

Sara E. Haslam, *John Ruskin and the Lakeland Arts Revival, 1880–1920* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2004), 250 pp., £15.00 pbk, 24 b&w illustrations, ISBN 18989 37605.

THIS WELL-RESEARCHED BOOK, together with those by Jennie Brunton and Ian Bruce reviewed by Martin Haggerty in the Summer 2003 issue of this *journal*, shows the extent to which the Lake District participated in the revival of handicrafts in the later nineteenth century. Ruskin came to live at Brantwood in 1871 and stayed for the rest of his life, finding some tranquillity there amidst his many personal troubles and public controversies. It is part of Sara Haslam's argument that Ruskin played a key role in promoting the revival, both through his writings and his personal contacts with those participating in it. She draws our attention to four central institutions: the Langdale Linen Industry, established by Albert Fleming in 1883 at Ellerwater, and run

in succession by two remarkable craftswomen, Marian Twelves and Elizabeth Pepper; the Keswick School of Industrial Arts established by Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley and his wife Edith in the same year; Arthur Simpson's workshop in Kendal from 1885, known for 1906 as The Handicrafts, which became the largest in scale of these businesses; and Annie Garnett's The Spinnery, originally called the Windermere Industry, in Bowness-on-Windermere from 1891 – the year in which another disciple, W. G. Collingwood, published *The Art Teaching of John Ruskin*. She also discusses, more briefly, the work of the architect Dan Gibson and the landscape- and garden-designer Thomas Mawson. This enables her make the challenging claim that by 1900 'south Lakeland's receptiveness to Ruskin's teachings' had created 'a concentration of handcraft workers probably larger than in any other region of England' (p. 133).

The twelve main chapters of the book substantiate this claim by giving details of the four enterprises and those who ran them, who all come across in their differing ways as dedicated and creative people in whose lives Ruskin and his ideas played a significant role. I particularly enjoyed the account of Marian Twelves, Fleming's housekeeper, who taught herself the craft of spinning, on which much of the revival was to be based; no easy task, as she recalled later, when neither she nor those about her had any 'technical knowledge as to why the wheels could turn the wrong way – bands fly off for no apparent reason – and yarn twist itself into innumerable kinks instead of winding itself in a orderly manner on the bobbin' (quoted p. 19). I was also impressed by what I learned of the work of Arthur Simpson, including the illustrated carved wooden panel *Iris*, which won a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1913; he evidently contributed commissioned work to numerous churches throughout the area. By writing this book – based on an academic thesis but by no means written in academic jargon – Sara Haslam has provided a fine example of the kind of valuable research that can be done in a specific area with a well-chosen focus.

Haslam's book does raise one problem, however, and that concerns the relation of what she describes in Lakeland to the Arts and Crafts movement as a whole. She admits that some of the protagonists best known in that movement did work in the Lake District, but places their contributions in a separate chapter at the end of her book entitled 'Other Developments'. Here we encounter Morris and Company,

with stained glass in several local churches, of which that at Jesus Chapel, Troutbeck, 1873, is particularly praised; we also encounter Philip Webb, through his friendship with George and Rosalind Howard of Naworth Castle, near Brampton: Webb's only church was built there in 1874–78, as were two houses in Brampton, Four Gables and Green Lanes. Two other architects associated with the Arts and Crafts worked in the area: C. F. A. Voysey and M. H. Baillie Scott. Voysey built Moor Crag in 1898, Broadleys in 1899, and Littleholme around 1910, while Baillie Scott built Blackwell (now known as an attractive tourist attraction) in 1900. Nevertheless, Haslam notes, 'the Arts and Crafts dwindled in south Lakeland after 1900, as the infiltration of wealthy industrialists into the south of the region also declined' (p. 212). This point is well made, being based on Haslam's valuable research. But she enlists it as part of what I find a less convincing argument, that the Ruskinian revival which she has documented should be seen as something quite separate from the Arts and Crafts movement, which she associates mainly with London and with big names. She may be disappointed to find that the local craftspeople she admires appear in the catalogue of the recent *International Arts and Crafts* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in a chapter by Mary Greensted entitled 'Nature and the Rural Idyll'; here they are saluted alongside the craftspeople of various kinds who practised in other parts of the British Isles, notably the Cotswolds, Surrey, Cornwall, and Fivemilestown. But when we think of the teaching of Ruskin himself in relation to the Arts and Crafts movement – of which he may surely be considered the grandfather – there seems no point in denying that the Lakeland arts revival, however Ruskinian, however appealingly provincial, was nevertheless part of the wider movement which we are now rightly celebrating.

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