

## Supplement – May 2021

### Why a supplement?

Not a month went by when, within a day or so of submitting my pieces to the David Parr House, I would stumble across additional information or a picture which would have been perfect. And, what to do with the interesting information that didn't make my 2020 'Afterword's? Moreover, new discoveries have come to light in the interim.



Compton – Designed 1882  
Designer: William Morris  
Collection: V&A Museum, London



Blackthorn wallpaper - 1892  
Designer: William Morris  
Collection: V&A Museum



Acanthus – 1875  
Designer: William Morris  
Collection: V&A Museum, London

### Apologia

In one of my 2020 'Afterwords', I included the following quote, which Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell - James McNeill Whistler's friends and official biographers - had slipped into their work:

'His [James Abbott McNeill Whistler's] decorations bewildered people even more than the work of the new firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.'

Even though my piece was posted on the David Parr House website, the team were, nevertheless, surprised at its inclusion.

Had I let them and the David Parr House down? Had I mistaken the Pennells's quote for impartial observation when I ought to have picked up the scent of a nasty undercurrent? I began to read more widely to find out where I had gone wrong. In doing so, I found a story of redemption, and some interesting asides.

*Dear Reader*, you are probably wondering why I had included the quote in the first place. To my mind, it was just as to be expected: doesn't every new generation of artists and designers, those who strive to produce something new by going against the stayed views of their elders,

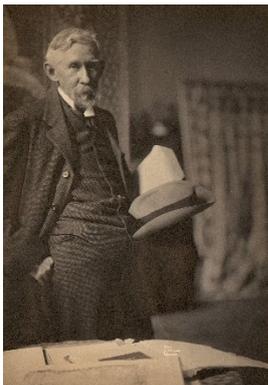
struggle to gain recognition and meet with criticism, often from those who wish to guard their elevated positions having been through same struggle? I thought it (albeit mistakenly) interesting that William Morris hadn't been exempt from such problems.

In his biography of the artist Richard Dadd, published in 1973, David Greysmith wrote, that The Clique, which Dadd founded in the late 1830s, was '...the first group of British artists to combine for greater strength and to announce that the great backward-looking tradition of the Academy was not relevant to the requirements of contemporary art.' Members William Powell Frith and Augustus Egg became academicians in 1853 and 1860 respectively.

When the Pre-Raphaelites [PRB] and artists associated with the brotherhood began submitting works to the Royal Academy, they found themselves up against the likes of Frith, who was critical of the PRB, aestheticism and new developments in art not only vocally but in print. Unsurprisingly, their paintings were rejected. Undeterred, the PRB and their friends founded The Hogarth Club so they might stage their own exhibitions.

In the case of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., fortune did indeed favour the brave. From the outset, well-placed acquaintances gave the firm commissions or provided details of clergymen whose churches were in want of furnishings, windows or decorating. Often the work of artists and designers is valued all the more if they've had to overcome a series of setbacks. William Morris had his fair share, but he persevered.

Last October marked 124 years since his passing. His designs are not only still available to buy but are considered classics. Therefore, I was certain William Morris could take any negative comments on the chin. For my part, I had highlighted a few flaws in my 'Afterwords' to help understand Morris's creative process in respect of his first wallpaper designs / repeat patterns. Given that time and tide hasn't diminished their appeal, I was confident that my observations would be as nought.



Joseph Pennell –  
published 1910 – 1924  
Collection: Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, USA



Elizabeth Robins  
Pennell –  
no later than 1904  
Image: wiki commons –  
Public domain



William Rothenstein –  
1902  
George Charles Beresford  
Collection: National  
Portrait Gallery, London



Walter Greaves –  
date unknown  
Image credit: The Royal  
Borough of Kensington  
and Chelsea website

My findings will carry more meaning if I first show their connection to the David Parr House:

**Let's 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 William Rothenstein in 3x degrees.

David Parr > Frederick Leach >	William Morris >	Edward Burne-Jones > <i>Alternatively,</i> William Morris's wife and daughter, May > Aubrey Beardsley >	William Rothenstein (1872 – 1945)  (And, the Pennells)
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William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Frederick Leach and David Parr all worked on the same commission for George Howard at no. 1 Palace Green but not necessarily at the same time. If Leach and Parr had met Edward Burne-Jones, then there are only 2x degrees of separation between them and William Rothenstein.

Shelley Lockwood, founder member of the David Parr House, confirmed that there is a tantalising reference to Edward Burne-Jones in Leach's diaries but no conclusive information.

William Rothenstein befriended artist Alphonse Legros. In his 'Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein, 1872 – 1900,' he recounts how they ran into Edward Burne-Jones as they were walking along Regents Street. Legros introduced the two men and the three of them headed to the Café Royale, which was only a short distance away.

Recalling the chance encounter in his memoirs, Rothenstein wrote, 'His [Edward Burne-Jones's] face was no less spiritual than it appeared in [George Frederic] Watt's fine portrait, and in photographs I had seen... his name at this time stood for beauty itself. I thought him a great and enviable figure, for like Watts, he had lived a life of incessant labour, had held aloof from the market place [sic], yet had gained the homage of the greatest minds of his day.'



Alphonse Legros – 1897  
Mr and Mrs  
Lewis B. Williams Collection  
Artist: Walter Rothenstein



George Bernard Shaw – 1897  
Gift of the John Huntington Art  
and Polytechnic Trust  
Image credits: Internet Archive Python Library.



Edmund de Goncourt – 1897  
Gift of the John Huntington Art  
and Polytechnic Trust

Rothenstein took up an invitation to visit Edward Burne-Jones at his London home and wrote, 'To enter his house was to go, as it were, from the open into the depth of a shady grove. There was something both rich and remote therein, which has struck me again and again, something of which the Victorians alone had the secret... I had the privilege of visiting two or

three times, when his studio was full of graceful aesthetic young women.’ One of them was the actress Mrs Patrick Campbell.

The National Portrait Gallery holds over 200 of William Rothenstein’s portraits. He headed the Royal School of Art for fifteen years and, in 1931, was knighted for his services to art. Max Beerbohm fictionalised Rothenstein in his story ‘Enoch Soames’, describing him as ‘...a bolt from the blue flashed down on Oxford’.

Rothenstein was twenty-one years of age, come by way of the Slade School in London and Julian’s Academy in Paris to execute twenty-four lithographic portrait drawings of Oxford dignitaries. Beerbohm continued, ‘He was a wit. He was a brimful of ideas. He knew Whistler. He knew Edmond de Goncourt. He knew everyone in Paris... He was Paris in Oxford.’ And, as inveigling ‘dignified and doddering old men, who had never consented to sit for anyone to sit for him.’

It is apparent in his memoirs that Rothenstein had the enviable ability to make friends. He hoped that William Morris might sit for him, but George Bernard Shaw, whom he approached to smooth the way, was adamant he would be turned down. Morris was already seriously ill, and the opportunity never arose. It is unclear whether it was before or after this attempt that he spotted May Morris’s husband in the Gourmets restaurant and struck up a conversation. Through him, he was introduced to May Morris and, in turn, secured an invite to meet her mother, Jane Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s muse.



