A Catalogue of the Original Designs by Morris and Company in the Collection of the William Morris Society

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Introduction
The purpose of this catalogue is to make the Society's collection more accessible to both members and public alike. It will be published in occasional installments as a supplement to the Society's Journal. It is closely based on A Study and Catalog of Morris and Company Designs in the Collection of the William Morris Genter, London, a Catalogue Raisonné by George Monk and Walter Gooch. This was published in 1978 in a typescript edition of four copies, three of which are held by the Society, The Victoria and Albert Museum and The William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. It was produced under the auspices of the William Morris Centre at Kelmscott House and the authors were sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C.

Monk and Gooch catalogued 87 original designs of which nine were missing from the collection by the late 1980s. This catalogue includes only those designs currently in the possession of the Society. The collection was acquired through the generous gift of the late Mrs Helena Stephenson, who also bequeathed Kelmscott House to the Society, and was presumably acquired by her on the dissolution of Morris and Company in 1940.

A Note on the Catalogue
Measurements are in centimetres, height precedes width.
Most of the designs, being working drawings, bear a number of inscriptions in various hands. Only those which identify the subject or are evidence of authorship or dating have been included.

PART I: INTERIOR DECORATION
(a) SAINT MARTIN-ON-THE-HILL, SCARBOROUGH (1861-1865)
The commission for stained glass and interior decoration for the new church of St. Martin-on-the-Hill, Scarborough, was given to the recently founded 'Firm', Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., by the architect George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907) in 1861. Bodley, a close friend of G. E. Street (1824-1881), to whom both Philip Webb (1831-1915) and Morris had been articled, had been proposed
as a possible partner in the Firm in December 1860 (Harrison, below, p. 187) and although this suggestion came to nothing was undeniably their most important patron during their early years. Bodley commissioned work for St. Martin’s, All Saints’, Selsley and St. Michael and All Angels, Brighton in 1861 and thus the three decorative schemes were contemporaneous. St. Martin’s was completed and consecrated in 1863 but the Firm provided stained glass until 1873 and decorative work certainly continued until 1865, the date of the watermark on the design below. The wall above the chancel arch was painted by Bodley himself and the chancel roof or Canopy of Honour was designed by Webb and painted by Webb, Morris and Charles Faulkner. According to Martin Harrison, in the V&A William Morris Catalogue, 1996, p. 108, this was the Firm’s sole contribution to the painted decoration but the company’s designs were also used on the East Wall, painted and re-painted between 1863–65, which deteriorated rapidly and had to be restored by Thomas Farren in 1889. It seems probable that D8, below, was intended as part of this decorative scheme. The design, rather misleadingly described by Monk and Gooch, p. 44, as a ‘formal net diaper’, is a repeating pattern of stylised flowering pomegranates (which symbolise Christ’s Resurrection) within ogival lozenges.

Bibliography.

D8. Philip Webb or William Morris.
Scarborough Wall Decoration. c. 1865.
pencil and watercolour; 59.6 x 31.9 cm.
Inscribed verso: Scarboro Wall Decoration (pencil).
Stencilled verso: 12B; Merton Abbey.

(b) THE OXFORD UNION CEILING (1874–5)
The story of the Oxford Union murals of 1857–58, ‘The jovial campaign’ is too well known to be recounted in detail here. In brief, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, inspired by the additions to the Union Society buildings, designed by his friend the architect Benjamin Woodward (1815–61), offered to decorate the interior of the Debating Chamber (now the Library) with tempera murals of scenes from the Morte d’Arthur. There was no charge other than for the cost of materials and subsistence for the group of artists he assembled to assist him, among whom were Morris and Burne-Jones. As Mackail so succinctly described the venture, ‘The story of these paintings . . . is one of work hastily undertaken, executed under impossible conditions, and finally abandoned after time and labour had been spent on it quite disproportionate to the original design.’ Those paintings which were completed rapidly deteriorated and were a subject of considerable concern within the Union until the mid 1870s. In 1869 a Committee of Enquiry considered the options of white-washing out what remained or covering them with Morris’s Pomegranate wallpaper, a move opposed by Morris who wrote to Richard Thursfield
(1840–1923), the Committee chairman, in December 1869, that the murals, especially those by Arthur Hughes and Burne-Jones, were worth retaining (Kelvin, I, 97). Five years later the report of the Fresco Committee, appointed on February 19, 1874, recorded, ‘Mr. Morris further called attention to the very unsatisfactory condition of the roof, in which he took a special interest as it was in great part his own work. He pointed out that restoration was impossible . . . but if it were thought desirable to repaint it, he suggested that a new and lighter design might be adopted, and he very kindly said that he would prepare such a design gratuitously if the Society cared to go to the expense of having it executed.’ The Society agreed to Morris’s generous offer and on the completion of the new design in May 1875 employed the firm of decorative painters Frederick R. Leach, first employed by Morris for the decoration of Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge, in 1866, to carry out the work, to be completed in two months for the sum of £75. The Committee’s report of November 25th records that, ‘The satisfactory result must be largely attributed to Mr. Morris’s personal supervision of the work.’

