

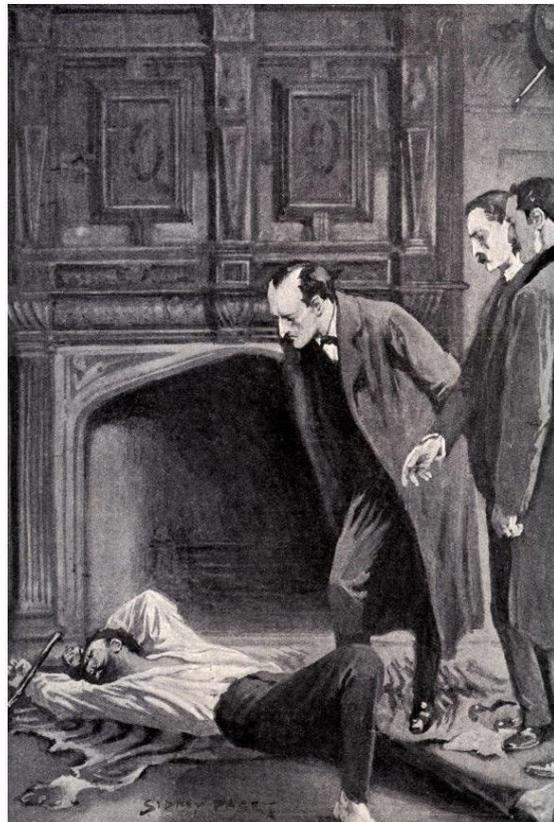
AFTERWORD

Why a fourth Sherlock Holmes story?

NOTE:

My Sherlock Holmes stories were inspired by a wonderful photo of Frederick Leach (David Parr's employer) and his assembled workers taken, in 1882, on a day out to Clayhithe. The men are arranged in rows, like a college photo. One man stands out from all the others because of his physique and his hat. The man is tall, has a Holmesian quality, and, most importantly, is the only one wearing a deerstalker. The wearer is none other than David Parr.

Incredibly, both men were born in 1854. David Parr was born on 19th July 1854 and in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's story 'His Last Bow', set in 1914, Sherlock Holmes is described as sixty years of age - his birthday is 6th January.

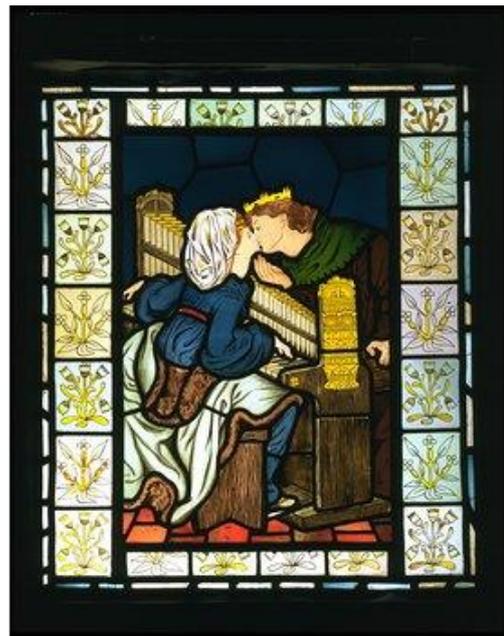
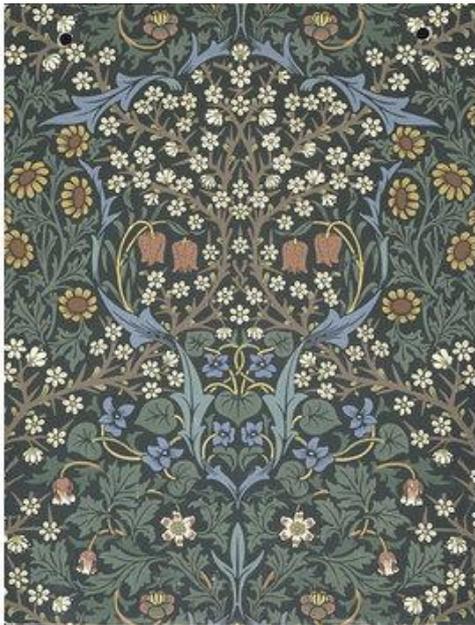


"IT WAS THE BODY OF A TALL, WELL MADE MAN, ABOUT FORTY YEARS OF AGE."

An illustration of Sherlock Holmes by Sidney Paget for The Strand Magazine

To my mind, St. James's Palace lends itself to a Sherlock Holmes tale as he would have been summoned to investigate a murder. After all, depending which website one believes, there were either seven or eight assassination attempts on Queen Victoria's life. It also ensured I could talk about Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s commissions to redecorate various state rooms at the palace in my Afterword. And, I could give a nod to the actor Basil Rathbone, who was born in the month of June and played Sherlock Holmes in fourteen films between 1938 and 1946. Moreover, share other interesting information which had come up as part of my research.