May Morris – 1897 - silverpoint  
William Rothenstein  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, London



Max Beerbohm – 1898  
William Rothenstein  
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis B. Williams Collection

**What can William Rothenstein, who became James Abbott McNeill Whistler’s friend in Paris and admired William Morris, tell us about Joseph Pennell and his character?**

In his memoirs, Rothenstein wrote, ‘At Whistler’s I first met Joseph Pennell. I felt, the moment that I met him, that he disliked me at sight. We were speaking of Mallarmé, and I happened

to praise his poetry; Pennell sneered at me for affecting to understand what baffled other people. He was so rude that when I left, Whistler was apologetic, saying: 'Nevermind, Parson; [Whistler's nickname for Rothenstein] you know, I always had bad taste for company.' After my return to England Pennell remained steadily hostile.'

Joseph Pennell's Wikipedia page notes that he 'wrote and illustrated an anti-Semitic travel book, 'The Jew at Home: Impressions of a Summer and Autumn Spent with Him' (D. Appleton: New York, 1892), based on his travels in Europe'. It suggests why Pennell might have been prejudiced against Rothenstein before the latter had even uttered a word.

Pennell's Wikipedia page also notes, 'In 1887 Joseph Pennell began writing as Art Critic for 'The Star' in London, a column originally started by George Bernard Shaw, but Pennell's outspokenness upset both the Academy and other artists, and the editor asked Elizabeth Pennell to step in and contribute, launching her career writing art criticism.' The evidence for this citation comes from the Pennell's own papers.

Rothenstein wrote of another encounter with Pennell, 'Whistler was still living in Paris, but he often came over to London, staying at Garlands Hotel. He went occasionally to the Chelsea [Arts] Club. There, one evening, I found Whistler dining with Pennell. Whistler made me sit down next to him, saying, 'My dear Parson, I can't play second fiddle to anyone, so I could not reply to your amusing letters.' He was very charming and lively, but Pennell was suitably hostile.'

In his memoirs, Rothenstein rarely provides dates, let alone the year, which is unhelpful. However, he noted, 'Trilby' had lately been published'. 'Trilby' was written and illustrated by George du Maurier and serialised in 'Harper's Monthly' between January and August 1894, and the first edition was published in September 1895. The novel is significant because it contained a thinly veiled portrait of Whistler in the character of the pompous and eccentric 'idle apprentice' Joe Sibley. Whistler threatened to sue for libel unless the character was removed and du Maurier apologised.' The text was revised, resulting in no public apology.



St. Paul's from the River - 1894  
Sandpaper aquatint  
Joseph Pennell  
Collection: Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

In 'Chelsea Reach: the brutal friendship of Whistler and Walter Greaves', Tom Pocock wrote, '**Egerton Cooper was to remember Joseph Pennell as being 'excitable, conceited, a braggart but a brilliant etcher'.**



James Abbott McNeill  
Whistler – 1869  
Walter Greaves  
Image credit: Sotheby's



James Abbott McNeill Whistler –  
1872  
Walter Greaves  
Image credit: Christie's



Walter Greaves – 1917  
William Nicholson  
Collection: Manchester Art Gallery

### The Pennells v. Walter Greaves

In 1863, upon moving to Chelsea, James Abbott McNeill Whistler befriended Walter Greaves and his family. Walter and his brother, Henry, rowed Whistler up and down the Thames so that the American artist could etch and paint. They became his studio assistants and, later, they would assist Whistler on his decorative scheme for the 'Peacock Room'.

Once Whistler became established as an artist, he began distancing himself from the Greaves brothers. Joseph Pennell recounted walking on Chelsea Embankment and having, '... been amazed to see approaching a strange faraway echo of Whistler, the chief difference being that the echo was shabby and wore a red necktie.' He continued, "Whistler gave me to understand that the 'Greaves boys' were negligible, that what they accomplished they had from him, and that when his influence was withdrawn, they relapsed into the nullity from which he had lifted them for a while.'

Tom Pocock stitched the twist and turns of Walter Greaves' life together in 'Chelsea Reach: the brutal friendship of Whistler and Walter Greaves'. He wrote, 'Both Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell came across the remnants of the Greaves family... but, while anxious to make use of their reminiscences for the forthcoming biography of Whistler, made no attempt to offer any help in return. First, Joseph Pennell, while helping to arrange the Memorial Exhibition of the late James McNeill Whistler at the New Gallery early in 1905, noted in his journal, 'While I was there one of the Greaves brothers, who figures in Whistler's early Chelsea days, turned up. He also lent things.

A year later, while Pennell was making an etching of Chelsea Old Church, Walter came up to him and talked. Later, Elizabeth Pennell wrote to him, 'Probably no one living knows more of Whistler in the old Chelsea days', and he told J. he would be delighted to recall all he could, if

J. would go to see him. His memory is still fresh of the ‘times’ there had been in the evenings, of the people who came to the house and went out with Whistler on his father’s boats. There had been noise. Whistler was always fit for it, he was always gay. But what affair was that of his? Why should he talk about that?’

But he did talk about it when the Pennells made three visits to him in Fulham, although he forgot their first appointment and Joseph Pennell was greeted only by Tinnie [Walter’s sister], now ‘an elderly woman in yellow wig and much jewellery, low dress and many necklaces’. On his next visit Walter was waiting and then, at subsequent meetings, was so eager to be of assistance that he later called at their house with more details he had remembered, although Elizabeth recorded, he was ‘repeating many things he had already told J., telling others in a disjointed fashion it is hard to follow’. The last of these meetings was in the autumn of 1907...’

Walter was so impoverished that he was forced to sell his treasured letters and remove the frames from his canvases when he and his remaining siblings couldn’t afford coal to heat their home. When there was little left to sell, he sold his canvases.

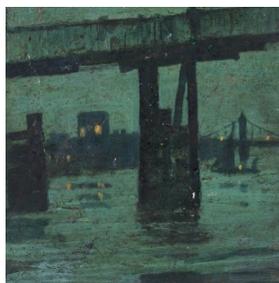
The rolled canvases were found in a second-hand bookshop on New Oxford Street and bought by a dealer of repute. He wrote to the Pennells. Elizabeth Pennell took a look at them, then Joseph. The canvases posed a mystery. Some were very good and Whistlerian and others lacked skill. Even if they weren’t by Whistler, they suggested a connection to their friend.

William Marchant, proprietor of the Regent Street, London showroom of the Goupil Gallery, was shown another set of over fifty oils and etchings, which he bought. Marchant knew of Walter Greaves and approached him to see if he was their creator. Greaves visited the gallery soon after and stated that the works were his own.

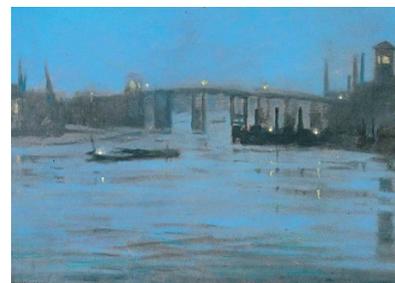
Tom Pocock wrote, ‘Although Marchant had been prepared to meet a needy old artist, he was surprised by what he found. ‘[Walter Greaves]...was shockingly thin, his butterfly collar now many sizes too large for his scraggy neck. His sparse hair – and even a bald patch – were blackened and the blackening had flaked on to his shoulders. His moustache had been darkened, too, but above his lip tea or beer had washed it showing the hair to be white. The features were still fine but he was puffy about the eyes, which seemed inexpressibly sad. Yet there was a dignity about him and a courtliness.’



