this incident have yet been uncovered.

Henry's

Twelve-year-old Winter, returning home after some playful ice-skating, slipped on the tow-path near Drew(e)'s Wharf, causing him to stumble on to the partially frozen Kennet and Avon Canal. The surface ice broke and young Winter plunged into the freezing water beneath. 'With great presence of mind and courage' Henry laid upon the ground and, stretching, 'reached Master Randell's

hand, which was the only part of him not under the ice'. Were it not for young Swan's 'praiseworthy actions' Randell, the reporter judged, 'would inevitably have lost his life'. But, they added:

We are sorry to state, that a man who was standing at Drew'e's wharf, within a few yards of the spot, to his eternal disgrace, did not offer any assistance, but contented himself with saying, that it would soon be over with him.

Young Swan's bravery did not go unrewarded. On 13 September, the paper reported:

We have the satisfaction of stating, that the Royal Humane Society have (*sic*) awarded a handsome bronze medal to Swan, for his intrepidity...

A selfless, noble act. Swan was a true Companion, never passing by on the other side (or standing still to stare and mutter unhelpfully). I wonder if Ruskin ever heard of this episode? I hope so. (Sadly, young Randell died in London in 1846, aged 20.)

Modest but precious research findings like this have impressed me with how brightly the constellation of stars that surround Ruskin

and his legacy have shone through the years. They have certainly helped me to build my own palace of restful and beautiful thoughts.

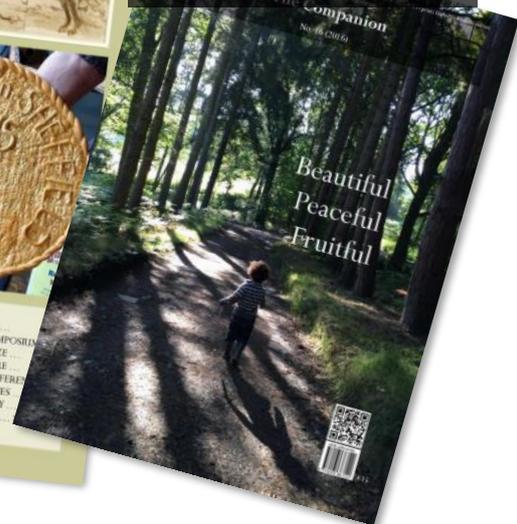
Thank you for your Companionship.



**Devizes Wharf, looking south-west towards the site of Drew's Wharf. Photo: Stuart Eagles.**



*I am delighted to pass The Companion into the safest hands. The new Editor is Dr Sara Atwood, and the new designer is Jodie Southwood. Congratulations & thanks!*



# DAVID PETER WARDLE (27 Sep 1933 - 8 May 2017)

Peter Wardle, who died aged 83, was, for the last 10 years or more, the longest-serving Companion of the Guild of St. George.

His family has been entwined with Ruskin matters since the inception of the Guild. His grandfather, William Wardle, was a Companion recorded on the Guild's Roll as having been 'Admitted by John Ruskin' shortly after 1884—along with my own grandfather, Charles Clucas Quayle. William was a founding (and leading) member of the Liverpool Ruskin Society. It was he who lived in Mulberry Cottage, used by the Liverpool Ruskin Society as their meeting place. It had half an acre of garden and small holding.

William Wardle was one of the signatories to the illuminated *Address of Congratulations* given to John Ruskin for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1897. The address was personally delivered by William Wardle and J. Howard Whitehouse.