Dear Reader consider the following images for a moment (courtesy of the V&A's collection):



<p>Previous page, left-hand side: <i>Blackthorn</i> by John Henry Dearle for Morris & Co. <i>Honeysuckle</i> by May Morris (William Morris's younger daughter) for Morris & Co.</p>	<p>Previous page, right-hand side: <i>Trellis</i> by William Morris & Philip Webb for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. <i>King René's Honeymoon</i> by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.</p>
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All the designs on the previous page were produced under the 'Morris' banner but were not designed by William Morris, save 'Trellis' which was a combined effort. William Morris and his friends tried to re-establish the medieval guild system, whereby they shared commissions and opportunities to bring their work to public attention, thereby supporting each other in the establishment of their careers and the means to earn a living. Thus, they were also able to play to their strengths. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Ford Madox Brown excelled at drawing the human form and their work lent itself to the stained glass produced by the company for secular and ecclesiastical settings. William Morris knew he did not possess the talent to become an artist, but, by researching historic textiles and drawing on them for inspiration, he could create beautiful patterns based on stylised flora and fauna. Philip Webb, who had trained as an architect, excelled at drawing animals and birds and added the birds to Morris's 'Trellis' wallpaper design and supplied the animals for 'The Forest' tapestry. May Morris headed the company's embroidery department. Lastly, John Henry Dearle, who started out as a shop assistant for Morris, went on to become the company's chief designer. Dearle's output is often hard to tell apart from Morris's designs because he followed Morris's aesthetic and teachings so closely.

When Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (MMF&Co.) were first commissioned to undertake decorative works in the Tapestry Room and Armoury, adjacent rooms at St. James's Palace, Morris assigned the design of the decorative schemes for these prestigious state rooms to his friend Phillip Webb. The company engaged Frederick Leach, David Parr's employer, for aspects of the work. I will leave the meat of this topic to others at the David Parr House as they can cover it with greater academic rigour, but I want to draw your attention to some interesting asides.

No doubt, readers will be burning to know if David Parr can be placed at the palace. He had lodgings in London at the time, but the firm was working on more than one commission.

However, in an article Charles Mitchell wrote for the January 1947 edition of 'The Architectural Review' on MMF&Co.'s commissions at St. James's Palace, (they were successive so, as one element was being completed, the company was invited to submit quotes for another stage, as well as for rugs and carpets), in respect of the initial commission, he commented, 'It was done - evidently a scramble towards the end.' Readers may recall I mentioned in January's Afterword that, similarly, when it looked like Charles Eamer Kempe wouldn't meet his deadline to complete the private chapel at Castle Howard, he had engaged Frederick Leach to help his draughtsmen paint the interior. Even if David Parr had been set to work on other commissions in London, Mitchell's comment opens-up the possibility that it may, nevertheless, have been a case of 'all hands to the pump' for a few days.

In the same year, MMF&Co. were commissioned to redecorate the state rooms at St. James's Palace, they were also commissioned to create the 'Green Dining Room' in the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A). Again, the work was given to Philip Webb. If you study the wallpaper in photo of the completed room and in Webb's design further below, you will see that he had not learnt how to create a pattern repeat. There is a distinct gap between one block of foliage pattern and the next. The design doesn't merge over the widths of paper.



Photo above and illustration below – V&A's collection



What has perplexed many historians is how MMF&Co. were given the St. James's Palace commissions, or, as Charles Mitchell described them in his article, 'a party of eccentric young artists, who had barely ceased to conduct their concern, founded only six years earlier, like a picnic and whose modest success at the Exhibition of 1862 had been violently contested by their contemptuous commercial competitors, had made their way into Crace's dismal preserve.'

(John G. Crace of Wigmore Street, the leading decorator of the day, had been expected to be awarded the work.)

However, this is convincingly explained by a letter Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote in August 1865 to Jane Morris asking if he could bring round Mr & Mrs William Cowper to see their furniture as an example of the work of MMF&Co.. William Cowper (Lord Mount Temple) was the First Commissioner of Public Works. Seemingly, his wife had asked Dante Gabriel Rossetti's opinion in respect of improving the decoration of their dining room and he had responded bluntly with the suggestion that she should start by burning everything they had. Given that Morris went on to win the commissions, it would seem she hadn't taken offence.

Unlike Philip Webb, William Morris must have taken advice to avoid the same pitfall as him, grasped the workings of the pattern repeat and created a monumental wallpaper design for the Grand Staircase at St. James's Palace. It was used again in the Banqueting Room, but in a different colourway with a red background. The vertical repeat is 119.4 cm and took two widths of wallpaper for the horizontal repeat. Moreover, 68 blocks were required, not only to achieve the large repeat, but to apply all the different colours.