Nocturne in Blue & Gold  
Walter Greaves  
Collection:  
Leicester Museum & Art Gallery



Old Battersea Bridge  
by Night  
Walter Greaves  
Collection:  
Chelsea Library, London



Nocturne,  
Battersea Old Bridge, London  
Walter Greaves  
Collection: Lotherton Hall,  
Leeds Museum & Galleries

Dates of the works: unknown

William Marchant exhibited the Greaves' canvases in the upstairs rooms of the Goupil Gallery – at the same time, William Nicholson's works were being exhibited in the downstairs rooms. In doing so, Marchant hoped that Greaves would finally be recognised as a significant artist in his own right.

He invited the Pennells to the private view and Elizabeth Pennell attended. She wrote in her journal, '...It seemed to me easy to see at first glance which were the pictures Greaves painted for himself, and which under the influence of Whistler. One or two blue nocturnes and one or two grey Battersea Bridges were obviously slavish attempts at imitation. The things that were entirely his own struck me as common in vision and treatment...'

The private view was poorly attended but the critic Arthur Clutton-Brock wrote a complimentary review for *The Times*, which inspired one of the frontpage headlines to proclaim, 'An Unknown Master'. He wrote, 'Mr. Walter Greaves in the catalogue of his pictures now to be seen at the Goupil Gallery, 5, Regent Street, describes himself as a pupil of Whistler. He tells us, in the short and simple account of himself at the beginning of that catalogue, that Whistler always insisted upon his describing himself so, and would not allow him to exhibit anything without his permission. Yet, the fact remains that Mr. Greaves, though some of his pictures have a remarkable likeness to Whistler's, and were evidently influenced by him, is a perfectly original artist. We understood that he is an old man, and has lived and painted in London for most of his life. That being so, his obscurity is inexplicable. For he is not an artist who has produced one or two fine works, as it were by chance. There are 50 paintings of his in the exhibition, and scarcely one of them is not remarkable.

At first sight one is struck by their likeness to Whistler's work, and at the same time puzzled by their underlying originality.'

William Rothenstein followed suit and gave his positive opinion to the *Daily News*.

These reviews helped to drive London society to the Goupil Gallery and to sell Greaves's paintings and etchings.

Soon London correspondents of American newspapers reported: 'Whistler dethroned; art tragedy shows vanity of Whistler; now critics are asking which was the master? Was this artist Whistler's ghost?...'

On the thirteenth day of the exhibition, Joseph Pennell turned up. Tom Pocock wrote, 'The American appeared not only excited, which was his frequent state, but 'angry... not to say antagonistic' and announced that he wished to speak of a most serious affair.

[William] Marchant had expected Pennell to be annoyed by some of the critics' sneers at Whistler but he cannot have foreseen that any specific accusation was to be made. But, now he claimed that Greaves had not exhibited his Battersea Bridge in 1862, as was stated in the preface to the catalogue. He had searched the catalogue of the International Exhibition for that year and there was no mention of any work by Greaves. The assertion that it had been shown in that year – many years before Whistler's own *Nocturne* on a similar theme – would have to be substantiated.

Joseph then continued his defence of Whistler by taking his grievance against Walter Greaves and the Goupil Gallery to the press. Marchant removed the offending preface from the exhibition catalogue and admitted to the mistaken date in print, quoting Greaves, who said that he had never intended to suggest he had invented the Whistlerian Nocturne. Heineman [publisher] seemed satisfied, for he replied, 'My object is achieved since 'history is put right...'

Pocock wrote, 'Heinemann's gentlemanly bowing out of the quarrel... was not enough for Pennell. He and his wife were in a state of feverish excitement...'. His attacks continued, demanding further replies.

'Clutton-Brock now stepped in with a letter in his newspaper, which could have been expected to end the controversy. 'Mr Greaves was praised in 'The Times', not because of the likeness of his works to Whistler's, but because of their unlikeness. They seemed to me most interesting when they were most original; and I said so,' he reasoned.

'A masterpiece is the work of the man who made it, no matter what he may have learnt from others. But, while the dates of Mr. Greaves' pictures have nothing to do with the merits of Whistler, they have also nothing to do with the merits of Mr. Greaves...'

Pennell's attacks in the press were so numerous that, in 1911, Marchant produced an 82-page response, titled, 'A reply to an attack made by one of Whistler's biographers on a pupil of Whistler, Mr. Walter Greaves, and his works'. It exposed Pennell's devious tactics. In his post-script, Marchant provided examples of the Pennell's revising their biography of James Abbott McNeill Whistler to expunge Walter Greaves. For example, the sentence referring to Walter and Henry Greaves, which had run as follows:

'We have often heard him speak of them as his 'first pupils', was reduced to:

'We have often heard him speak of them as his pupils.'

In the Pennell's 'New and Revised Edition' of their biography, the sentence was changed again so that it read, 'M. W. Ridley, who was Whistler's first pupil'.



Barges on the Thames –  
date unknown  
Walter Greaves  
Collection: Leeds Art Gallery  
Image credit:  
Leeds Museums & Art Gallery



Nocturne in Blue & Gold –  
1870 - 1879  
Walter Greaves  
Collection: York Art Gallery  
Image credit: York Museums Trust



Battersea Reach – c.1870  
Walter Greaves  
Collection and image credit:  
Tate Britain

According to Pocock, the Pennell's persecution of Walter Greaves 'reached a climax when 'The Whistler Journal' was published ten years after the scandal of 1911 and a whole chapter of the book was devoted to an attempt to discredit Greaves, written in a so vicious a style that it probably did more harm to the Pennells than to the old artist, who had again sunk back into obscurity.

Just as William Marchant had given financial aid to Walter Greaves and his family at the time of his exhibition, William Rothenstein and William Nicholson came to Walter Greaves's rescue a decade late. They started a subscription which generated £150.00. By applying to the Royal Academy, he was guaranteed an annual allowance of £50.00 from the Turner Bequest, and they secured Greaves an honorary membership of the Chelsea Arts Club.

On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1920, Walter Greaves attended a formal dinner at the Florence Restaurant in Rupert Street, which was sponsored by the Chelsea Arts Club and held in his honour. Lord Henry Bentick presided, and Walter Sickert was the principal speaker.

Alice Rothenstein wrote an account to Max Beerbohm, dated 17<sup>th</sup> February 1920, saying,

'All evening he [Greaves] kept saying to me, this is the proudest moment of my life if I live to be a thousand I shall never forget it – we insisted on his saying a few words – he demurred – we insisted – but once he got going it was lovely – he talked and talked of old Chelsea – what times they must have been! – how you would walk right across the river stepping from boat to boat – of the crowds watching the fireworks at Cremorne, people fighting on the Bridge – the Bridge breaking – but the people still going on fighting just the same in the water and mud – so that in time the fireworks had to be stopped (to save the bridges and the fighting I suppose) – did we realise that now his father knew Turner? – how it takes one back! Well, he went on talking – and it made Chelsea of Augustus John very dull indeed, absolutely colourless...'

