Lost and Unexamined Aspects of the Arts and Crafts Movement, with a Particular Focus on the Design Work of C.F.A. Voysey

Evolving Methodologies for Recovery and Study

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of PhD by Published Work
University of Cumbria, Institute of Education, Arts and Society
March 2025

Dedication

To Sharyn, Eryn and Janet

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Associate Prof. Penny Bradshaw and specialist external mentor Annette Carruthers for their professionalism, good humour, patience, dedication and academic insights in supporting the creation, development and refinement of this supporting paper. I am also indebted to Tom Grimwood and Sonia Mason of the University of Cumbria Graduate School and must thank my employer, the University of Cumbria, whose financial support made this project possible.

With forty years spent researching and collecting the Arts and Crafts movement, it is not possible in the limited space available to acknowledge the many private individuals, curators, academics, librarians, archivists, collectors and dealers who have supported and informed my research and collecting. However, many of their names can be found within the acknowledgements of the individual published papers—I am indebted to them all.

My partner Sharyn Brown is absent from the following narrative but the journey that leads to this submission is just as much hers as mine. From acquiring our first Arts and Crafts piece—a sideboard purchased in 1985—through the ensuing years of researching, building, curating and living with a private collection, we have been co-conspirators.

Author's declaration

I have read the Academic Regulations relating to assessment of work and declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Declaration of wordcount

I declare the wordcount of this supporting paper at 30,179 words against the suggested wordcount of 30,000. This *includes* methodology, quotations, citations, critical overview, contribution to knowledge and, contribution to the wider state of knowledge but *excludes* title page, dedication and acknowledgements, contents, abbreviations, introduction, references/bibliography and appendix papers.

The total wordcount excluding the published papers is 34,172 words.

Contents

Introduction

The subjects of my published work can be situated within the broad field of the Arts and Crafts movement and, in two instances—The Fulham Pottery and The Betula Ltd—as manifestations of its wider influence and legacy. There are two principal strands to my research: a sustained investigation into the 'applied arts' designs—in a wide variety of media—created by the architect Charles Francis Annesley Voysey (1857–1941); and a complementary series of studies examining the influence of the movement on late nineteenth-century art education and urban social reform, such as The Newcastle Handicrafts Co. and The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. Common to all these studies is a desire to engage rigorously with primary material and artefacts, and through this to illuminate neglected or previously undocumented aspects of a movement whose historical and cultural significance continues to resonate. My work spans two distinct eras of archival research—the analogue and the digital—and I will explore how the transition between these has shaped not only my methodology but also my understanding of what constitutes research in the field of design history.

Over the course of forty years, my approach to research has undergone a substantial process of refinement and expansion. In my early career, my perspective was that of a practitioner: my understanding of form, process, and material was rooted in the discipline of making and observation. This foundation in practice instilled in me an acute sensitivity to the physical and aesthetic qualities of objects and to the creative intentions that shaped them. As my work developed, I began to situate these visual and tactile observations within a wider historical and cultural framework, integrating documentary evidence and contextual interpretation. This evolution—from a maker's eye to a historian's perspective—was gradual but transformative. It allowed me to shift from recording and describing artefacts to interpreting them as expressions of social and philosophical values, situating the Arts and Crafts movement as a multidimensional cultural phenomenon rather than merely a stylistic episode.

Methodologically, my practice as a design historian has been grounded in a combination of close visual analysis, archival research, and, more recently, digital documentation and curation. Early research relied upon extensive visits to archives and collections, often working with uncatalogued or poorly preserved materials. The physical act of handling and photographing objects cultivated a tactile intimacy with my subjects, while the slow pace of analogue research encouraged reflection and precision. With the advent of the digital age, my methodology expanded to incorporate

new technologies of recording, indexing, and retrieval. The creation of extensive digital archives—most notably my systematic documentation of the RIBA Voysey Collection—transformed my ability to analyse, cross-reference, and disseminate primary material. These digital tools did not replace traditional methods but rather enhanced them, allowing me to bridge the manual and the technological, the visual and the analytical. I argue that this synthesis constitutes a methodological contribution to design historical research, demonstrating how traditional scholarship and digital innovation can coexist to mutual advantage.

This supporting statement is divided into three chapters. The first provides a critical overview of the intellectual context in which my work is situated, capturing the state of knowledge prior to my entry into the field and positioning my subjects within the wider historiography of the Arts and Crafts movement. The second chapter outlines my contribution to knowledge through a discussion of the submitted publications, their interrelationships, and the methodological developments that have informed them. The final chapter evaluates the wider significance of my interventions within design and cultural historical scholarship, identifying the special skills—both practical and intellectual—that I have brought to these endeavours and that continue to shape my evolving research identity.

Abbreviations

ACES	Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society
AWG	Art Workers' Guild
BGH	Birmingham Guild of Handicraft
BMAG	Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
BSoA	Birmingham School of Art
DAS	Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present
DIA	Design and Industries Association
FHS	Furniture History Society
HAIA	Home Arts and Industries Association
NEAC	New English Art Club
NHC	Newcastle Handicrafts Company
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
TACS	Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society
TAG	Traditional Architecture Group of the Royal Institute of British Architects

Chapter 1: A critical overview of the state of knowledge prior to my entry into the field

The Arts and Crafts movement

The Arts and Crafts movement emerged in late nineteenth-century Britain as an attempt to redefine and promote the value of art and craftsmanship in response to the perceived damaging effects to society posed by mass industrialisation. Key figures such as A.W.N. Pugin (1812–1852), John Ruskin (1819–1900) and William Morris (1834–1896) influenced the ideologies of the movement. Morris highlighted the societal and aesthetic harm of separating art and craftsmanship from production, championing small-scale workshops that preserved the connection between creators and their work: "eating would be dull work without appetite, or the pleasure of eating, so is the production of utilities dull work without art, or the pleasure of production…" (Morris, 1889, p. 25). Earlier, Ruskin had been critical of the dehumanising division of labour in factories:

> You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cogwheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanise them (Ruskin, 1852, p. 161).