Left: St. James's Palace Wallpaper, V&A collection

Right: St. James's Wallpaper design by William Morris, William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow

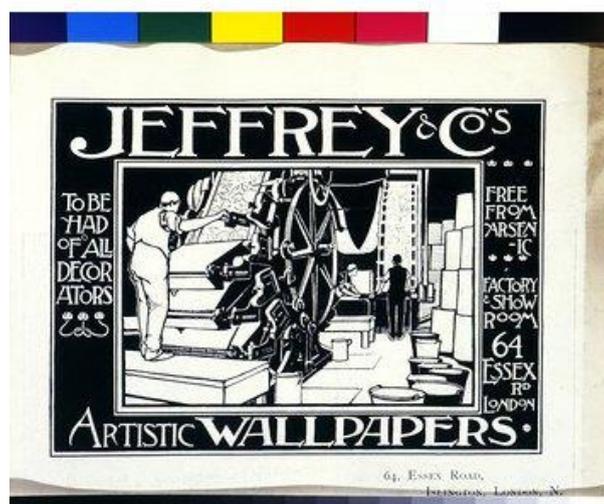
Wood block (1 of many) from William Morris's Strawberry Thief design – V&A collection



At college in the late 1980's my fellow students and I produced fabrics and wallpapers using screen printing. Each colour we wanted to lay down required a separate screen. They were coated in a photographic solution, which, after the areas of the design for the same colour were exposed to light, would wash away in the areas where colour was to penetrate through the fine mesh. This method was far less labour intensive than carving pear wood blocks.

It should be noted that Jeffrey & Co. printed the St. James's Palace wallpaper. Wallpaper printing had been mechanised since 1839 and superior surface printers, which could apply multiple colours, came on stream around 1860 – 1870. However, the number of extant wood blocks carrying Morris's designs are indicative that, whenever possible, Morris preferred using traditional printing methods, just as he rejected aniline dyes in favour of natural dyes.

Advertising for Jeffrey & Co. showing a surface printer – V&A collection



When it comes to Morris's designs there are a couple of things which puzzle me. Firstly, how was he able to ensure his designs 'registered' exactly – that the prints from a wood block tessellated? In terms of the actual printing, some device, such as a nail driven into the wood, would have been placed onto a printed circle at the edge of the fabric, ensuring the block was aligned perfectly ensuring a seamless continuation of the printed design.

At college, in order to ensure the accuracy of our repeats – this was before we went anywhere near the print room - we had to take our design to a lightbox and, using a grid and a long, steel ruler, we marked out the edges of the repeat. A lecturer would then take a medical scalpel and, using a rubber mat, cut through the design, wiggling round leaves etc, but keeping a line that was roughly straight. The bottom half would then be stuck to the top half so that one marked line sat exactly over the other, ensuring the new top and bottom matched exactly because they were both halves of the same wiggled cut-through. The design had to be made to match at the sides too, but no wiggling required, only a straight edge. No matter how accurately one executed the design, there was always an element of making good where the stuck down paper overlapped. Yet, extant examples of Morris's designs only show the repeat and nothing more. His methods look rudimentary, as though it ought to invite mishaps.

Windrush design by William Morris – William Morris Society collection



Secondly, we were taught to draw/paint well beyond the edges of the pattern repeat, as by doing so one could spot so-called 'holes', where there should be something going on in the design or ugly shapes or the bunching up of elements etc. As Morris's designs often have a main pattern and the gaps in between have another pattern going on with a different treatment, there are rarely any places where there is nothing going on. However, as some of his designs are better than others, one could argue he too would have benefitted from having drawn more of his repeat to see if it worked.

Note: the 'brick pattern' repeat is often used in design as the staggered effect ensures a less predictable repeat. Morris uses a variety of repeat patterns, even a simple mirroring as can be seen in his Pimpernel wallpaper design.

William Morris's 'Pimpernel' wallpaper – The Billiard Room, Wigtwick Manor



Readers of 'April's' 'The Adventure in Holland Park' story might remember I stated that Frederick Leach's and David Parr's work was completed at St. James's Palace in December 1880, therefore, just days before Sherlock Holmes met Dr. John H. Watson for the first time. Strike that! At the start of June, the David Parr House acquired the January 1947 edition of 'The Architectural Review', whose featured article on MMF&Co.'s decorative schemes at St. James's Palace was drawn from royal accounts and information provided by his successor at Morris & Co.. If the new information is accurate, William Morris was still fulfilling his commissions at the palace throughout 1881 and Dr. Watson and David Parr overlap in my Sherlock Holmes chronology.

