

The ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT & in Surrey

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Chairman's Editorial by Carolyn Smith

I have recently read *The Diary of a Nobody* by George & Weedon Grossmith. This began as a series in *Punch* magazine and ran for a year from May 1888. It depicts the day to day life of Mr Pooter and his wife who live at 'The Laurels', a terraced house in Holloway. It is the precursor of *Bridget Jones's Diary* in its lighthearted and amusing details. There are similarities with the short stories of Saki which I alluded to at last year's 25th anniversary of the Society. Mr Pooter recounts his problems with 'shocking' eggs and off mutton, his troublesome door scraper, his disastrous effort to paint his bath red, odd socks and problems with his maid. It is also an interesting depiction of lower middle class life at the time when friends regularly dropped round in the evening in the days before television. When William Morris was house hunting in 1879 he wrote to Janey 'I don't think either you or I could stand a quite modern house in a street, say at Notting Hill: I don't fancy going back among the bugs of Bloomsbury: though 'tis a healthy part and we might do worse; we might as well live at York as at Hampstead for all we should ever see of our friends.' In the end, they moved to Kelmscott House in Hammersmith, a half hour's walk from Burne-Jones's home at The Grange. (*William Morris* by Fiona MacCarthy p.393)

One sentence that caught my attention in *The Diary of a Nobody* was: 'our new enlarged and tinted photographs look very nice on the walls, especially as Carrie has arranged some Liberty silk bows on the four corners of them'. Did people really do this or is it a little dig at the popularity of Liberty at this time? Presumably the photographs were also framed and this leads me on to a zoom lecture about *Victorian Frames: a Renaissance* written by Lynn Roberts and given by the Pre-Raphaelite Society. Unfortunately, I received the details of the lecture too late for the January e-newsletter. However, there are details of their next lecture on Ruskin below. Lynn Roberts has a blog containing many sections of Arts and Crafts interest including Pre-Raphaelite picture frames at <https://theframeblog.com/archives/>

She talks about the influence of Flemish picture frames on Ford Madox Brown, Rossetti and Holman Hunt. ‘ Ford Madox Brown, who had trained in Belgium and then befriended artists in the Nazarene group whilst in Rome, had a natural sympathy for Northern and Gothic art... These frames share elements which would reappear in the frames of Rossetti, Brown and Hunt: simple, often shallow, profiles; flat top edges or central friezes, sometimes bordered by small mouldings; deep hollows or slanting rainsills at the sight edge; inscriptions which expand upon the painted image; finishes which were not just gilded but might be stained or painted; and horizontal ‘butt’ joints instead of mitred joints. A further important feature in Pre-Raphaelite frames from the early 1850s was the use of oak gilded directly on the wood, with no intervening layer of gesso, so that the grain provided interesting texture’ Some beautiful examples may be seen in the current exhibition at Watts Gallery on the work of Ford Madox Brown’s daughters. This is soon to close, so catch it if you can!



Greater Manchester Tour. Part One by Carolyn Smith

This tour was made in September 2016 and, for most of us, began with a train journey. A Virgin train took us in three hours from London Euston to Manchester Piccadilly. Our three night stay was at the Palace Hotel which was one of the most interesting of our tour accommodations. It was originally the offices for the Refuge Assurance Company. Finding our way around was difficult as it was very large and formed of three separate buildings: number one by Alfred Waterhouse in the 1890s, number two by Paul Waterhouse in 1910 and number three by Stanley Birkett in 1932. Little did we know how much harder moving around this building was to become!

Our afternoon visit was to the John Rylands Library.



This Gothic Revival building by Basil Champneys was described by the British Architects' Journal after its opening in 1900 as 'one of the finest buildings in England.' Filled with dark panelling, stained glass by Kempe, stone carvings of dragons and strange beasts, the library cost £230,000. Figure sculpture includes Enriqueta Rylands, the patroness. Described in Pevsner as 'cathedral like', this sums it up as the Reading Room is like the nave of a church with double aisles and a clerestory with a tall tower 'deceptively like a transept'. I particularly remember the very impressive staircase leading up from the Entrance Hall.

The Palace Hotel had been undergoing a major refurbishment at a cost of twenty million pounds. Shortly before we left for the tour, I was informed that we would have to eat out on our first night. This led to many complicated arrangements and taxi rides to dine out at the Radisson BLU Edwardian. This building was originally the Free Trade Hall, constructed in 1853. Bombed in the Blitz, it still has its original façade but the interior has had many reconstructions before its current incarnation as a luxury hotel.