Morris, a follower of Ruskin, was inspired by medieval craftsmanship and sought to restore dignity and joy to labour, opposing the excessive ornamentation and the poor-quality of goods characteristic of mass production:

> I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few. No, rather I want all persons to be surrounded by beautiful things, as indeed they ought to be… It is not merely utilitarianism that has killed the spirit of craftsmanship, but a hideous system of work which robs a man of his self-respect and turns his labour into a mere mechanical drudgery (Morris, 1878, p. 30).

The movement was marked by internal contradictions, blending a nostalgia for an idealised medieval past with progressive social ideals. While figures such as William Morris championed handcrafted production as a rejection of industrialisation and an opportunity to provide stimulating, decently paid employment to his workers, others such as A.H. Mackmurdo (1851–1942) acknowledged the need for machine-assisted craftsmanship. Ruskin viewed the movement as a moral crusade, while others, such as

C.F.A. Voysey, prioritised aesthetic simplicity alongside a deeply held faith. The movement paradoxically embraced both socialist ideals and exclusive, elite craftsmanship. These tensions—between past and future, individualism and collectivism, idealism and pragmatism—defined the movement's complexity in both design and thought.

Evolving from the Art Workers' Guild (AWG), the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (ACES) was founded in 1887, becoming central in promoting the movement to which it gave its name. The AWG had been established in 1884 by a small group of architects, artists and designers, influenced by the ideas of Morris, who sought to reunify the 'fine arts' with the then undervalued 'crafts.' Voysey was an early member of the AWG and a frequent exhibitor at the ACES, which hosted exhibitions showcasing handcrafted work, initially held annually and later at approximately three-yearly intervals. Coinciding with a boom in well-illustrated art journals capitalising on recent technical advances in the print reproduction of photography, the resulting work was widely illustrated in magazines such as *The Studio* (established in 1893), a publication with which the Arts and Crafts and Voysey soon became synonymous. These magazines did much to spread the philosophy, artifacts and aesthetics of the London-centric organisation to an enthusiastic national and international audience and it would be the art journals that demonstrably had the greatest influence in disseminating the Arts and Crafts 'gospel' to a wider public. Familiarity with the contents of *The Studio* and its competitors, is essential to achieve a balanced overview of the scope and development of the Movement. Although the AWG was a male bastion, the ACES exhibitions as documented in *The Studio* showcased the work of many female practitioners who were largely absent from the narrative when the first 'modern' monographs on the movement appeared in the late 1970s. These were ushered in by a slowly growing revival of interest in the movement which, at the height of Modernism in the 1930s, had been widely viewed as embarrassingly anachronistic. The genesis of this revival was a pioneering exhibition organised by the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in 1952; *An Exhibition of Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts*, which influenced a select group of curators and collectors. As momentum grew, serendipity also played its part, with many of the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement chiming with those of the counterculture of the 1960s.

Gillian Naylor's pioneering *The Arts and Crafts Movement: a study of its sources, ideals and influence on design theory* (1971) was the first of the 'modern' monographs to critically address the subject. This remains a key text that meticulously explores the ideological and aesthetic underpinnings of the Arts and Crafts movement, along with its

enduring influence on design theory. Naylor demonstrates how the movement's emphasis on functional, honest design prefigured modernist ideals, making the work both an historical account and a critical resource for understanding the evolution of modern design. Key figures such as Ruskin and Morris are examined in depth but, as with most of the following general surveys, figures and groups such as Voysey and the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft (BGH) only appear briefly in passing. In focusing on those she considers the 'key players', Naylor creates a somewhat hierarchical, male-dominated narrative that does not fully represent the movement's collective ethos, a position which has been superseded by further research and different critical positions, creating a more inclusive narrative.

Arts & Crafts in Britain and America by Anscombe and Gere (1978) offers a broad and richly illustrated exploration of the transatlantic scope of the Arts and Crafts movement. However, its scholarship sometimes prioritises aesthetics over deeper socio-political analysis, leaving critical historical contexts underexplored. This was followed by V&A curator Lionel Lambourne's *Utopian Craftsmen* (1980) offering a thorough exploration of the Arts and Crafts movement, delving into its utopian ideals, influential figures, and cultural impact whilst overlooking many of its contradictions. Additionally, while the book thoroughly examines British contributions and developments in the USA, it pays less attention to parallel movements elsewhere, the contribution of women and the broader socio-economic factors that limited the movement's widespread adoption.

As for the many female Arts and Crafts practitioners largely absent from the initial 1970s narrative, a pioneering work by Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the arts and crafts movement*, 1870–1914 (1979) would do much to inspire the following generation of female scholars and curators who, in the twenty-first century, have done much to redress the initial imbalance. Through a feminist lens, critical readings of the Arts and Crafts movement have evolved to highlight the overlooked contributions of women, not only as practitioners but also as key figures in shaping the movement's ideals. Academics have reevaluated the traditional male-dominated narrative, recognising the ways in which women navigated social constraints to establish workshops, influence design education, and challenge the separation between fine and applied arts. Additionally, feminist critiques have shed light on how gendered labour divisions within the movement often relegated women to textile arts and decorative work, despite their technical expertise and creative innovation. This shift has led to a more nuanced understanding of the movement, emphasising collaboration, community, and the intersections of art, labour, and gender politics.