Thus the present design of the ceiling dates from Morris’s maturity as a designer and not, as is sometimes supposed, from 1857. From contemporary reports the earlier design appears to have been far less sophisticated and more Ruskinian, incorporating a menagerie among its foliage.

Bibliography

Oxford Union Ceiling; curved rib of roof, 1875.
pencil and watercolour; 61 x 8.6 cm.
inscribed recto: top left, Oxford (watercolour); top left to centre, Curved rib of roof. Side Elevation. (pencil); lower right, The Property of William Morris. (pen).
stencilled verso: 9c; Merton Abbey.

D17. William Morris.
Oxford Union Roof, 1875.
pencil and watercolour; 66.8 x 51.2 cm.
inscribed recto: top right, Oxford Union Roof (pencil).
stencilled verso: 9; Merton Abbey.

D74. William Morris
Oxford Union Roof, 1875.
pencil and watercolour; 65.9 x 51.2 cm.
THE ST. JAMES’S PALACE COMMISSIONS (1865–1882)

In 1865 the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. were commissioned to decorate the Armoury and the Tapestry Room in St. James’s Palace, an extremely prestigious commission for a small and recently founded business and a snub to the well-established and fashionable firm of Crace and Co., of Wigmore Street, which had previously been responsible for decoration at the Palace.

The work was undoubtedly obtained by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, at this stage still a keen and active partner, through his recent but deep friendship with William Cowper-Temple, later Lord Mount Temple (1811-1888) to whom he had been introduced by John Ruskin earlier that year. Cowper-Temple was First Commissioner of the Office of Works, the body responsible to Parliament for the maintenance of the Royal Palaces, and thus a man with considerable powers of patronage. Fired by Rossetti’s enthusiasm he had commissioned the Firm to redecorate the stairwell of his house in Curzon Street and simultaneously proposed the work at St. James’s Palace. The decorative scheme was designed by Philip Webb and executed by Dunn & Co, the London based firm of builders and decorators who were regularly employed by Morris for interior decoration.

The commission was noticed by the Athenaeum on October 15, 1865, in a brief article which implied that further work was likely. This was not in fact forthcoming as Cowper-Temple lost his post when the Government was defeated in 1866. The work was completed by January 1867 and the Firm’s Royal connection lapsed until November 1879 when, largely at Queen Victoria’s insistence, work at the Palace, which had been neglected for the last decade, recommenced.

On November 6, 1879, Morris was asked by A. B. Freeman-Mitford, the Secretary to the Board of Works, to submit tenders for carpeting the rooms that the Firm had decorated twelve years earlier. In late December he submitted two quotations, one for real Axminster carpets at £215 and £172, and another for patent Axminsters at £173 and £137. Being Morris he strongly recommended the former and being a Government department the Office of Works ordered the latter. Presumably the carpets were laid by January 15 when an additional four rugs were ordered.

By 1880 the growing reputation of Morris & Co. more than compensated for the lack of Cowper-Temple’s patronage and on July 15 Morris was invited to meet Ponsonby Fane and Freeman-Mitford to ‘inspect and advise upon’ the redecoration of the State Apartments at St. James’s Palace ‘which the First Commissioner (Gerard Noel) proposes to entrust to you.’ By the 20th of August Morris had submitted an estimate of £4,779 to decorate the Grand Staircase and the Ambassadors’ Staircase including the painting and gilding of ‘the ceilings, beams, columns etc.’ Interestingly, given Morris’s later reputation as a modernist, the proposed treatment of the Grand Staircase was described by the Office of Works as in ‘the Holbein style’. The designs in the Society’s collection all relate to this phase of the decoration.

D18. St. James’s Palace, design for the Queen’s Staircase, 1881.
D29. №.1 Holland Park drawing room ceiling, c. 1883.
The result must have proved satisfactory for on completion, in May 1881, Morris & Co. received a further commission to decorate the main suite of State Rooms, including the Throne Room and Council Chamber, at an estimate of £4,868. Financial stringency necessitated the re-use and re-dyeing of existing hangings and materials where appropriate and some of the lesser areas were papered with Morris's standard domestic wallpapers, eg. 'Chrysanthemum' in the Boudoir. However, three new designs, 'St. James's' wallpaper (which required 68 blocks and two change blocks), 'St. James's' ceiling paper and 'St. James's' silk damask were specifically manufactured for the commission. Further works were added in December 1881, at a cost of £722 and the scheme was completed in March 1882 when, finally, new curtains and embroidered valences were provided for an additional £2,025.

Bibliography

D9. William Morris
St. James's Palace. Design for a Clock Case, 1881.
pencil and watercolour; 43.9 x 68 cm.
inscribed recto: top right, St. James' Palace (pen)
inscribed verso: top centre, Clockcase (pencil)
stencilled verso: 1; Merton Abbey


D11. William Morris or Philip Webb
pencil and watercolour; 41.3 x 61.4 cm.
inscribed recto: top left, St. James's Palace. Grand Staircase. top right, Side of Beam. (pen)
stencilled verso: 1 E; Merton Abbey.