(Source: Max and Will: Max Beerbohm and William Rothenstein, their friendship and letters, 1893 – 1945. Published in 1975 by Harvard University Press).

Regular readers will know that I am a supporter of Wikipedia. Every now and then, however, I will spot things which are incorrect, or I might disagree with an entry. Walter Greaves's page is a case in point. At date, they have him dying twice: on 23<sup>rd</sup> November and 28<sup>th</sup> November. Also, he may have disappeared into obscurity, but I don't think the end of his life was as grim as the impression suggested by his entry. He was saved from the misery of poverty. He knew his work was appreciated by Whistler's successors and some had been bought for the Nation.

Lord Henry Bentricks, Rothenstein, Nicholson, Marchant and Clutton-Brock all wrote letters in support of an application made by the Artist's General Benevolent Institution for Walter Greaves to be admitted to The Charterhouse, London.

Rothenstein wrote, 'There was no difficulty in Greaves entering the Charterhouse. No expenses, a pound a week pocket money and everyone kind!'. And, Pocock wrote, 'He took with him sketching materials and continued to draw Chelsea from memory.'



The Charterhouse, London

Images: author's own - 2019

John Rothenstein, William's son, visited Walter Greaves at The Charterhouse for his first book, 'The Artists of the 1890s'. He found Walter 'one of the most delightful old men: enthusiastic, serene utterly without guile or ill-will.' This meeting had a lasting effect upon Rothenstein and he wrote, 'The consequence of my coming to know Greaves was to make me feel it both a privilege and a duty to preserve against oblivion some memorials, however, slight, of artists I have known – especially those whom fashionable opinion passes-by.'

He went on to become the Director of the Tate Gallery and the institution's works by Walter Greaves became part of his curatorial responsibilities.

Similarly, Sir Charles Wheeler, who became President of the Royal Academy, thought to mention Greaves in his memoirs. Wheeler had lodged in Old Church Street, Chelsea, in his youth and had seen Greaves out and about or in one of its pubs.

Walter Greaves is buried close to the lychgate in a cemetery in Little Hallingbury, a village just a few miles South of Bishop Stortford. Given his whole being ran to the rhythm of the Thames, its ebb and flow, one might ask: how did he end up so far from London? That is easily explained: the cemetery, which is adjacent to the one belonging to St. Mary's Church, is on Charterhouse land, allowing former residents to be buried there.

**Had the Pennells been given cause to dislike Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.?**



James Abbott McNeill Whistler - 1897  
Giovanni Boldini  
Collection: Brooklyn Museum, New York City



Sir Edward Burne-Jones (left) and  
William Morris (Right) - 1874  
Frederick Hollyer  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, London



John Ruskin – 1879  
Sir Hubert von Herkomer  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, London



Joseph Pennell – 1920  
Wayman Adams  
Collection: Addison Gallery of American Art,  
Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, USA

As has been established, if the Pennell's friends were slighted, they considered themselves to have been slighted.

Edward Burne-Jones, who had mainly produced cartoons for stained glass windows for the firm, had publicly sided with John Ruskin when the Pennell's friend James Abbott McNeill Whistler sued the critic for libel after Ruskin - referring to Whistler's painting 'Nocturne in Black and Gold – The Falling Rocket' - wrote in a review of its inaugural showing at the Grosvenor Gallery that it was, 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'.



Nocturne in Black and Gold – The Falling Rocket  
1875

James Abbott McNeill Whistler

Collection: Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan, USA

When Edward Burne-Jones embarked on his career as a painter and was struggling, Ruskin, his hero, had been a great supporter. For example, author and critic had given Burne-Jones four high-quality engravings by Albrecht Dürer: the Knight, Melancholy, St. Hubert and Adam & Eve. And, when his wife lay ill with scarlet fever, Ruskin had, Georgiana would later write, '...the street laid as deep as a riding-school with tan that kept the horse's feet from my brain'.

Years later, when Ruskin approached Burne-Jones and asked him to stand witness in his trial, Burne-Jones felt obligated to repay the many kindnesses.

Whistler included excerpts from transcript of the trial in his book 'The Gentle Art of Making Enemies', published in 1890.

'Evidence was then called on behalf of the defendant. Witnesses for the defendant, Messrs. Edward Burne-Jones, [William Powell] Frith, and Tom Taylor.

Mr. Edward Burne-Jones was called.

Mr Bowen, by the way of presenting him properly to the consideration of the Court, proceeded to read tracts of eulogistic appreciation of this artist from the defendant's own writings.

The examination then commenced; and in answer to Mr. Bowen, Mr. Jones said: 'I am a painter, and have dedicated about twenty years to the study. I have painted various works, including the 'Days of Creation' and 'Venus's Mirror', both of which were at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877... In my opinion complete finish ought to be the object of all artists. A picture ought not to fall short of what has been for ages considered complete finish.

Mr. Bowen: "Do you see any art quality in that nocturne, Mr. Jones?"

Mr. Jones: "Yes... I must speak the truth, you know... (Emotion).

Mr. Bowen: !.. "Yes. Well, Mr. Jones, what quality do you see in it?"

Mr. Jones: "Colour. It has fine colour, and atmosphere."

Mr. Bowen: "Ah. Well, do you consider detail and composition essential to a work of Art [sic]?"

Mr. Jones: "Most certainly I do."

Mr. Bowen: "Then what details and composition do you find in this nocturne?"

Mr. Jones: "Absolutely none."

Mr. Bowen: "Do you think two hundred guineas a large price for that picture?"

Mr. Jones: "Yes. When you think of the amount of earnest work done for a smaller sum."

Examination continued: "Does it show the finish of a complete work of art?"

"Not in any sense whatever. The picture representing a night scene on Battersea Bridge is good in colour, but bewildering in form; and it has no composition and detail. A day or a day and a half seems reasonable time within which to paint it. It shows no finish – it is simply a sketch. The nocturne in black and gold has not the merit of the other pictures, and it would be impossible to call it a serious work of art. Mr Whistler's picture is only one of the thousand failures to paint night. The picture is not worth two hundred guineas.'

(The trial must have caused a few uncomfortable situations between acquaintances. In 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Friends and Enemies', Helen Rossetti Angeli wrote, 'When, years later, William [Rossetti – her father] had to give evidence against Ruskin at the Whistler libel trial, he wrote to his old friend [Ruskin] expressing his deep personal regret at the obligation.')

**The plot thickens...** On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1891, **Aubrey Beardsley**, together with his sister Mabel, had called at Edward Burne-Jones's home in the hope of meeting his hero. Beardsley, who was working as a clerk in an insurance office, had been tipped off that the artist held an 'open studio' on Sundays. However, they were refused entry by a servant who told them that the studio was no longer open except by appointment. As Beardsley recounted in a letter to a friend, they had reached the street corner when they heard 'flying footsteps' behind them. It was Burne-Jones himself. He had urged, 'Pray come back, I couldn't think of letting you go away without seeing the pictures, after a journey on a hot day like this.'