And, regular readers of my Afterword will know that I like to highlight the social connections David Parr may have observed whilst undertaking his work. This month is no exception...

Will the real 'My Fair Lady' step forward please!

The film 'My Fair Lady' starring Audrey Hepburn was based on George Bernard Shaw's play 'Pygmalion'. Shaw wrote the play in early 1912 and it premiered on 16th October 1913 at the Hofburg Theatre, Austria.

The story of Pygmalion and Galatea was first related in Ovid's Metamorphoses. Ovid's version tells of Pygmalion, a sculptor of Cyprus, who prays at the temple of Aphrodite for forgiveness for the years he has shunned her and begs for a wife as perfect as his marble statue. In his absence, Aphrodite appears in the studio to impart life to Galatea. When Pygmalion returns home, he finds that his statue has come to life.

The pre-Raphaelites created their own versions, bringing the story to public attention again. Edward Burne-Jones produced two series of four paintings and William Morris wrote his own version of the story.



Above and below: 'Pygmalion' 2nd series of four paintings by Edward Burne-Jones – Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery



But who was the inspiration for Shaw's 'Pygmalion'?

Shaw was friends with William Morris for twelve years, united by the Socialist cause. Perhaps he learnt that Morris's wife, Jane, was born in Oxford to a stableman and laundress.

According to wiki, '...After her engagement, she was privately educated to become a gentleman's wife. Her keen intelligence allowed her to recreate herself. She was a voracious reader who became proficient in French and Italian, and she became an accomplished pianist with a strong background in classical music. Her manners and speech became refined to an extent that contemporaries referred to her as "queenly." Later in life, she had no trouble moving in upper-class circles. She was possibly the model for the heroine of the 1884 novel *Miss Brown* by Vernon Lee upon which George Bernard Shaw based the character of Eliza Doolittle in his play *Pygmalion* (1914) and the later film *My Fair Lady* (1964)...'



Jane Morris (née Burden)
(19 October 1839 – 26 January 1914)

Photo taken: July 1865
By John Robert Parsons,
Copied by Emery Walker Ltd.

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National Portrait Gallery

When researching Sir Frederic Leighton for 'April's' story and Afterword, I came across claims that his model Dorothy Dene (born Ada Alice Pullen) was George Bernard Shaw's inspiration.

From The Guardian, Tuesday 22nd December 2009, '...Leighton also paid for elocution lessons for another beauty, Ada Alice Pullen, so successfully that she abandoned modelling and became a modestly successful actor as Dorothy Dene. She was one of the few allowed into the artist's bedroom as he lay dying, and he left her a then enormous bequest of £3,000. George Bernard Shaw knew both artist and model, and there was speculation that she inspired his immortal Eliza Doolittle, plucked out of the gutter and turned into a lady by Henry Higgins and his friend Colonel Pickering...'

Perhaps the answer lies in the name 'Doolittle'.

Jane Morris is said to have suffered from chronic back pain and often travelled with a sofa so she could lie flat during the day. Her daughter May recalled, '...My dear mother was rather heroic on these occasions quietly forgoing the many little comforts that a delicate lady needs.'

In 'Jane Morris: The Burden of History', Wendy Parkins writes, 'Jane's association with Rossetti that has tended to reinforce her image as a rather melodramatic invalid ('Dear suffering Janey,' he begins one letter...'). If, as I have suggested in discussing Mackail's biography, Jane's individualism has been unflatteringly juxtaposed with her husband's zealous productivity...'

Fiona MacCarthy wrote in her biography of William Morris, 'There remains the mystery of the ill health of Mrs Morris, who took to the sofa in 1869, at the age of twenty-nine and never really left it'.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's niece Helen Rossetti Angeli wrote the most cutting remark of all: [those] '...who knew her only in effigy'.

In respect of Dorothy Dene, the 1887 edition of 'The Illustrated Queen Almanac & Lady's Calendar' carried the following review:

'Miss Dorothy Dene has been a pupil of the School of Dramatic Art and her first appearance in London took place in March 1884 when she played Maria in 'The School for Scandal' at the Olympic. Since then she has travelled in the provinces as Pauline in 'Called Back', and as Marie Graham of 'In His Power', meeting everywhere with flattering receptions, with appreciation of her talent, and predictions of a bright career...'

Given Dorothy Dene featured on an Ogden's cigarette card some seven + years later, suggests that she had continued to work hard to establish herself and get notable roles and was ill-suited for the name 'Doolittle'.



Dorothy Dene
Featured on an Ogden's cigarette card
Published 1894 – 1907

National Portrait Gallery



Dorothy Dene
(1859 – 27 December 1899)
Taken in 1880s by Henry Van der Weyde

National Portrait Gallery

The social connections continue...