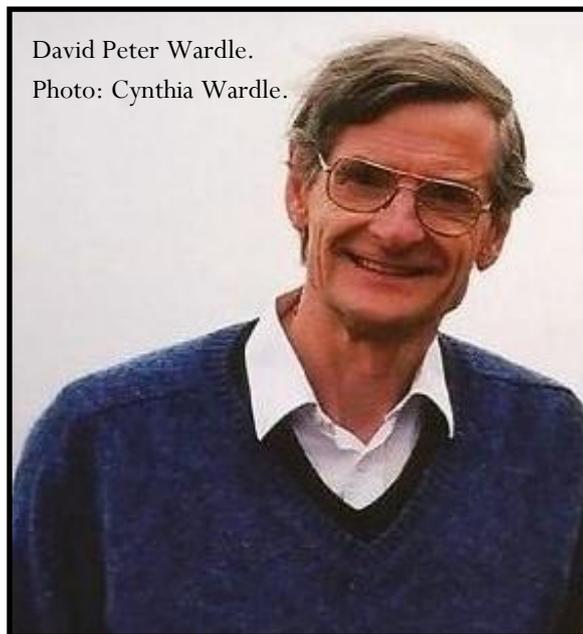
William was instrumental in gathering together grieving Companions following the death of Ruskin in 1900, and he also encouraged Companions to attend the Guild AGM in Keswick in 1902. He was elected Secretary to the Guild in a temporary capacity, but remained for 25 years until his death in 1925. It was William Wardle's second son, Bernard Wardle—Peter's uncle—who, in his turn, became Secretary, also for 25 years, from 1950 to 1975.

Between William, Bernard and Peter, every Master and every Companion has served the Guild alongside a member of the Wardle family—such is the link that has been severed. It is questionable whether the Guild would have survived the 40s, 50s and 60s if Peter and his family had not carefully and devotedly kept their hands to the

plough through these long, lean years.

Peter was born at Olive Lane, Liverpool, in 1933. In 1939, the War required his father, Geoffrey Wardle, to remain in Liverpool as he was the Port of Liverpool Distribution Officer, a key strategic post. The family was fortunate to survive a near miss from German bombs. It prompted Geoffrey to send his wife and two boys away to Bewdley where they would be safe. Thus Peter came to spend time with his aunt, Ursula Wardle, at Atholgarth, a cottage originally built for his Great Aunt, Edith Hope Scott, on the edge of the Wyre Forest. Both Edith and Ursula were Companions of the Guild.

After a short period at Far Forest School, Peter attended King Charles' Grammar School in Kidderminster. Called up in 1951,



David Peter Wardle.  
Photo: Cynthia Wardle.

he joined the RAF and was sent to Germany at the height of the Cold War serving as an Air Traffic Controller.

Returning to England, for two years he was at Cheltenham Training College where he studied Art and also Religious Education. His teaching career took him to Perryfields Primary School. He then

moved to Callney School for Boys where he taught R.E., and later became Head of English. Here he produced many school plays; coached cricket teams; organised overseas trips for pupils at a time when such things were uncommon. He was also a competent batsman for Luton Schoolmasters' Cricket Team.

Peter was a committed Christian and remained so all his life. He was licensed as a Reader at St Albans Abbey by Bishop Runcie, as he was then. Later, Peter served for many years as a Reader at St Anne's Church, Luton.

He loved singing, first as a boy in Bewdley Church Choir, then in College Choirs, in Gilbert and Sullivan groups and, when he moved to Clows Top (not far from Bewdley, to take up a post as Head of Year and then as Deputy Head at St John's Middle School in Kidderminster), he joined the local church choir in the Parish of Bayton. Here again, as Reader, he took services in the local churches and the Mission Room at Clows Top. He preached regularly in the small churches and mission halls in the villages around his home.

Peter married Cynthia in July 1970 and they had two children, Sarah and Christopher.

Peter wrote with great charm and delight and the fact that he became Head of English is no surprise. He produced an original story for his children's birthdays; a history of the Clows Top Mission church; a short history of

Bayton Church (another small village nearby). He also co-authored (with me) the book, *Ruskin and Bewdley*. He had great joy in researching the background to Ruskin's connection to Bewdley, making the most of his considerable historical resources, in the form of diaries, letters and photographs.

*Cedric Quayle*

# POOR MRS CRESWICK

*Paul Dawson*

Companion Annie Creswick Dawson's book *Benjamin Creswick*, published by the Guild, tells the story of how Creswick needed to find a commercial method of printing decorative friezes to adorn the home as an affordable alternative to commissioning an artist to decorate the walls.