After Burne-Jones had given them a tour of his studio, he asked Beardsley if he drew. The artist couldn't have failed to notice the portfolio tucked under Beardsley's arm. Upon seeing Beardsley's work, Burne-Jones said, 'All are full of thoughts, poetry and imagination. Nature has given you every gift to become a great artist. **I seldom or never advise anyone to take up art as a profession, but in your case I can do nothing else!**

Burne-Jones made enquiries on Beardsley's behalf to find an evening art class, deciding that two hours of art every day would suffice to improve his skill. Of the two options presented to him, Beardsley settled on Professor Frederick Brown's class.

In recognition of their friendship, Beardsley presented Burne-Jones, whom he considered 'the greatest living artist in Europe', his illustration of 'Siegfried'.

This thread and its link to the Pennell's will be picked up again further along...



Aubrey Beardsley – 1894  
Walter Sickert  
Collection: Tate, London



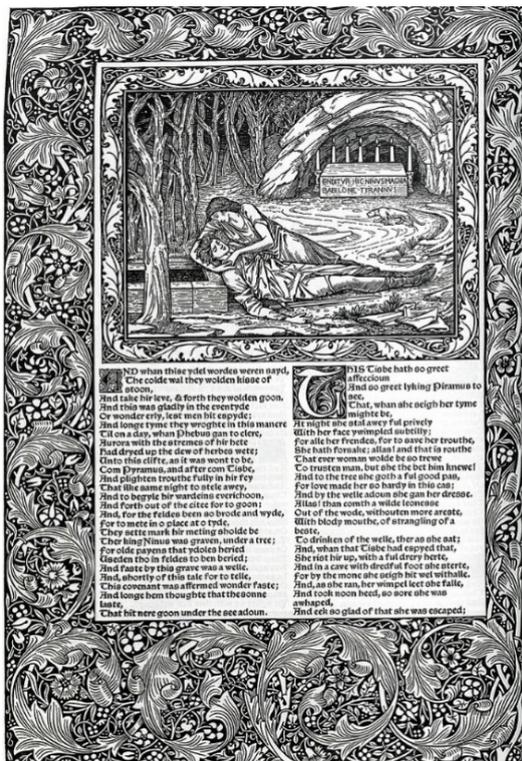
Illustration for Siegfried, Act II  
This version is dated c. 1892 - 1893  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Collection: Victoria & Albert Museum, London

**Had William Morris given the Pennells cause to write something unflattering about Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.?**

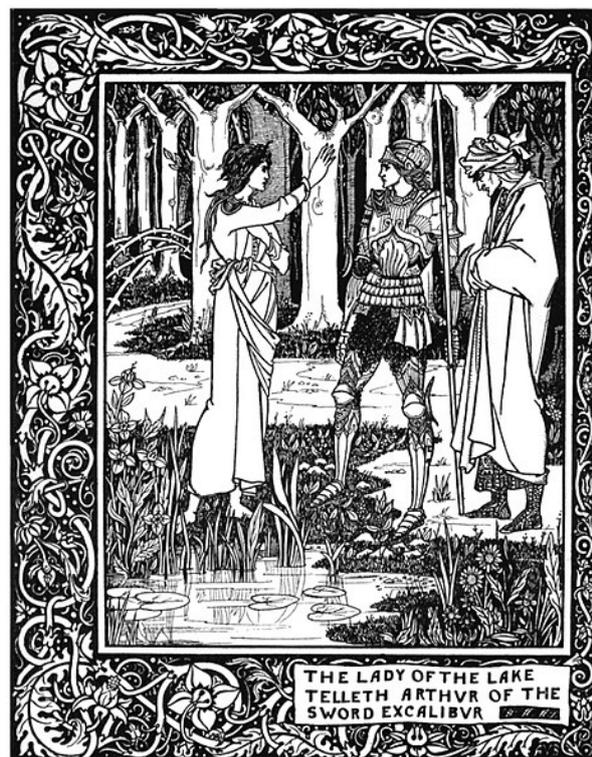
According to 'The Collected Letters of William Morris', Vol. IV, published in 1984 by Princeton University Press, 'Aymer Vallance [a 'disciple of Morris' and biographer] wrote that Morris had complained that it was difficult to obtain suitable illustrations for the Kelmscott books, including the planned Sidonia \*, and that he [Vallance] persuaded Aubrey Beardsley to make a drawing of Sidonia, and then took Beardsley to show Morris his portfolio, including the new drawing [no longer extant]. Morris was unenthusiastic about the work but praised Beardsley's 'feeling for draperies.' Beardsley left discouraged. 'Vallance said the meeting took place sometime 'in the spring or early summer of 1892' but the author(s) think it took place in 1893.'

In February 1893, Beardsley wrote to G. F. Scotson Clark about the commission for the Morte d'Arthur and added: 'William Morris has just sworn a terrible oath against me for daring to bring out a book in his manner. The truth is that, while his work is mere imitation of the old stuff, mine is fresh and original.'

\* Wilhelm Meinhold's 'Sidonia von Bork, die Klosterhexe' had been translated by Oscar Wilde's mother. Morris wrote to Wilde saying he wanted to publish his mother's version but needed her permission. He asked Wilde if he might write on his behalf.



Sample page from the Kelmscott Press -  
The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer - 1896  
Kelmscott Press (Note: its first publication was  
'The Glittering Plain' in 1891):  
Illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones  
Type and decorations by William Morris  
Image credit: Newberry Library, Chicago



Sample page from Le Morte D'Arthur  
1893  
Illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley  
Published by J. M. Dent

Vallance wrote that Morris was so indignant at what he deemed an act of usurpation that it was only the prudent advice of Burne-Jones that stopped Morris writing an angry letter to the publisher. Another of Morris's biographers suggested he had been advised not to take legal action against Beardsley.

Was William Morris wrong to be upset with Beardsley for providing illustrations and borders so that J. M. Dent might produce a book in the same vein as the Kelmscott Press house style? Seemingly, Morris had complained to Vallance saying, 'A man ought to do his own work'.

Morris and Burne-Jones had another reason to be upset at Beardsley: he had illustrated 'Le Morte d'Arthur'.

There are seven references to 'Le Morte d'Arthur' in volume I of Georgiana Burne-Jones's 'Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones' and five in the main text of volume II. She wrote, 'It was Southey's reprint of Malory's Morte d'Arthur: and sometimes I think that the book never can have been loved as it was by those two men. With Edward it became literally a part of himself. Its strength and beauty, its mystical religion and noble chivalry of action, the world of lost history and romance in the names of people and places – it was his own birthright upon which he entered.

'I remember I could not buy the precious book,' he [Edward Burne-Jones] writes thirty-five years afterwards. 'I used to read it in a bookseller's shop day after day, and bought cheap books to pacify the owner, but Morris got it at once and we feasted on it long.' After nearly three weeks together in Birmingham Morris went on to Worcester, and Edward started for a long-delayed visit to Harris Bridge, but 'the precious book' seems to have been left with him, for when he was back again at home Mr. Price's journal says, 'over to Birmingham, round and round the garden with Ted, reading the Morte d'Arthur, the chapters about the death of Percival's sister and the Shalott Lady.'