George Bernard Shaw wrote the part of Eliza Doolittle expressly for the actress **Mrs Patrick Campbell**, who was forty-nine years old when she played the part in 1914 and played Eliza again in the 1920 revival of the play.

Mrs Patrick Campbell was a feted actress, thereby exceptionally well connected. In 1914, she became the second wife of George Cornwallis-West, who was previously married to Jennie Jerome, mother of Sir Winston Churchill. Short of money, Jennie Jerome had taken to writing plays for the West End, many of which starred Mrs Patrick Campbell.

The following letter is from Mrs Patrick Campbell's 'My life & some letters'. Note: The artist Aubrey Beardsley was mentioned in 'April's' Afterword as he had seen the 'Peacock Room', which James McNeill Whistler had created for Frederick Leyland and the artist Edward Burne-Jones at his studio.

'Dear Mrs Campbell

Mr Aubrey Beardsley, a very brilliant & wonderful young artist and a great admirer of the wonder and charm of your art, says that he must have the honour of being presented to you, if you will allow it. So, with your gracious sanction, I will come round after Act III with him, and you would gratify and honour him much if you would let him bow his compliments to you. He has just illustrated my play Salome for me; and has a copy of the edition de luxe which he wishes to lay at your feet.

His drawings are quite wonderful.

Very sincerely yours,

Oscar Wilde'



Left: publicity illustration depicting Mrs Patrick Campbell as Eliza Doolittle

Right: Mrs Patrick Campbell - photographer unknown. Taken in 1896 (National Portrait Gallery).

In the same publication, Mrs Patrick Campbell wrote, 'Philip Burne-Jones was among the many new acquaintances my success brought me. We soon became warm friends and what unforgettable kindness he showed me. His talent for painting and drawing and keen appreciation of the comedy of life, his interest in the theatre, and his genuine love of children made him a delightful companion...'

'...The wonderful day came when he took me to his father's studio... Sir Edward Burne-Jones – 'Dearest,' I called him – came a little into my life. His genius, his rare wisdom, his richly stored memory, his boundless sympathy, and his letters with their precious sketches, made the friendship he gave me one of the greatly prized honours of my life.'

And, in respect of Jane Morris, 'It was during the run of Juliet that Mrs William Morris gave me a lovely photograph of herself taken by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in her garden. I saw her first when her hair was white; her beauty and grace took my breath away. I sent her some seed pearls for her needlework. I wonder what work she wove them in?'

The actor **Basil Rathbone** wrote in his autobiography 'In and Out of Character',

'Another great actress I was connected with during my early days in London was the extraordinarily beautiful and exceptionally gifted Mrs. Patrick Campbell. She taught me, I think, to be prepared for almost any emergency that might happen to an actor anywhere at any time! I was playing Alfred de Musset opposite her George Sand at the Duke of York's Theatre London late in 1920. She was then in her early fifties I should say, and still devastatingly beautiful... She had christened me "that young actor with a face like two profiles stuck together,"... and then later as being like "a folded umbrella taking elocution lessons!".



Basil Rathbone
(13 June 1892 – 21 July 1967)

Taken on 20 February 1920
by Bassano Ltd

Collection : National Portrait Gallery

The detour around London's theatres makes one wonder whether David Parr and his family went to the theatre. The Arthur Lloyd website – see link below – talks about the history of Cambridge's theatres.

<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/CambridgeTheatres.htm>

To recap and play ‘**Six degrees of separation**’, (Six degrees of separation is the idea that all people are six, or fewer, social connections away from each other), applying this rule, we can connect David Parr and Frederick Leach to the ‘Sherlock Holmes’ actor Basil Rathbone in 3 degrees

Edward Burne-Jones* > Mrs Patrick Campbell > Basil Rathbone

*Frederick Leach was commissioned by William Morris to decorate the London home of George Howard, where Edward Burne-Jones worked on a series of paintings in their final stages of completion.

If we err on caution, then Parr and Leach can be linked in 4 degrees:

William Morris > Edward Burne-Jones* > Mrs Patrick Campbell > Basil Rathbone

Returning to the inspiration for George Bernard Shaw’s Eliza Doolittle, if Shaw was inspired by Vernon Lee’s 1884 novel Miss Brown, how did Vernon Lee know of Jane Morris?

Vernon Lee (14 October 1856 – 13 February 1935) was a British writer who was born in France to expatriate parents and lived mostly in Italy but spent time in England. She was friends with Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s brother William Rossetti, Leslie Stephen and his family (he was the father of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell), and John Singer Sargent amongst others.