After the resurgence of scholarly interest initiated in the 1970s, the Arts and Crafts movement achieved much wider, public popularity. Dealers such as John Jesse, Haslam & Whiteway and the Fine Art Society created a series of pioneering exhibitions facilitated by the recently opened Sotheby's Belgravia, the first major London auction house to handle previously disparaged art and design from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. By the 1980s William Morris wallpapers were once again fashionable, and museums and collectors were actively seeking original Arts and Crafts pieces and wanting to know more about them. Exhibitions devoted to individual practitioners associated with the movement proved popular, which in turn spurred on a plethora of more nuanced monographs devoted to significant designers. These provided a level of detail that could never be achieved by those writers exploring the Arts and Crafts movement as a whole. This buoyant commercial market supported more ambitious surveys of the wider movement. The first of these was Isabelle Anscombe's *Arts & Crafts Style* (1991) which extends the scope of the movement to both America and Europe, exploring how it influenced the late nineteenth-century European obsession with concepts of national identity, and attempts to actively promote the adoption of national styles in architecture and design (see Salmond 1997). Livingstone and Parry's *International Arts and Crafts* (2005), the catalogue of an ambitious V&A exhibition, also focuses on the international influence including Japan. Rosalind P Blakesley's *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (2006) situates the movement within its broader socio-cultural context, emphasising its reaction against industrialisation and its commitment to integrating art with everyday life. She effectively highlights the key figures—Morris, Ruskin, and others—while also drawing attention to the movement's international dimensions, particularly its influence in northern, central, and eastern Europe. Blakesley states that here: "the Arts and Crafts evolved out of the broader political landscape of national resurrection and resistance to the oppression of foreign rule" (Blakesley, 2006, p. 8).

The above survey broadly captures the state of knowledge prior to my entry into the field however, although the pace of production has slowed somewhat in recent years, books exploring the wider British Arts and Crafts movement continue to be published. Notable examples include *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain* by Mary Greensted (2010), *William Morris and the Art of Everyday Life* by Wendy Parkins (2010), and *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Scotland: A History* by Annette Carruthers (2013).

Charles Francis Annesley Voysey (1857–1941)

Although Voysey is mentioned in the above-cited monographs exploring the wider Arts and Crafts movement he emerges as little more than a footnote, a frustratingly elusive and under explored figure. However, in his own right, he has long been the subject of academic scrutiny which has generated an extensive bibliography. The following is a brief overview of the state of knowledge of Voysey before my own contribution to the field.

C.F.A Voysey was an architect, designer and major figure of the Arts and Crafts movement whose legacy continues to prove difficult to classify. Was he the product of Victorian design reforms instigated by A.W.N. Pugin, a pioneer of Modernism or an individualist who stood apart from these somewhat simplistic interpretations? Voysey lived long enough to experience Modernist architecture but rejected his association with the movement using a 1935 letter to the Architects' Journal to distance his work from the: "square box, roofless buildings" … "unfortunately" emerging across Europe (Voysey, 1935, p. 408). This rejection did not stop the great architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–1983) from including Voysey's work in his 1936 book, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*. Pevsner acknowledged Voysey's adherence to tradition but noted the progressive qualities in his domestic designs creating a style that could have seamlessly evolved into Modernist architecture. Although primarily focused on Voysey's contribution to architecture, Pevsner also addresses Voysey's activities as a pattern and furniture designer, claiming he had: "ventured on a new style of an original and highly stimulating nature, before Art Nouveau had begun" (Pevsner, 2004, p. 125). This is a tribute Voysey would have rejected, since he stated: "Surely l'Art Nouveau is not worthy to be called a style. Is it not merely the work of a lot of imitators with nothing but mad eccentricity as a guide?" (Voysey, 1904, pp. 211-212).

Even before Pevsner's analysis, the question of Voysey's Modernism was raised in a 1931 issue of *The Architectural Review*, where John Betjeman—a friend of Voysey's—opened his article, 'Charles Francis Annesley Voysey – The Architect of Individualism' with the observation that Ruskin, Voysey and Le Corbusier are: "the true pioneers and their messages differ but little" (Betjeman, 1931, p. 93). Betjeman is also one of the first writers to identify that to understand the architecture and decorations of Voysey it is: "necessary to know the principles and life, for the man and his work are closely allied" (Betjeman, 1931, p. 95). Voysey believed his work had two interdependent but equally important aspects: the moral and the aesthetic. Counselling against judgement based

purely on aesthetic grounds, Voysey encouraged his audience to seek the higher motive of his actions, in his case an unswerving and deeply held belief in a beneficent and loving god. Voysey's concept of 'individualism', inherited from his father the Rev. Charles Voysey (1828–1912) was expounded in his 1915 book *Individuality*. Here, referring to his belief that Tudor Gothic houses, colleges and religious buildings are the only 'true' form of national architecture—being born of local climate, materials and spiritual belief—Voysey states:

> Could we but revive the individualistic spirit and stimulate moral sentiments, then, we should once more have a noble national architecture, without any revival of any particular style, either native or foreign (Voysey, 1915, p. 62).

In the years immediately prior to this re-evaluation, Voysey's architecture had received limited attention. However, a six-part feature in *Architect and Building News* in 1927, positions him as a timeless and unyielding architect, removed from the fashions of the day, while also hinting at the friction between the opinionated Voysey and the younger architects of the: "modern cult" (Anonymous, 1927, p. 134). This relative neglect was due to two major factors, a shift in public taste from the vernacular aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts movement to the formality of Neoclassicism, combined with a widespread economic downturn. Voysey's architectural commissions—like those of many of his contemporaries—declined significantly after 1907. Any potential recovery was further impeded by the First World War and Voysey's resolute refusal to adopt any form of Classical styling. This stands in stark contrast to architects such as Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), who successfully adapted to the Edwardian preference for Classicism. As demand for his vernacular-influenced, modest country houses waned, Voysey was forced to rely on his pattern design and graphic arts skills as his primary source of income.

Ironically, as Voysey's architectural career waned, his influence on the built environment of the country grew, especially in the proliferation of interwar, 'Voysey style', suburban homes. Although he distanced himself from Modernism some of his theoretical writings align with its principles. In Voysey's *Architectural Review* article '1874 & After', he describes a revolt against "styleism" (Voysey, 1931, pp. 91-92) and a pursuit of utilitarianism as stemming from scientific progress and the ideas fostered by the Great Exhibition of 1851. Voysey praises designers such as E.W. Godwin and A.H. Mackmurdo, whose simplified furniture designs encouraged a rebellion against excessive decoration, inspiring others including himself to embrace a straightforward, machine-friendly aesthetic.