D12. William Morris or Philip Webb
St. James's Palace. Design for Frieze of Queen's Entrance Hall, 1881.
pencil and gold watercolour; 31.2 x 59.5 cm.
inscribed recto: top left, Frieze of Queen’s Entrance Hall, St. James’ Palace (pen).
stencilled verso: 1 N; Merton Abbey.

D14. William Morris or Philip Webb
St. James’s Palace. Design for the ceiling decoration of the Ambassadors’ Entrance, 1881.
pencil and watercolour; 68 x 73.2 cm.
inscribed recto: top right, St. James’ Palace. Ceiling decoration for Ambassadors Entrance (pen).
stencilled verso: Merton Abbey.

D15. William Morris or Philip Webb
pencil and watercolour; 66.9 x 67.1 cm.
inscribed recto: top right, St. James Palace, Ambassadors Entrance Ceiling (pen).
stencilled verso: Merton Abbey.
This design is a coloured version of D14 above.

D18. William Morris or Philip Webb
St. James’s Palace. Design for the Queen’s Staircase, 1881.
pencil and watercolour; 47.1 x 49.2 cm.
inscribed recto: top left, Queens Staircase (pencil); centre left, S. James’s Palace, Queen’s Stair - Soffits (pen); lower left, the yellow for sofit of Stairs – Carbrook – same colour as in ceiling (pencil).
inscribed verso: top centre, St. James’s Palace (pen).
stencilled verso: 1 C; Merton Abbey.

D21. William Morris or Philip Webb
St. James’s Palace. Design for Ambassadors’ Room cornice, 1881.
pencil and watercolour; 60.5 x 61.5 cm.
inscribed recto: top left, ST. JAMES’S PALACE, AMBASSADOR’S ROOM (black paint); top right, CORNICE (black paint).
stencilled verso: 1 L; Merton Abbey.

D22. William Morris or Philip Webb
St. James’s Palace. Design for Queen’s Entrance and Ambassadors’ Entrance, 1881.
pencil, pen and watercolour; 63 x 45.7 cm.
inscribed verso: ST. JAMES PALACE QUEEN’S ENTRANCE (paint), & Ambassadors Entrance (pen).
stencilled verso: 1 N; Merton Abbey.
(d) CARBROOK (1879-1881)
Morris & Company were involved with the decoration of Carbrook from 1879-1881, a period which co-incided with the second commission for the decoration of St. James’s Palace (see D18 above which bears an inscription relating to a colour used for the Carbrook ceiling). The commission, for which no documentation is known, included a carpet, the Carbrook, a later version of which was woven for Aleco Ionides for 1 Holland Park and is now in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Unfortunately no information about Carbrook or its owner appears to have survived.

Carbrook Ceiling, c.1879
pencil, pen and watercolour; 45.2 x 82.9 cm.
inscribed recto: lower left, Carbrook Ceiling; please send off to Carbrook at once.
(pencil); lower right, Ceiling Bed. Space between enrichments (pen).
inscribed verso: Carbrook Decoration (pen).
stencilled verso: 15; Merton Abbey.

(e) 1 HOLLAND PARK (1880-1888)
1 Holland Park was the London residence of Alexander (Aleco) Ionides who acquired the house in 1875 from his father Alexander Constantine Ionides, a Greek born merchant whose family had fled from Constantinople in the 1820s under Turkish persecution. The commission to decorate and furnish the house was received by Morris & Co. in March 1880 but Morris had known the family since the late 1860s and was an intimate friend of Aleco’s sister Aglaia Coronia. In 1875 he had designed panels for Aleco’s mother, Mrs. Ionides, and her female relations to embroider.

Philip Webb was responsible for the structural changes to the interior and Morris himself for the entire decorative and furnishing scheme. This wholesale redecoration allowed a coherence which had not been possible in earlier commissions where only partial refurbishment had been required. The work was completed in October 1888 at a total cost of £2,360.2s.10d.

Bibliography

D29. William Morris or Philip Webb
No.1 Holland Park. Drawing Room ceiling, c.1883.
pencil and watercolour; 53 x 50.8 cm.
inscribed recto: top left, No 1 Holland Park (Ionides). Drawing Room Ceiling.
(pen).
stencilled verso: 11; Merton Abbey.

An estimate of May 2, 1883, now in the National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum (MS. L.885-1954) costs the ceiling at about £160.

(f) **JEW PARK (c.1873–74)**
**D25.** Attributed to William Morris.
Jew Park Wall Plate, c.1873.
pencil and brown watercolour; 35.5 x 67.2 cm.
inscribed recto: top right, Jew Park. wall plate. (pencil).
stencilled verso: 21 Merton Abbey.

The paper is watermarked for 1873 and Monk and Gooch, *op. cit.*, relate the design, a frieze of foliage and berries within geometric borders, to the wallpapers of 1870-76. Nothing further is known of this commission, neither the ownership nor location of Jew Park which may conceivably be a nickname.

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