Vernon Lee

Artist : John Singer Sargent

Year : 1881

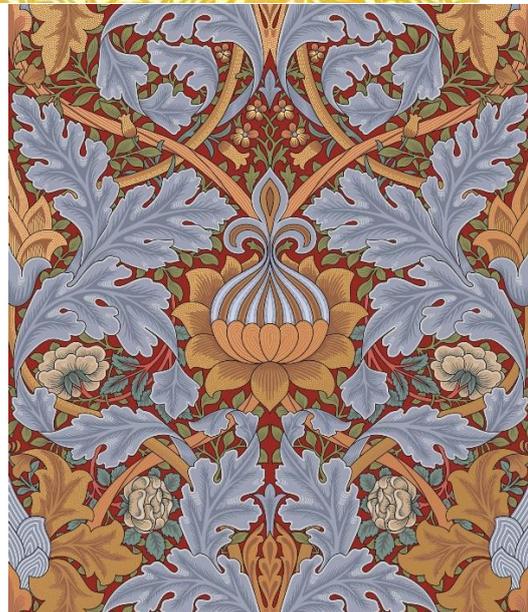
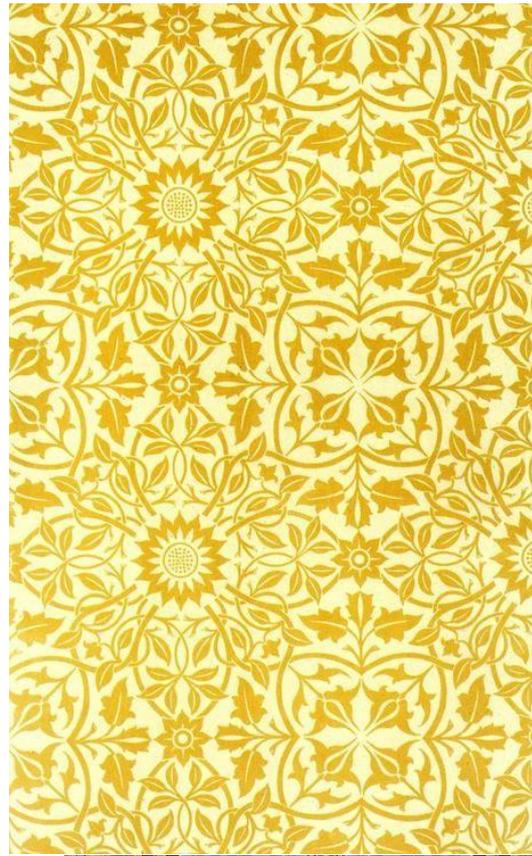
Collection : Tate

In a letter dated 6th July 1883 (in the Vernon Lee Archive, Miller Library Colby College, Maine, USA) she writes, ‘...tea at the Holidays... who live beyond Hampstead... Among these... to my joy Mrs Morris. She certainly is magnificently beautiful.’

Dear Reader consider the following decorative elements (author's own photographs):



Now, dear Reader, consider the following:



Left top: Door in the Armoury, St. James's Palace – Philip Webb (The Architectural Review)
Left bottom: Pattern for wood panels in the Armoury & The Tapestry Room, St. James's Palace – Philip Webb (The Architectural Review)
Right top: St. James's Palace, ceiling paper – William Morris (V&A Collection)
Right bottom: St. James's Palace, wallpaper – William Morris (Image from Bradbury & Bradbury Art wallpapers website.)

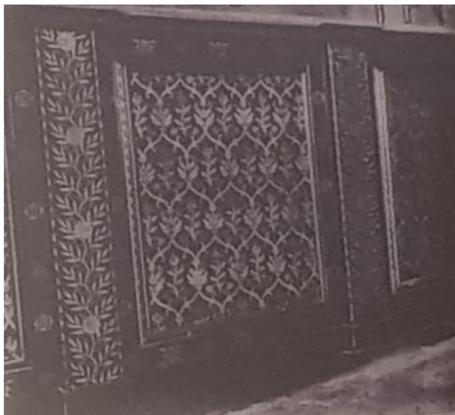
The first set of photographs were taken in the Foreign Office, Whitehall, London. I've not included any of the spectacular murals or ceilings but focussed on design elements which are representative of those used in the Victorian era.

When one compares Philip Webb's and William Morris's work against them, one can see that they brought their own visual language to their decorative schemes.

Philip Webb's skill as a designer can be seen in the patterning for the Tapestry Room and Armoury doors. His palette was limited to gold on olive green. Yet, through alternating different weighted leaf patterns, he lends his designs complexity, creating interest.