Voysey's work was extensively documented and celebrated from early in his career and much of our understanding stems from contemporary magazines that bolstered his reputation. *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art* was particularly instrumental, positioning applied arts alongside fine arts. Voysey designed the cloth bindings of its first two volumes, and Issue 6 (September 1893) featured a detailed article, 'An Interview with Mr. Charles F. Annesley Voysey, Architect and Designer' (Anonymous, 1893, pp. 321-327). The article highlights his influence on wallpaper and furniture design, emphasising his philosophy of utility as the foundation of beauty, already evident in his architectural work.

Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927), a German architect and cultural attaché in London from 1896, recognised Voysey's prominence through journals such as *The Studio*. Tasked with studying British residential architecture, Muthesius compiled his observations in the influential three-volume *Das englische Haus* (1904–1905), a work that significantly elevated Voysey's reputation across Europe. Within this study, Muthesius (1987) presents Voysey as a leading figure in the English domestic tradition, praising the clarity, restraint, and functional integrity of his designs. He situates Voysey within the Arts and Crafts movement while also emphasising his alignment with a broader shift towards modern simplicity. Unlike many contemporaries who retained a decorative approach, Voysey prioritised plain surfaces, strong forms, and a disciplined use of ornament—qualities that Muthesius regarded as essential for the evolution of a rational and honest architectural style. He particularly admired Voysey's ability to balance aesthetic refinement with practical functionality, highlighting his logical spatial organisation and domestic warmth. Muthesius also commended Voysey's restrained material palette, including whitewashed walls, unadorned timber, and expressive yet understated details. For Muthesius, this approach marked a departure from nineteenth-century historicism and foreshadowed a more progressive architectural language, later recognised by figures such as Betjeman and Pevsner as a precursor to International Modernism.

Voysey died in poverty and relative obscurity in 1941, but his son Charles Cowles-Voysey gifted his father's extensive archive of drawings, papers, photographs and personal items to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1943, creating a hugely valuable and, due to its size, somewhat daunting resource for all subsequent Voysey scholars.

During the years following his death, critical re-assessment was slow to gather pace. An extensive selection of Voysey's furniture, metalwork and pattern design were included in the V&A's 1952 *Exhibition of Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts,* showcasing

him as one of the major figures of the Arts and Crafts movement. In 1957 the *Architectural Association Journal* ran a long piece by the architect and Voysey scholar, John Brandon-Jones (1908–1999) who had known Voysey personally, being in partnership with his son Cowles-Voysey. Although referencing Voysey's claimed influence on the Modern movement, the author leaves readers to come to their own conclusions using Voysey's published and unpublished writings to create a more balanced view of his life, work and thoughts (Brandon-Jones, 1957, pp. 239-262).

The first publication dedicated exclusively to Voysey was David Gebhard's *Charles F. A. Voysey, Architect*, which was produced in conjunction with a 1970 exhibition at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In his analysis, Gebhard (1970) builds upon the perspective of Brandon-Jones—who collaborated on the exhibition and contributed the catalogue's introduction—by portraying Voysey as an arch-individualist whose work resists straightforward classification. The monograph primarily examines Voysey's architectural contributions, a focus that would also characterise subsequent publications. These early studies, perhaps reflecting the gender bias of the time, largely overlooked his decorative work—some scholars believing that such an inclusion might undermine his standing as a 'serious' architect.

As previously stated, the resurgence of public interest in the wider Arts and Crafts movement began with works by Naylor (1971), followed by Anscombe and Gere (1978) and Lambourne (1980), all of which featured Voysey. Concentrating more on the artifacts of the movement rather than the architecture, and with the first two volumes authored by women, these early, general studies do provide an insight into his versatility as a designer of both objects and pattern. David Gebhard's *Charles F.A. Voysey Architect* (1975) became the first monograph dedicated to Voysey, focusing primarily on his architecture and republishing many of his writings, offering insights directly from the architect himself.

A landmark project began in 1969 to catalogue the RIBA Drawings Collection, with twelve volumes published by 1975. Joanna Symonds's *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects: C.F.A. Voysey* (1976) listed 931 projects from RIBA's extensive collection. Organised into five design categories, it documented his work across buildings, furniture, graphic design, wallpaper, and textiles. Despite having limited illustrations, Symonds' work remains a key text for Voysey scholarship, providing the first extensive overview of this primary material.

The 1978 publication *C.F.A. Voysey architect & designer 1857–1941* accompanied a Brighton exhibition, featuring contributions from John Brandon-Jones, Joanna

Symonds, Duncan Simpson and V&A curators: Elizabeth Aslin, Barbara Morris, and Shirley Bury—who had all contributed to the V&A's groundbreaking 1952 exhibition. Although owing much to Symonds's catalogue, its well-chosen illustrations and wide-ranging scope, provided the first balanced account of Voysey's activities as both architect and designer. Duncan Simpson's *C.F.A. Voysey: An Architect of Individuality* (1979) offered a chronological study of his architecture and prioritises his furniture designs over all other aspects of his design practice. While agreeing with Pevsner and Betjeman on Voysey's influence on Modernism, Simpson emphasised his role as an 'individualist' rooted in the Gothic tradition of Pugin.

Voysey's pattern designs were explored in some detail a decade later by Stuart Durant in *The Decorative Designs of C.F.A. Voysey* (1990). The book showcased 64 colour plates—from the RIBA Drawings Collection—of Voysey's pattern designs, focusing on his foliate designs and grotesque creatures, which Durant links to a late-nineteenth-century retreat from materialism. Durant also provides biographies of key figures who influenced Voysey early in his career, further enriching the study of his formative years.

In 1992, Durant expanded on this work with *Architectural Monographs No. 19: C.F.A. Voysey*. This large-format volume combined high-quality commissioned photographs of Voysey's houses alongside the architect's original writings, many long out of print. By presenting Voysey's work through both visual and textual means, Durant underscored his multifaceted contributions to architecture and design, solidifying his reputation as a leading figure in the Arts and Crafts movement.