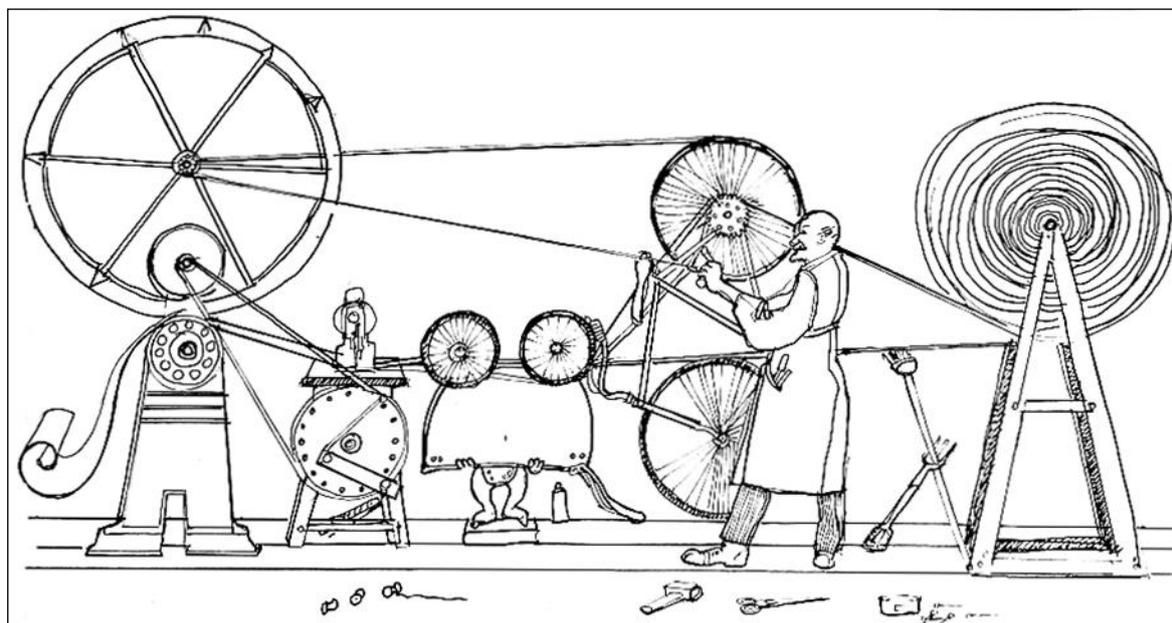
Creswick's lifelong friend, the artist and engraver Frank Brangwyn, recorded how—with no such printing press in existence—Creswick was able to accomplish his task. He designed and constructed a machine that could print the wood-blocked images on a continuous roll of paper up to 170 feet in length without repeating the images.