Similarly, Webb was extremely clever when devising the patterns for the wood panels in the two state rooms. See the bottom left image on this page and the bottom left image on the previous page, note how the gold isn't applied uniformly. Instead, the gold is applied unevenly on the leaves, stems and flowers, thereby lending it more interest than if it had been applied as solid colour. It may be that he simply wanted the decoration to look aged, like something one might find in a medieval church or castle, something befitting of Henry VIII's medieval, crenelated red-brick palace. Regardless, with his measured application of gold, he has again created interest despite his limited palette.

Colour-wise, the gold on olive green would have sat perfectly with the Royal tapestries, although current pictures, which we can't reproduce here without the right permissions, suggest Philip Webb's patterning has been replicated but is now gold on black, making it look like Chinese lacquer work, therefore equally beautiful.



Previous page, left: wood panelling, St. James's Palace – Philip Webb (The Architectural Review)

Previous page, right: Green Dining Room ceiling at the V&A – Philip Webb (V&A collection)

As for William Morris's St. James's Palace wallpaper, the tessellated image below gives an indication of what the pattern repeat would have looked like. Even though Morris hadn't used a 'brick-pattern' repeat, the sweeping stems and furling acanthus leaves in contrasting colours, keep the eye moving. The intertwining stems and overlapping leaves give the design depth and the stylised flower heads, which are cupped by naturalistic leaves, create interest. It is a busy pattern but that is a positive as it would have camouflaged any inevitable marks.

In respect of a big budget film, one asks if one can see the money on the screen. Similarly, was it worth the 68 wood blocks it took to achieve Morris's repeat pattern and lay all the colours? The design is majestic. It seems that, faced with the vast walls of a public area, Morris understood the answer was to go large, and produced his most sophisticated work to date.

Morris was inspired by illuminated manuscripts in his design work. They often have more than one decorative pattern on the same page to fill the spaces around blocks of text. Similarly, Morris's ceiling papers are not meant to match his wallpapers and his St. James's ceiling paper is no exception. Morris has clearly taken his inspiration from the delightful ceiling Philip Webb designed for the Green Dining Room at the V&A – see previous pages for photographs.



Charles Mitchell concludes his 1947 article for 'The Architectural Review' by saying, '...and in the Ante Room (the present Drawing Room) we may still see the wall-hangings, the curtains and the valances in their original position as Morris installed them over sixty years ago. The valances, with their rich flowered silk base, are particularly impressive. The original sample piece submitted by Morris to the Board of Works was recently presented by Mr. Marillier to the Victoria and Albert Museum.'

It should be noted that Mitchell erroneously uses the word 'valance'. He means 'pelmet'. The sample is noted as being a 'pelmet with appliqué motifs' in the V&A's collection – image below from the V&A collection.



Alas, since Mitchell wrote his piece, Morris's decorative scheme has been covered over or removed. The Grand Staircase, where his magnificent wallpaper had hung, is now painted white with gilded highlights.

Readers may recall that in April's Afterword I debated whether Frederick Leach and David Parr had gone to see Frederick Leyland's Peacock Room, which James McNeill Whistler created.

Other letters Vernon Lee wrote to her mother suggest that, if one is introduced to the 'gate-keeper', then access to various artist's studios and the homes of the wealthy was all too easy. They are worth reading anyway for her amusing, if cutting, insights.

To give some context, Vernon Lee must have been introduced to Mrs Russell Barrington, who lived next door to the artist George Frederic Watts and went on to write her reminiscences of him and Sir Frederic Leighton.

In a letter dated 2nd July 1883 (in the Vernon Lee Archive, Miller Library Colby College, Maine, USA) she wrote – note: Lee’s mistakes are unaltered:

‘Mrs Barrington is a rumpled scrumpled little brown paper woman, of uncertain artistic pretensions, a sort of King Charles’ dog of the neighbouring studios. Through her garden (with real flowers in it) and paddock, we got to G. F. Watts’ studio. He is, as you know, one of the chiefs of the Idealists, yet separated by a gulf of fashionableness from the pre-Raphaelites. He has done some first rate work, but is now old. He is a most charming man, & talked to me a long time about the Portrait Art. Thence, through more paddocks & back doors, we got to Sir F. Leighton’s. This is quite the 8th wonder of the world, including a Moorish cupola place, with a fountain, all lined with precious Persian tiles and mosaics by Walter Crane; as good almost as a Ravenna church. Sir Frederick, is a mixture of the Olympian Jove & a headwaiter, a superb decorator & a superb piece of decoration, paints poor pictures of the correctest idealism, of orange tawney naked women against indigo skies – He is surrounded by a lot of fashionable women, all begging his opinion of this & that, his patronage of that – “a word of Sir Frederick’s will of course act like magic everywhere” as one said. After this I departed...’

In a letter dated 7th July 1883 (in the Vernon Lee Archive, Miller Library Colby College, Maine, USA) she wrote:

‘Now we are going to see some Rossetti pictures...’