Wendy Hitchmough's *The Homestead: C.F.A. Voysey* (1994) is the first focused account of a single Voysey building—a small house dating to 1906—and concerns itself only with the house, the client, the location and the commission. Concurrently Hitchmough was engaged in the research for what would become the first truly extensive survey of Voysey's life and work. Published the following year, *C.F.A. Voysey* (1995), a lavishly illustrated, large-format monograph still stands as the most detailed and exhaustive survey of Voysey's architectural work. The author does not engage as extensively with Voysey's furniture, textile, wallpaper, and metalwork design, although these elements are discussed in passing where they intersect with the architectural works. Hitchmough suggests:

> If circumstances had been different, if for example Voysey's Gothic competition entry for the government buildings of Ottawa of 1914 had been successful, then his position in history might have been quite different (Hitchmough, 1995, p. 222).

In this scenario posterity might have situated him firmly at the end of the Victorian Gothic tradition rather than as a precursor to Modernism. Drawing extensively on Voysey's published writings, a concerted attempt is made throughout the work to position the architect as 'Pugin's last disciple'. A psychological element is introduced exploring the great similarities—noted in passing by some earlier commentators—between Voysey's defence of Gothic architecture on moral and spiritual grounds—to the detriment of his architectural career—with the actions of his father. The Rev. Charles Voysey had very publicly challenged the dogma of the established Church of England, ultimately being deprived of his living. Hitchmough also questions more recent scholarly readings of Voysey as 'the architect of individuality' but does acknowledge that it is Voysey's 'individuality' that has had the greatest influence on the architect's more recent critical standing. As a more nuanced understanding of the complexities and contradictions within Voysey's life and work has emerged, the tendency to categorise him solely as either a pioneer of Modernism or a disciple of Pugin has diminished, allowing for a more balanced and historically contextualised assessment of his contributions to architecture and design.

By the early 2000s, the recognition of Voysey's work had extended beyond the specialised domain of architectural and design historians, curators, and collectors. Widespread public demand for his distinctive pattern design was fed by companies such as the wallpaper and textile manufacturer Sanderson, who updated and re-launched many of the designs originally supplied to the company by Voysey. The commercial division of the V&A actively monetised the museum's extensive holding of original Voysey designs, applying them to a diverse range of gift products. Squarely aimed at this new, general audience, Anne O'Donnell's *C.F.A. Voysey Architect Designer Individualist* (2011) gives the general reader, through its plentiful colour illustrations, a more rounded view of Voysey's activities across both architecture and design than that provided by Hitchmough (1995). The text, although brief, does accurately convey Voysey's career, beliefs and opinions although disappointingly, most of the colour illustrations have been previously reproduced elsewhere, most notably the many pattern designs that had already appeared in Durant (1990). In the same year V&A curator Karen Livingstone published *The Bookplates and Badges of C.F.A. Voysey* (2011) the first monograph to focus on this aspect of Voysey's oeuvre. The bookplates featured, along with many other objects illustrated, belong to Crab Tree Farm, Illinois, a private Arts and Crafts museum showcasing the collection of food magnate John H. Bryan. Valuable biographical information is provided for the subject of each bookplate, and much use is made of Voysey's own detailed descriptions of the often-arcane symbolism employed, that is found in his unpublished 1930 manuscript *Symbolism in*

Design (Voysey, 1930). Unfortunately, the large collection of original, frequently dated individual designs held in the RIBA Drawings Collection was not consulted and thus some erroneous dates of execution are postulated—the designs in the Crab Tree farm album and *Symbolism in Design* being rarely dated.

In 2012 a group of enthusiasts and campaigners concerned about the future of the Winsford Cottage Hospital, Halwill, Devon, a building designed by Voysey in 1899, came together to form the C.F.A. Voysey Society. The Society's attractive and profusely illustrated annual journal *The Orchard*—named after Voysey's self-designed home—provides the ideal platform for Voysey scholars wishing to explore, in much greater detail than previously possible, specific aspects of this complex figure's life and work. My first Voysey paper would appear in the second volume of *The Orchard* in 2013.

As documented above, before my entry into the field, Voysey's architectural achievements had been well-documented but much of his design work had been overlooked or insufficiently studied by academics. The first major publication to address this specific aspect of his oeuvre was published as recently as 2016: *C.F.A. Voysey: Arts & Crafts Designer* by Karen Livingstone with Max Donnelly and Linda Parry—all V&A curators. The narrative created by Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016) offers a nuanced reinterpretation of Voysey's legacy, challenging traditional Modernist narratives by focusing on his decorative arts rather than solely on his architectural achievements. The volume presents an extensive examination of Voysey's designs for textiles, wallpapers, furniture, ceramics, and metalwork, contextualising them within his studio practices, financial strategies, and the broader cultural landscape of British design reform.

Karen Livingstone's introductory chapter traces the intellectual and social influences on Voysey's work, emphasising the role of his nonconformist faith and drawing parallels to A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin. While his connections to contemporaries such as William Burges and Norman Shaw are mentioned, Livingstone notably downplays the influence of William Morris, portraying Voysey as distinct from Morris's socialist ideals. Instead, as is well documented elsewhere, A.H. Mackmurdo is highlighted for encouraging Voysey's expansion into the decorative arts. The chapter concludes by detailing the art exhibitions and journals that bolstered Voysey's reputation.

The subsequent chapters explore specific media. Linda Parry's chapter on textiles and wallpapers (Parry, 2016, pp. 54-151) stresses the importance of this work in disseminating Voysey's ideals to a broad audience and incorporates some of my previously published research (Peart, 2013, pp. 21-27). Parry examines the iconography

of his patterns and highlights his late-career frustrations with the industrial production process. Despite these challenges, Voysey's prolific pattern design exemplified his aesthetic ingenuity and pragmatic approach, allowing him to balance artistic ideals with financial realities.

Max Donnelly's chapter on furniture (Donnelley, 2016, pp. 152-229) focuses on Voysey's approach to materials, manufacturing techniques, and formal experimentation. Donnelly positions Voysey's furniture as integral to his architectural projects, reflecting the Arts and Crafts principles of 'fitness for purpose' and suggests that along with many of his contemporaries Voysey actively engaged with the hygienic concerns of his era with his furniture and interior designs reflecting a broader awareness of functionality and health concerns.