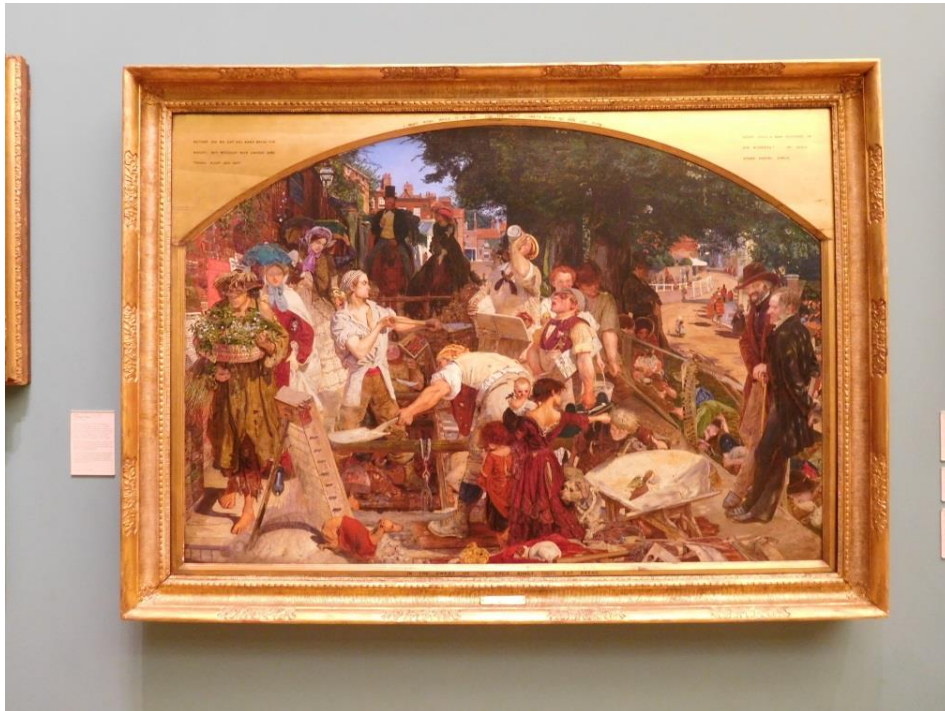
On day two, we congregated in the enormous entrance hall of the Palace Hotel for what would prove to be an eventful day on foot in Manchester. Our first stop was Manchester Art Gallery where we were treated to a private view of items from the Decorative Arts collection. This Pilkington vase of 1912 depicts five fish swimming amongst weeds in silver and copper lustre over a streaked purple glaze. Other highly desirable items included spoons and buckles.



This was followed by a tour of the Pre-Raphaelite collection which included the first version of *Work* (1859-65) by Ford Madox Brown. It is often a surprise to see these well known paintings in their original frame and mount and this was no exception. 'The revival 'Lely' frame was also used several times by Ford Madox Brown; his are more decoratively authentic versions of the original 17th century pattern, but – in the spirit of the earlier frames he

designed with Rossetti – he has the frame gilded directly on the wood. He also uses the pattern emblematically, for paintings which seem to be celebrations of English history, life or literature: for example, *Work*, 1852-63, and *Byron's dream*, 1874, both Manchester City Galleries, and *Cromwell on his farm*, 1874, Lady Lever Art Gallery (*Autumn leaves* and *Work* may have been reframed some time after they were finished).

<https://theframeblog.com/2012/12/06/a-final-look-at-pre-raphaelite-frames/>



The gallery also displayed a good collection of furniture including a gorgeous Pre-Raphaelite writing desk by William Burges and other artefacts. My favourite was the patinated brass lantern designed by Holman Hunt for his painting 'The Light of the World'. The gallery has a version of the picture.

Lunch beckoned at the sumptuous Mr Thomas's Chop House of 1901. Looking back at the study notes, I was interested to note that this cast iron frame building was one of the first in Manchester. Unfortunately, because of the size of our party, we ate outside rather than in its original tiled interior.



We then met our guide for the afternoon who took us on a walking tour culminating in Alfred Waterhouse's Gothic Revival Town Hall of 1867. From a window we could see Thomas Worthington's Albert Memorial of 1862, in the square below.



We spent some time examining Ford Madox Brown's twelve murals which decorate the Great Hall.



The murals have rather turgid titles such as 'The Proclamation regarding Weights and Measures A.D, 1556'. However, they include interesting details and feature many dogs. Here are some examples.