And, in a letter dated 11th July 1883 (in the Vernon Lee Archive, Miller Library Colby College, Maine, USA) she wrote – again, mistakes are unchanged:

‘The day before yesterday Bella Duffy & I went to fetch Evelyn Pickering to go to see Leyland’s Rossettis. You never saw anything like the dreariness of her studio and of the pictures in it. I confess I cannot feel as sorry as I ought to for the utter going to pieces of the excellent talents she really possesses, for it is the result of such pigheadedness on her part. In her studio was a shaggy man in shirtsleeves, who, I discovered himself to be Holman Hunt. The Leyland’s house is in Prince’s Gate: frightfully vulgar & badly got up, with hideous gilt box ceilings & the most monstrously ugly furniture. The Rossettis there are said by Mr. Theo Watts & also by Evelyn not to be of the best, but I know William Rossetti thinks differently. They are half lengths of women: one vile caricature, with a goitry throat, red hair & german housemaid sentiment, of Mrs Stillman called “Veronica Veronese” – the others mainly of Mrs Morris, making her look as if her face were covered with ill shaven stubble, & altogether repulsive. The best is one of Lilith, a vealy woman – I believe his latest mistress, a Mrs Schott [Fanny Cornforth], who stole various things of his & sold them from a public house which she took to keeping – in white with sealing wax lips & red ornaments. The picture seem to me not merely ill painted & worse modelled, but course & repulsive;

& to make painted diseased harlots of women like Mrs Stillman & Mrs Morris requires a good deal.

In the same house is a room all decorated by Whistler with gold peacocks & peacocks' eyes on a blue ground, & gold étagères covered with blue & white China, which make the tail streakings; I have never seen anything so beautiful & fairylike.

In the evening Bella & I went to a party at the Buntings. It was awfully dull & frowsty, the most mangy set of literary people I ever saw.

Yesterday afternoon we went to the Grosvenor: there is nothing at all suggestive there. Then to the Fine Arts Gallery, to see John's [John Singer Sargent] portrait of the Pailleron children. It is a splendid work (I have a photo, but too large & stiff to send, of it) which, so completely healthy & wholesome, does one good to see after all this scrofulous English art. Oscar Wilde, who is lecturing here at 10/6 the seat, calls John's art vicious & meretricious – I wonder what we should call Rossetti's – what particularly afflicted me in the Rossetti's is the frightful discrepancy between the morbid coarseness of his paintings & the Dantesque delicacy of his poems – His picture of the Blessed Damozel is the most marvellous misinterpretation of the poem that I can conceive.

Yesterday I dined with the Stephens. It was very dull & could not make out who anyone was except Burne Jones, who is effete & literary, but very pleasant with whom I had a long talk about Mrs Stillman, who, he says, is the most beautiful woman, altogether, he has ever seen; & Ouida, whom he greatly admired. I am going to his studio on Monday, & if I see anything suggestive, will try & get photographs.

We are now going to see the Rossettis at Mr Graham's – so much love Yr V.



'Lady Lilith' - Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Delaware Art Museum
Wilmington, Delaware

Note: the original 1866 version of the painting had Fanny Cornforth's face. Rossetti changed it to Alexa Wilding's face in 1872.

On 24th May 1873, Rossetti wrote to his mother: 'About the model, it wd [sic] be Miss Wilding, who is a really good-natured creature – fit company for anyone & quite ladylike, only not gifted or amusing. Thus she might bore you at meals & so on (for one cannot put her in a cupboard)...'

To conclude this Afterword, readers of April's Afterword will know that I gave a nod to Dante Gabriel Rossetti as he had died on Easter Sunday 1892. And, that I related how his new friend Hall Caine was quick to publish revelations about Rossetti in the year of his death.

According to Fiona MacCarthy's biography of William Morris, 'Janey had her last meeting with Rossetti in 1881. He was now in a state of extreme paranoia. She went to spend the afternoon with him at Cheyne Walk and dined with him. After dinner he took her back to Hammersmith in a cab. 'He was in high spirits that day,' Janey had remembered, 'but I never saw him again.'

Rosalie Glynn Grylls (Lady Mander of Wightwick Manor) gets to have the last word. I had reached for her biography of Dante Gabriel Rossetti titled 'Portrait of Rossetti' and picked up where I had left off. I read:

'The return to Tudor House did not bring restoration to health [Rossetti's]. And from this time there is no more mention of Jane Morris. No letters from either side are extant, nor is there any record of her whereabouts in Morris's correspondence quoted by his biographers. Somewhere she must have been lying on a sofa, sick whenever she tried to get up, but whether it was at home or in some English seaside resort or on the Continent there is nothing to tell. Nor whether she had ever loved Rossetti or only been in love with being loved...'