Finally, Livingstone's chapter on metalwork and ceramics (Livingstone, 2016, pp. 230-294) examines Voysey's work in these media. Highlighting his rejection of the collectivist ideals and craft-focused ethos of contemporaries such as C.R. Ashbee, Livingstone explores Voysey's pragmatic collaboration with manufacturers and craftsmen, which complicates his relationship with typical Arts and Crafts ideology. This richly illustrated and meticulously researched volume offers a multifaceted understanding of Voysey, emphasising his decorative arts as a vital component of his legacy and challenging conventional interpretations of his role as primarily an architect of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Although this book was published after I first entered the field, it represents a significant and substantial contribution to the body of scholarship on Voysey's work as a designer, serving as a valuable point of reference for all my subsequently published papers. While it is extensively illustrated, I have deliberately selected images for my own papers that do not merely replicate the artifacts featured in this volume. In so doing, I aim to further expand public awareness of the breadth and variety of Voysey's design work. Although thoroughly researched, the book does contain some factual inaccuracies—primarily in relation to Voysey's ceramics and metalwork—which I have addressed, where appropriate, in my own papers. Moreover, aside from the chapters dedicated to Voysey's furniture and pattern design, this publication does not explore his broader design work to the same degree as is possible in my highly detailed studies, resulting in the omission of much information. In response, I have deliberately concentrated on aspects of his design practice that are either overlooked or insufficiently examined in this work, thereby contributing new insights and critical analysis that further enhance the scholarly discourse on his contributions to the field of design.

The Arts and Crafts movement's influence on progressive art schools and their enduring legacy

Alongside this major focus on the work of C.F.A Voysey, the second strand of my published research explores the Arts and Crafts movement's influence on progressive art schools—'The Birmingham Guild' and 'The Newcastle Handicrafts Company'—and the continuing influence of these schools well into the twentieth century as exemplified by the cases of Florence Standfast and Gladys Mayer—'The Fulham Pottery' and 'The Betula Ltd' respectively. Standfast's integral position as Constance Spry's principal collaborator, alongside Gladys Mayer's overlooked contributions as a pioneering figure in furniture design, underlines the necessity of reassessing women's roles in the decorative arts of the twentieth century, challenging historical narratives that have often marginalised women's creative labour and intellectual influence within the field.

In nineteenth-century England, debates about design and industrial production were partly spurred by an 1836 Government report criticising the declining quality of British goods compared to those from France, Germany, and the United States. Concerns about Britain's international trade competitiveness were compounded by aesthetic and moral objections to excessive ornamentation in industrial goods. To address these issues, the Government Schools of Design were established in 1837 to improve design education and raise industrial standards, as detailed in Quentin Bell's *The Schools of Design* (1963).

Despite these efforts, industry often prioritised popular taste, and the subpar quality of many British products at the 1851 Great Exhibition drew criticism. Figures such as Henry Cole, Richard Redgrave, and Owen Jones, supported by Prince Albert, developed formal principles advocating for modern, ethically grounded design. Drawing was emphasised as a universal skill, but many students lacked basic proficiency. Cole addressed this by implementing a national art education system, evolving into the Schools of Practical Art, later known simply as 'Schools of Art'. Stuart Macdonald's *A Century of Art and Design Education* (2005) notes that these reforms focused exclusively on two-dimensional design, neglecting practical crafts and manufacturing processes. It was in Birmingham and Glasgow—the respective nation's hubs of mass manufacturing—that the first efforts to reconcile design education with craft production took place, centred on the Birmingham and Glasgow Schools of Art.

In 1877 Edward Taylor (1838–1912) was appointed headmaster of Birmingham School of Art (BSoA) and under his reign it became the first school of art to municipalise, thereby removing its dependency on central Government funding and increasing its

educational autonomy. This allowed Taylor to introduce innovative practices, the most notable being 'executed design', the integration of the conceptual process of design (drawing) with hands-on craftsmanship, enabling students to work directly with the materials for which they were designing. R.G. Hatton, the motivating force in creating the Newcastle Handicrafts Co. (NHC), trained at BSoA before moving to Newcastle, developing Taylor's innovations to a radical, unique conclusion. The NHC had never been subject to academic research and until my first published paper rescued it from oblivion, the only documentary material available was a single, short article in *The Studio* of November 1901 ('C.W.', 1901, p. 135), the piece that first piqued my interest. The significant developments taking place at BSoA were recognised by *The Studio*, with Birmingham student work frequently featured in reports of 'the National Competition'—an annual art examination—leading to a profusely illustrated two-part article (Anon.,1893, pp. 90-99 and pp. 171-174) appearing in late 1893, surveying the work of its students.

The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft (BGH) evolved from evening metalwork classes held in one of central Birmingham's most deprived neighbourhoods, organised by the philanthropic Kyrle Society—which focused on bringing art to the poor. Many of those involved with the management of the BGH were either current, or former students at the School of Art and in the early days of the Guild, the two were closely linked. The BGH, one of the longest running of the Arts and Crafts guilds, only appears sporadically in contemporary journals such as *The Studio* and *The Artist*. Although brief reference to its activities and examples of its work appears in Naylor (1971) and Anscombe and Gere (1978), it would not be until the following decade that it would be addressed in greater detail.

By Hammer and Hand: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham (1984), edited by Alan Crawford, is the catalogue of an exhibition held at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery surveying the city's contribution to the movement, the title for the exhibition and catalogue being the motto of the BGH. Crawford's introduction provides an informed and succinct account of the origin and development of the wider movement including its international influence. The catalogue also presents an excellent account of the Birmingham setting, differentiating it from similar large cities such as Manchester and Liverpool. Quoting Felicity Ashbee, Crawford describes the city as a: "curious mixture of bourgeoisie and romance" (Crawford, 1984, p. 27) and claims it was only in Birmingham that the movement found a natural home. He also highlights the movements integration of craft with ideals of social betterment, drawing attention to how the city's industrial backdrop both shaped and challenged the movements ethos

of handmade artistry. Only five pages within the chapter on metalwork are devoted to the BGH and these were the primary source of information on this neglected but significant company at my point of entry into the field. Crawford identifies the BGH's importance, asserting they produced the most radically austere and puritanical metalwork of the whole Arts and Crafts movement.