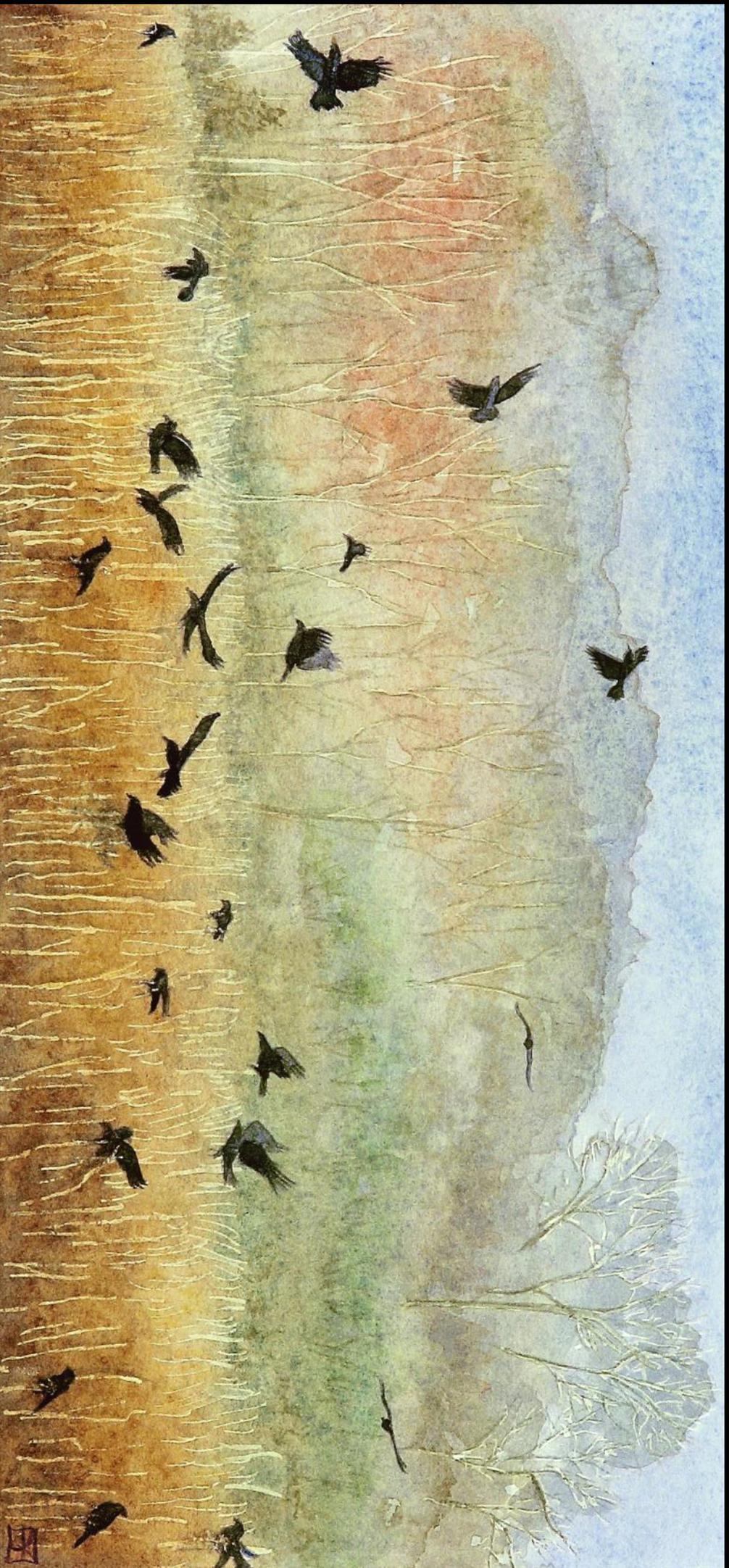
How he went about this scheme we do not know, but the chance discovery of the following report from the *South Wales Daily News* (17 June 1899) offers a clue:

An artist, Ben Creswick by name, lives at Sutton Coldfield. He was originally a bricklayer [*sic*] but Ruskin 'discovered' him and had him educated. A mutual friend went to his chambers a little while since and during the conversation asked after Mrs. Creswick who had been ill.

Creswick said she was quite well again but he was afraid 'he had upset her.' It turned out he had designed a frieze but had found that no machine was large enough to print it, therefore he had turned two of his sons out of their bedroom [and] had turned it into a workshop and proceeded to make a printing machine, first he used up his bicycle then having not enough material used the perambulator. Then the mangle fell a victim followed by three clocks and finally he was going to use his wife's sewing machine. But she had seen with calm eyes the disposal of the no longer required perambulator; had been upset by the discovery of the mangle and the clocks; but put her foot down firmly over the sewing machine. But Creswick managed without it and 'the printing machine works beautifully, only it has the bicycle pedals left on it, however they interfere with the looks not the works.'

*The Heath Robinson-styled cartoon was supplied by Paul Jackson, an artist who usually produces work of a more sophisticated nature! You can read his biographic notes and see his paintings on <http://nahproart.blogspot.co.uk/>.*





*Kateri Ewing, A Murder of Crows (Wyoming County) (2015).*