In his biography of Aubrey Beardsley, published in 1999, Matthew Sturgis wrote, 'Beardsley's airily contemptuous attitude to the work in hand [his illustrations for J. M. Dent's 'Morte d'Arthur'] led also to a break with Burne-Jones. He still called on his first mentor, but found himself increasingly out of temper with the painter's pious attitude towards Arthurian romance. When Burne-Jones asked him how the commission was progressing, Aubrey replied brutally that he would be 'precious glad when it was done; he hated it so. Burne-Jones asked why he did it at all if that was his attitude, and Beardsley was only too happy to tell a man who had lived his life free of financial problems and restraints the stark commercial nature of the undertaking. He did the work, he explained because a publisher had asked him to, not because he had any love of Mallory; indeed, rather gratuitously, he added that he hated the story as he hated all medieval things.

He must have known that this would wound Burne-Jones. The blow struck home. The painter dismissed his erstwhile protégé. 'I let him see plainly', he said, 'that I wasn't anxious to be troubled by him again'.'

Given the Pennell's had accused Walter Greaves of plagiarising James Abbott McNeill Whistler's nocturnes and had refused to accept that Greaves had been encouraged by Whistler to make his paintings more atmospheric, there's an interesting twist.

The first volume and first number of 'The Studio' - an illustrated magazine for fine and applied arts, published in April 1893 - featured Joseph Pennell's piece, titled 'A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley'. It starts, 'I have lately seen a few drawings which seem to me to be very remarkable. The very limited number which the artist is said to have produced makes their perfection of execution all the more remarkable. I am quite well aware that the mere fact of publicly admitting one's interest in the work of a new man, whose first design may be a delight to artists, is not considered to be good form in criticism...

Although in all of Mr Beardsley's drawings which I have so far seen there are signs of other men's influence, I know no reason why this influence should not be apparent if the inventor of what we may consider the type is a worthy man to imitate. However, to say that Burne-Jones or even his far greater master Rossetti, invented what is vulgarly known as the Rossetti type, is absurd. They did not invent it: they have only recorded a type which is very common in this country, emphasising certain characteristics which no one had ever so emphasised before. Mr Beardsley, in illustrating the 'Morte d'Arthur,' wished an appropriate type; he has taken the one which appealed to him most, and he was perfectly justified in doing so.'

In her book, 'Nights: Rome, Venice, in the aesthetic eighties; London, Paris, in the fighting nineties', published in 1916, Elizabeth Robins Pennell wrote, 'For it was from Mrs Harland that we first heard of the wonderful youth [Beardsley], unknown still, an insignificant clerk in some insurance company, who made the most amazing drawings - it was she who first sent him to us that J. [Joseph Pennell] might look at his work and help him to escape from the office he hated and from the toils of Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott Press in which he was entangled.'

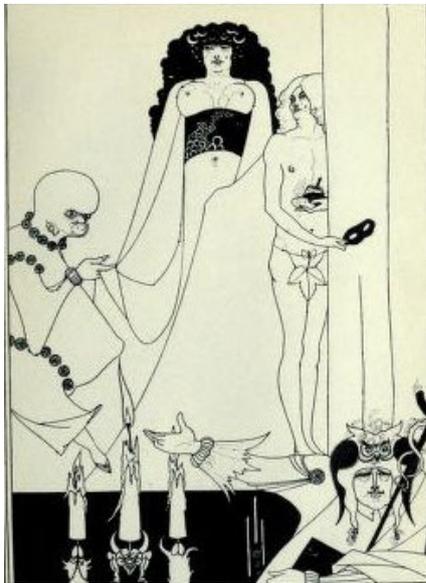
To sum up, Edward Burne-Jones, who invited Beardsley into his home, offered encouragement and advice, and found him an evening art class he could attend, is thanked for his pains by being accused of causing Beardsley (in modern parlance) grief. And, William Morris, who was placed in a difficult situation by Aymer Vallance, but, nevertheless, agreed to an interview with Beardsley to consider his illustrations, is painted in the same negative light even though, as the proprietor of the Kelmscott Press, he was well within his rights to decline Beardsley's work because he felt it didn't chime.

Beardsley could not have failed to suppose that, if he imitated the style of the Kelmscott Press, he would ruffle some feathers and invite accusations of plagiarism. Just as with Whistler, the Pennells were blind to Beardsley's faults and were only prepared to see his side of the story.

That said, there is no doubt that Joseph Pennell was, indeed, a brilliant etcher and is rightly credited, along with a couple of other people of influence, as having brought Aubrey Beardsley and his work to the public's attention. Equally, Beardsley's artistic mastery is not in doubt.

## Aubrey Beardsley

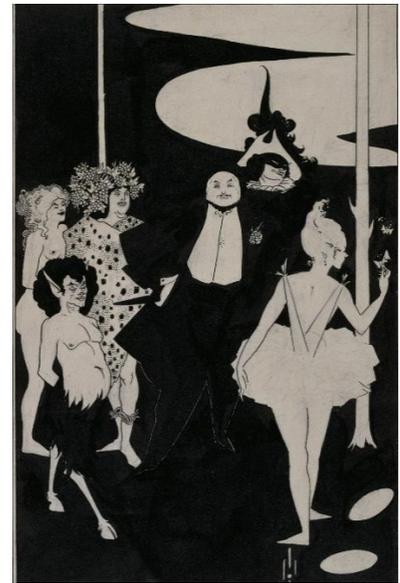
Aubrey Beardsley had a habit of incorporating unflattering caricatures in his work. One wonders whether the constant awareness of his mortality made him behave so rashly – he died of tuberculosis on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1898. He was twenty-five years old.



An illustration from 'Salome'  
(Oscar Wilde is the jester figure -  
bottom right)  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Image credit: archive.org



The Woman in the Moon  
(detail) – 1894  
(Oscar Wilde as the moon)  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Collection:  
Victoria & Albert Museum,  
London



Design for the frontispiece to John  
Davidson's Plays – 1894  
(Oscar Wilde is depicted as  
Bacchus with vine leaves in his hair  
and wrapped in leopard skins)  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Collection: Tate, London

**The Woman in the Moon** – In his BBC TV programme 'Scandal & Beauty', Mark Gatiss discussed Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's 'Salome' with Stephen Fry. Gatiss said, 'John Lane, the publisher, took fright at it being called 'The Man in the Moon' in case there was a litigious dimension and changed it to 'The Woman in the Moon...'

Stephen Fry responded, 'It is a peculiar thing he would do to someone older and greater than he at the time. Most people would say 'this is the great Oscar Wilde' and he thought that himself and he would *presume* to do that.

Gatiss agrees, saying, 'He has some sort of crush or some sort of hero worship and very rapidly turns it into a satire or...'

Fry and Gatiss chorus, '...bites the hand'.

Gatiss continues, 'We sometimes forget how young he was. What he actually has is all the pretentiousness and ingratitude of a man of twenty-one.'



**'The Dancing Faun'** – the image is believed to represent James Abbott McNeill Whistler, who wore a monocle and made a feature of his tuft of white hair.

**Left:** The illustration was used for Florence Farr's novel 'The Dancing Faun' - Aubrey Beardsley was not credited  
Image credit: archive.org

**Right:** James Abbott McNeill Whistler – late 1880s  
Watercolour  
Bernard Partridge



**'Mrs Patrick Campbell'** – Beardsley's portrait of the actress appeared in the first edition of 'The Yellow Book'. Upon publication, it was considered 'grotesque'. Vanity Fair described it as a 'hideous caricature' rather than a portrait. The Athenaeum declared it 'libellous'. Undeterred, Beardsley presented the actress with an inscribed copy of 'The Yellow Book'. Against his name she added 'who is an unwholesome and incompetent fellow'.