Our visit ended with a splendid cream tea in the Sculpture Hall. We then set off on our own to explore. As I came out of the Central Library, the weather looked increasingly threatening and it began to rain. It had been the hottest September day for 105 years. At 6pm for an hour, 30mm of rain fell: half the average for the whole of September. This coincided with our tour of the Palace Hotel. As we did so, violent thunderstorms swept across the city, flooding streets and deluging homes. Manchester City's Champions League match had to be called off and two substations of the Metro were hit by lightning, knocking out the operator's systems. Parts of the Town Hall were also flooded. The hotel was badly affected as the main thoroughfare through the entrance hall was completely flooded. Downpipes, which used to be on the exterior of the building, had not been removed when the building was altered. These were now inside the hall of the hotel and were gushing water into the newly renovated building. They can be seen behind the horse in the photo on the left - without the gushing

water! A tour member recently reminded of the sound of the torrential rain on the glass roof over the entrance hall shown on the right.



There was something of a Blitz spirit as we were led down passageways with failing lights and given complicated instructions about how to get back to our bedrooms! It was equally challenging trying to get to dinner. This was a very strange experience as we ate in a huge basement room with a long table laid out in the centre surrounded by buckets. Water dripped through the light fittings and into the buckets or onto the brand new carpet. It was certainly an unforgettable evening!

Part Two to follow in March e-newsletter.

Grants

In the November 2021 e-newsletter, I reported on a Pugin stained glass book to be published online. The research undertaken by Stanley A. Shepherd will be made available to students, scholars, universities and the general public at no cost. This will be a wonderful resource and enable Pugin's work to be publicised more widely. I cannot underestimate the value of online images that are free to use. I am constantly searching for these for the e-newsletter and lectures and am often frustrated when I find a perfect image that I am unable to use because of copyright!

I am pleased to report that the Main Committee approved a grant of £1,600 towards the photographic laboratory, library, website production and long term hosting costs of the Pugin book website which will include the ACMS logo. This will also be linked to the ACMS website. I will notify you as soon as it is available.



Forthcoming events for 2022

17th February 2022. A Most Surprising Church in Lower Kingswood

16th March 2022. Stained Glass – The Making of Arts & Crafts Stained Glass in the mid to late Victorian Era. Zoom lecture by Dr Jim Cheshire.

30th March 2022. Visit to the Sidney Sime Gallery, Worplesdon, Surrey.



Other organisations – Events of interest

Pre-Raphaelite Society

The Society's Spring Lecture series continues with *Ruskin and Textiles*. Zoom Lecture given by Dr. Rachel Dickinson on Saturday 19th February 2022 at 11.00 am
Tickets £5 Members, £8 Non Members (plus online booking fee)

Watts Gallery

Uncommon Power: Lucy and Catherine Madox Brown. Until 20th February.
<https://www.wattsgallery.org.uk/whats-on/>

Victoria & Albert Museum

Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature. Exhibition opens 12th February.

The V&A is home to the world's largest collection of Beatrix Potter-related materials in the world. Bequeathed to the museum by engineer and enthusiast Leslie Linder, the man who decoded Potter's secret diary, the collection spans drawings, manuscripts, correspondence and photographs.

Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature uses this extensive archive to explore the lasting legacy of one of the best-loved children's authors of the 20th century. Her love for the natural world is evident from the letters, sketches and paintings on display – a passion that began with drawings documenting the distinguishing characteristics of animals when Potter was only eight years old.

Realised through a major partnership with the National Trust, the exhibition highlights Potter's work as a farmer and conservationist in the Lake District, which helped to inform the careful accuracy of her illustrations, whilst building on the success of the V&A's family-friendly shows with playful staging and immersive design.

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/beatrix-potter-drawn-to-nature>

Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh

The Art of Wallpaper-Morris & Co. 27th January to 22nd June.

William Morris (1834-1896) is one of the world's most successful pattern designers. A British craftsman and pioneer of modern design, Morris started designing wallpapers in the 1860s. Within

a decade, he was creating some of his most enduring designs including 'Larkspur', 'Jasmine' (both 1872), 'Willow' (1874) and 'Marigold' (1875). This exhibition focuses on his legacy and includes framed original samples, as well as interior layouts.

<https://dovecotstudios.com/exhibitions/the-art-of-wallpaper-morris-co>

As always, we would welcome any ideas for events, visits and lectures that you would like to propose to the Events Committee and any news or articles that you might like to submit for the Society e-newsletter or printed newsletter. Also, if you are aware of any planning applications relating to Arts and Crafts buildings in Surrey we should be pleased if you would bring them to our attention.

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