The Fulham Pottery

Florence Standfast (1872–1964) who would become associated with the Fulham Pottery was very much the product of those late nineteenth-century art school reforms first instigated by Edward Taylor in Birmingham and Francis Newbery (1855–1946) in Glasgow. She studied both design and embroidery at the Royal School of Needlework, London. This practical grounding would be put to good use when she came into the orbit of society flower arranger Constance Spry (1886–1960) around 1929 and was tasked with making vases for Spry's ambitious floral designs. Evolving from hand-made plaster to ceramics manufactured by the Fulham Pottery, the vases she designed both influenced contemporary taste and had a profound effect on the wider British ceramics industry. At my point of entry into the field, 'Constance Spry' vases were growing in popularity with dealers and collectors, although Florence Standfast's role was unrecognised. Those vases designed and manufactured independently by the Fulham Pottery were also confused with those designed by Standfast for Spry. Having a central position in the history of British ceramics, founded in 1672 by John Dwight and running continuously until 1978, the pottery has been subject to some scrutiny, but this focuses almost entirely on the early Dwight period. The only publication to capture something of the full spectrum of the pottery is *John Dwight's Fulham Pottery 1672–1978: A Collection of Documentary Sources* (1979) edited by Haselgrove and Murray. This hard-to-obtain academic journal does devote a few pages to the later activities of the pottery garnered from archive material, but this is presented without commentary or interpretation.

The Betula Ltd

As with Florence Standfast, Gladys Mayer (1888–1980) benefited from a progressive art school education. In her case this was at Liverpool School of Art, which had evolved from the well-known 'Art Sheds' (see Bennett, 1981). Early in her career she became a follower of the philosopher and occultist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and moved to the

colony he had established in Dornach, Switzerland. Here she was exposed to anthroposophical art and design, a term coined by Steiner from 'anthropo' (human) and 'sophia' (wisdom). This movement, a physical manifestation of Steiner's all-encompassing philosophy, took much from Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement and has a similar belief in the redemptive power of craftwork. On returning to London in the late 1920s Mayer would soon establish The Betula Ltd, a unique attempt to manufacture radical, expressionist, anthroposophical furniture. In this endeavour she was assisted by the Czech refugee Francis Nevel (1911–1993) who had been informally adopted into the family of leading Arts and Crafts architect Hugh Thackeray Turner (1853–1937). As a pupil of Rendcomb College near Cirencester, Nevel was exposed to practical crafts, specifically furniture making in the 'Cotswold School' tradition. The work of The Betula was only scantly documented during the 1930s and had been completely overlooked by recent scholars.

Anthroposophical architecture remains a continuing tradition and has received a little, if infrequent, critical attention (see Raab, 1979 and Bayes, 1994). However, it was not until the second decade of the new millennium that a critical lens would finally be applied to anthroposophical design. *Rudolf Steiner: Alchemy of the Everyday* (2010), edited by Mateo Kries, is the first publication to document Steiner's multifaceted legacy delving into his unique blend of spiritual philosophy, architecture, and pedagogy inspiring innovative approaches to creativity and functionality in everyday life. Contextualising Steiner within the broader Modernist movement while emphasising his distinctiveness, the book leans heavily toward admiration, sidestepping contentious aspects of his theories, such as the esoteric and pseudoscientific elements of anthroposophy. Reinhold J Fäth's *Dornach Design: Möbelkunst 1911–2011* (2011) is a German language exploration of the furniture and design principles associated with the anthroposophical movement in early twentieth-century Dornach, Switzerland. It primarily focuses on the unique aesthetic and functional characteristics of the handcrafted furniture offering insights into how Steiner's spiritual ideals influenced the furniture's organic forms and symbolic motifs. While Fäth provides detail on the design aspects, the book lacks deeper critical engagement with the socio-political implications of Steiner's ideas and how they intersected with the arts. *Aenigma: One Hundred Years of Anthroposophical Art* (2015) edited by Fäth and Voda expands the scope of enquiry to the wider anthroposophical movement, tracing its evolution over a century. The book brings together essays, visual material, and critical perspectives to illuminate the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of anthroposophy. The strength of the volume lies in its ambitious scope, providing a historical overview and situating anthroposophical art within broader cultural contexts. Although they provide a rich insight into the world of

Steiner and European anthroposophical design, the authors of all three volumes are unaware of the existence of The Betula Ltd which, because of its absence, confines the narrative to the countries of mainland Europe, thereby denying England its rightful place in the development of an international movement.

In conclusion, of all the subjects I have studied and published, it is C.F.A. Voysey who has received the most extensive and prolonged academic scrutiny by others. Unlike the Birmingham Guild and the Fulham Pottery—who appear in the published canon as little more than footnotes—and the NHC and The Betula which were totally lost to history, the life and work of Voysey has generated an extensive bibliography. However, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter, even here there is still much to discover, examine and contribute to the on-going debate.

Chapter 2: Contribution to knowledge

As stated in Chapter 1, all my published work is related to aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement, but two themes emerge. The first is a detailed, extensive and analytical exploration of the wide range of 'applied art' designs produced throughout the career of the Arts and Crafts architect C.F.A. Voysey. This has been accomplished through the systematic documentation and archiving of primary Voysey research material, including items housed in obscure and previously un-accessed collections. This comprehensive review of Voysey's design oeuvre and personal papers, along with my extensive knowledge of publications dedicated to him—as discussed in Chapter 1— has allowed me to identify, analyse, and highlight significant aspects of his design work that have been minimally documented, superficially examined, or entirely overlooked.