The actress went on to play 'Eliza Doolittle' in George Bernard Shaw's 'Pygmalion'.



Mrs Patrick Campbell – 1902  
Photographer:  
George Charles Beresford  
Collection:  
National Portrait Gallery, London



Mrs Patrick Campbell as Ophelia in  
'Hamlet' – 1897  
Photographer: John & Lizzie Caswell Smith  
Image: flipped horizontally  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, London



Mrs Patrick Campbell – 1894  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Image credit: archive.org



The Fat Woman – 1894  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Collection: Tate, London

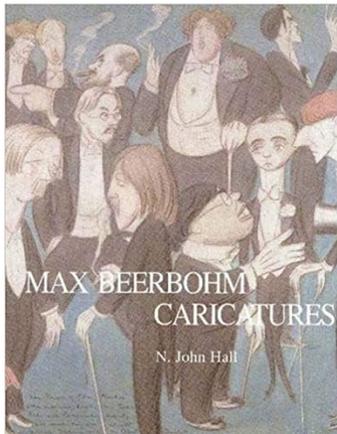
**The Fat Woman** – the Tate’s website entry says, ‘The drawing is said to be a caricature of Beatrice Whistler, the wife of the artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), who had offended Beardsley by failing to take him seriously and subsequently snubbing him. It was destined for publication in the first volume of the avant-garde journal ‘The Yellow Book’ (15 April 1894) but was refused by the publisher, John Lane, who feared recriminations from Whistler....’

Beardsley gave the drawing, inscribed on the back ‘à mon ami Will Rothenstein’, to his close friend and fellow artist, William Rothenstein, who returned it, recommending that it be destroyed. It was subsequently reproduced in ‘Today’ on 21 May 1894.’

William Rothenstein mentions Aubrey Beardsley several times in his memoirs.

‘Beardsley was an impassioned worker, and his hand was unerringly skilful. But for all his craftsmanship there was something hard and insensitive in his line, and narrow and small in his design, which affected me unsympathetically. He, too, remarkable boy as he was, had something harsh, too sharply defined in his nature – like something seen under an arc-lamp. His understanding was remarkable; his mind was agate-like, almost too polished, in its sparkling hardness; but there was that in his nature which made him an affectionate and generous friend... But one was always aware of the eager, feverish brilliance of the consumptive, in haste to absorb as much of life as he could in a brief space he instinctively knew was his sorrowful portion. Poor Aubrey! he [sic] was a tragic figure.’

Recounting the last time they met, Rothenstein wrote, ‘I gathered from his sister Mabel that he was seriously ill. I found Aubrey staying at a hotel on the Quai Voltaire, much changed, less in appearance – he had always looked delicate – than in character and outlook. All artifice had gone; he was gentle and affectionate, and I realised now how much I cared for him. He had found peace, he said; but how rudderless he had been, how vain; and he spoke wistfully of what he would do if more time were allowed him; spoke with regret, too, of many drawings he had done, and of his anxiety to efface the traces of a self that was now no more. Alas, that this new self, of which he was so poignantly aware, should have so frail a hold! He was going south [sic], to Mentone, to gain fresh strength, though he foresaw, I felt, there was little hope. I had done well to come; but for this, I had never known the Aubrey whom I now loved, and would have continued to love, had he been spared. Perhaps some would say the old Beardsley was the true Beardsley. True as he had been to a former self, the new Aubrey would have been true to a finer self. I had seen a new beauty in his face, felt a new gentleness in his ways; and I believed them due to something other than weakness.’



The three friends: Beerbohm, Beardsley and Rothenstein – together bottom right  
Max Beerbohm Collection: not known



L'Hotel Royale, Dieppe, France – 1894  
Walter Sickert  
Collection & image credit: Museums Sheffield

Remembering happier times, Rothenstein wrote, 'Smithers, Symons, Beardsley, Dowson and Conder used often to run over to Dieppe. Dieppe, with its harbour and quays, its beautiful churches and dignified streets, had for long attracted artists... It was one of Sickert's favourite haunts... I remember Beardsley, Conder and Dowson starting off from The Crown one night, wandering about London, and taking the early boat-train to Dieppe without any luggage – Beardsley and Dowson coming back a few days later looking worse for wear.'



Love Among the Ruins  
c. 1873  
Watercolour version  
Edward Burne-Jones  
Collection: Private  
Image credit: Christie's

William Rothenstein wrote in his memoirs, 'One evening, at the rue du Bac, a man from Goupil's came, very worried, to ask Whistler's advice. Goupil's had been asked to clean Burne-Jones's 'Love Among the Ruins'; they had foolishly treated it as an oil painting, and thereby had ruined it. What was to be done? Whistler had never forgiven Burne-Jones for giving evidence against him at the Ruskin trial. He shouted with derision at the disaster. 'Didn't I always say the man knew nothing about painting, what? They take his oils for watercolours and his watercolours for oils.' **Whistler never forgot and never forgave.** (Edward Burne-Jones took advice and managed to restore the damage.)

William Rothenstein went on to lose Whistler's friendship through a misunderstanding and Walter Greaves called on Whistler in the hope of a reconciliation, but he wasn't admitted. Whistler died not long after. Greaves didn't bear him any grudges. Instead, he remembered their time together in Chelsea with great fondness.

## The Merry Month of May



May Morning on Magdalen Tower - 1890  
William Holman Hunt  
Collection: Lady Lever Art Gallery



May Morning on Magdalen Tower  
Image credit: Magdalen College School website



**Above:** Morris dancing - May Morning, Oxford  
Image credit: myoxfordtravel.com  
**Right:** Looking down from Magdalen Tower  
Image credit: Ox in a Box website

In Oxford, the city where the Pre-Raphaelites had banded together, where William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones became life-long friends, where John Ruskin had been a tutor, and Oscar Wilde and Max Beerbohm had studied, albeit at different times, they celebrate **May Morning**, a tradition going back 500 years.

Large crowds of Town and Gown normally gather very early under Magdalen Tower, along the High Street, and on Magdalen Bridge. The event starts at 06:00 with the Magdalen College Choir singing the Hymnus Eucharisticus from the top of Magdalen Tower. Prayers for the city are led by the Dean of Divinity. These are followed by the choir singing the madrigal, 'Now Is the Month of Maying'.

This is followed by general revelry and festivities, including Morris dancing in Radcliffe Square, impromptu music, etc., creating a party atmosphere, despite the early hour.



## April - May flowering plants and their influence on William Morris



Columbine – tile  
William Morris  
Image credit: PreRaphaelite paintings blogspot



Aquilegia vulgaris (aka Columbine)  
Image credit: Sarah Raven website



Blackthorn Wallpaper – designed 1892  
Designer: William Morris  
Sample donated by Soo Martin



Fritillaria meleagris (aka Snake's Head Fritillary)  
Image taken at the Botanischer Garten, Karlsruhe, Germany - 2009  
Image credit: H. Zell – wiki commons

**Fritillaria meleagris** - According to Wikipedia, ‘...the plant was once abundant in the UK, particularly in the Thames Valley and parts of Wiltshire, and was collected in vast quantities to be sold as a cut flower in the markets of London, Oxford and Birmingham. During World War II most of the ancient meadows were ploughed up and turned over to the production of food crops, destroying much of the plant's habitat. \*1 A popular garden plant, it is now rare in the wild, although there are some notable sites where it is still found, such as the meadows at Magdalen College, Iffley Meadows, Oxford \*2...’

Sources:

\*1 BBC Radio 4 (Just so) programme ‘Mabey in the Wild’ aired on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

\*2 Publication on Iffley Meadows by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust – author not credited.

## Postscript to April's Supplement



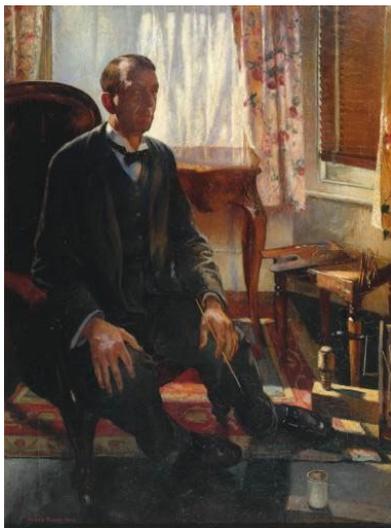
Henry Tonks –  
photograph in public domain

In respect of last month's 'Shakespeare' and 'theatre' themed supplement, I had debated whether my piece about Joseph Merrick (aka 'The Elephant Man') treated him with sufficient sensitivity.

The necessary gravitas - in the form of **Henry Tonks**, a former surgeon turned artist and a friend of William Rothenstein - appeared after I submitted my piece.

In 1866, Tonks became a house surgeon under Sir Frederick Treves. Interestingly, the date coincides with Joseph Merrick's residence at the hospital - Treves was Merrick's primary carer.

From 1888, Tonks joined Professor Frederick Brown's art evening classes (the ones Aubrey Beardsley would go on to attend) and, when Brown became Slade professor, Tonks was invited to become a teacher.



**Above:** Henry Tonks, self-portrait  
-1909

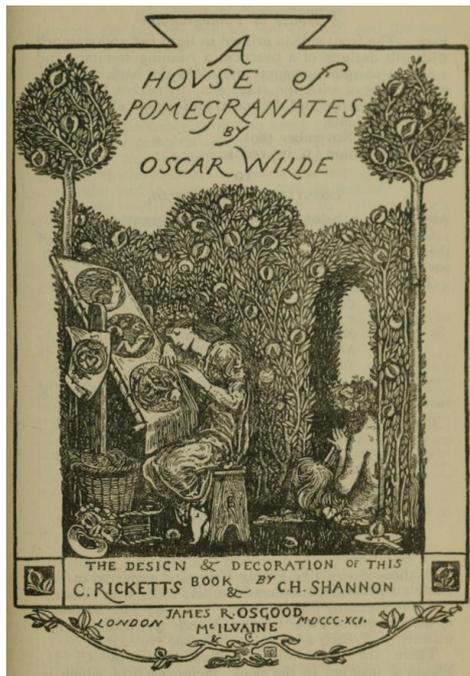
Collection: not known  
Image: public domain

**Right:** Saturday Night in the Vale  
– 1928-1929

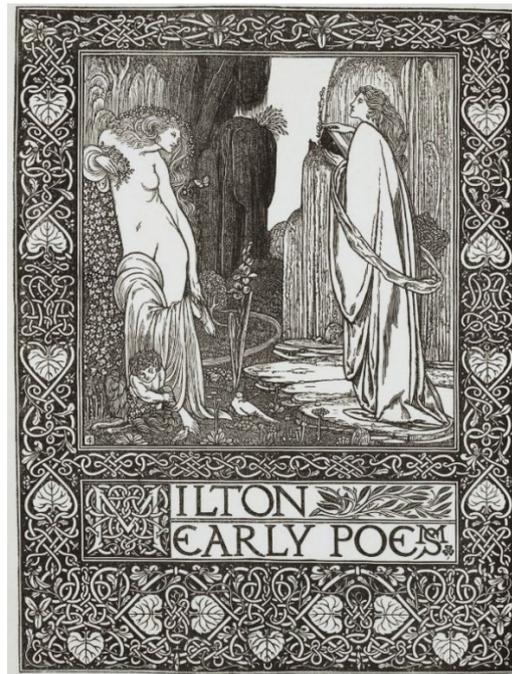
Henry Tonks  
Collection: Tate, London



From the Tate's webpage: 'The picture [Saturday Night in the Vale] represents George Moore reading aloud from his manuscript of 'Aphrodite in Aulis', a novel which he published in 1930, to his friends on one of his regular Saturday evening visits to Tonks's studio in The Vale, Chelsea.'



'House of Pomegranates' (1914)  
Illustration by Charles Ricketts



Sample page from the 1<sup>st</sup> publication produced by  
the Vale Press, founded by Ricketts in 1896.

Note: Pan can be seen sitting under the pomegranate arch with his back to the viewer.

Both Ricketts and Shannon, were influenced by William Morris and A. H. Mackmurdo.

Last month's supplement also discussed the fad for Pan and fauns. After submitting my piece, I came across another example, above left, of Pan appearing on a book cover.

William Rothenstein wrote, 'I was anxious to meet [Charles] Ricketts and [Charles] Shannon, of whom Wilde often spoke so admiringly; he had shown me the drawings they did for his 'House of Pomegranates', and Rickett's lovely cover; and it surprised me to hear of these gifted men, of whom we knew nothing in Paris; so I went to the Vale one evening with Oscar. I fell at once under their charm, and hoped, when settled in London, to see more of them and their work.'



Charles Ricketts – 1898  
Charles Shannon  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, London



Charles Shannon – self-portrait – 1897  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, London



**Left:** detail from 'Design for the frontispiece to John Davidson's Plays' – 1894  
Aubrey Beardsley  
Collection: Tate, London



**Right:** Richard Le Gallienne  
Date not given  
Photographer: Alfred Ellis  
Image credit: Bonhams



Gallery Box at the New Bedford Music Hall, London - 1906-1907  
Walter Sickert  
Collection and image credit: Museum of London



The New Bedford – 1915  
Walter Sickert  
Collection and image credit: The Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate

Further to last month's 'theatre' themed supplement, I came across the following on the Tate's webpage, '...the figure with the mask at the back of Aubrey Beardsley's 'Design for the frontispiece to John Davidson's Plays' is Richard Le Gallienne.'

Will Rothenstein wrote in his memoirs, 'Other of [Grant] Richards' friends were more to my taste, especially Le Gallienne, whose appearance was fascinating. He looked like Botticelli's head of Lorenzo...'

'While for Sickert the music-hall was a workshop, for the rest of us it was a pleasant dissipation. The Empire Promenade was the orthodox place to go to. I remember meeting Le Gallienne there... He was a little self-conscious at being found in this equivocal haunt.'

And, 'Walter [Sickert] had for a time turned to the stage, and had played with [Henry] Irving and Ellen Terry.'