The second theme centres on bringing attention to overlooked or forgotten aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement and its broader, lasting influence on British design and manufacture. The papers exploring the Newcastle Handicrafts Co., the Birmingham Guild, the Fulham Pottery and The Betula Ltd. fall into this category. Both strands of research involve reconstructing and reinterpreting historical narratives with accuracy, relying on archival and primary sources rather than secondary material.

Research into the Arts and Crafts movement has traditionally been the purview of professional design historians, museum curators and specialist dealers. Acknowledging that I do not belong to these groups, I recognise that this places me in a somewhat unconventional position. Before discussing how my research methodologies have developed over the past three decades, summarising my published papers and outlining their interconnections, I will first reflect on how I—an artist and Illustration tutor—came to develop an academic interest in the Arts and Crafts movement. Within the broader narrative I will also reflect on the unique perspectives that a practising artist and designer can bring to an academic subject, offering fresh insights and approaches.

The Studio: *An Illustrated Magazine of Fine & Applied Art*

In the early 1980s as an undergraduate Illustration student, I would visit Leeds City Art Gallery to examine its collection of Victorian and Edwardian art. These works influenced my practice as a painter in oils, particularly the works of artists associated with the New English Art Club (NEAC) which flourished during the 1890s. At that time, these artists were underappreciated, and visual references in contemporary literature

were sparse. To learn more, I delved into historical publications such as *The Magazine of Art* and *The Art Journal* but these conservative journals provided limited insights into avant-garde art. The one consistent champion of the NEAC was *The Studio*, the illustrated magazine founded in 1893 by Charles Holme which, as discussed in Chapter 1, featured both the fine and applied arts.

Initially drawn to *The Studio* for its NEAC-related content, I soon became drawn to the Arts and Crafts movement pieces it also showcased, particularly the work of designers such as C.F.A. Voysey. His understated and austere aesthetic resonated with me, deeply influencing my visual sensibilities and eventually the course of my life. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts artifacts by Voysey and his contemporaries illustrated in *The Studio* I embarked on a lifetime of collecting decorative arts from the period 1870–1950, including books, textiles, furniture, ceramics, and metalwork. Four decades later, this has become an important private collection—visited by learned societies—and a key inspiration for my published research, such as the studies on the Birmingham Guild and the Fulham Pottery.

Collecting introduced me to a niche network of dealers, curators, and auction houses, where specialised knowledge was essential. In the pre-internet era of the 1980s and with only a handful of books on the Arts and Crafts movement available, fully understanding the movement and its artifacts required familiarity with *The Studio*. Gaining this expertise meant acquiring and studying as many of its first 80 volumes (1893–1920) as possible. Specialist dealers guarded their collections fiercely, so I began acquiring my own set of *The Studio* volumes including the published index, which frustratingly only covers Volumes 1 to 42. This deep dive into *The Studio* not only fuelled my collection but also led to discoveries, such as the existence of the Newcastle Handicrafts Company (NHC), first encountered in a short, illustrated article in a newly acquired volume. Residing in Newcastle significantly facilitated my subsequent archival research into this short-lived company. This endeavour was partly motivated by my recognition of the prevailing London-centric perspective among many researchers, which has contributed to a pronounced southern bias in the historical narrative of the Arts and Crafts movement.

In recent years the early volumes of *The Studio* have been digitised, democratising access, but my early study of these volumes laid the foundation for a lifetime of scholarship and collecting, intertwining my professional research with my passion for the decorative arts. My initial published paper, along with my subsequent in-depth exploration of the Arts and Crafts movement in North East England, was significantly enhanced by my extensive knowledge of *The Studio*. The information contained within

this publication served as a foundational resource, guiding much of the detailed research and documentation of original artifacts held in both public and private collections that I would undertake in the following years.

Background to my first published paper 'The Lost Art Workers' and a reflection on my pre-digital research methodology

By the early 1990s, I had a deep familiarity with key texts on the Arts and Crafts movement—as outlined in Chapter 1—and had developed an enduring fascination with both Voysey and the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. From contemporary commentators such as Naylor (1971) I was aware of the nationwide manifestations of the movement. From Cornwall to the Cotswolds, the Lake District to London, the Arts and Crafts movement seemed to have flourished everywhere with one notable exception: the North East of England. This huge area was absent from the modern narrative creating the false impression that the region had been immune to its influence. Fortuitously, my familiarity with *The Studio* indicated the contrary. Active and long-running woodworking classes had been held at Lucker in Northumberland and Bolton-on-Swale in North Yorkshire. There was also the previously mentioned article in *The Studio* featuring the illustration of an ornate silver and enamel bowl executed by the NHC. As Arts and Crafts metalwork is a key passion, and initially with no view to publishing, I determined to find out what I could about this forgotten enterprise.

Lateral thinking is central to illustration and its teaching. Applying this mindset to the NHC, I approached it as a problem to be solved. The only clues in *The Studio* were the Company's name and the designer of the bowl, R.G. Hatton. I speculated there might be a connection to the University of Newcastle's well-known Hatton Gallery. Fortunately, there was. A visit to the University's library yielded a brief biography of Hatton, who had the gallery named in his honour upon retiring as Professor of Fine Art in 1921. The biography also mentioned Hatton's Birmingham training and identified the NHC as an offshoot of the University's Art Department.

This discovery marked the starting point of my investigation. With the cooperation of the university, I eventually discovered the Art Committee's minute books stored at the back of a safe in the Bursar's office. These records, long neglected, proved invaluable as they documented the entire period of the NHC's operation. Later, they would be

transferred to the University library's Special Collections and Archives for preservation. I undertook the task of carefully transcribing the minute books by hand and began interpreting their contents. Through this painstaking work, I was able to construct a timeline and narrative for the Company. The discovery of a direct connection to the Birmingham School of Art revealed that the NHC offered previously undocumented direct evidence of the national impact of Taylor's reforms at BSoA. This added to the narrative established by Crawford (1984) and, in the case of the technical innovations at Glasgow School of Art, Rawson (1996).

Biographies were carefully researched for all individuals recorded in the Art Committee minute books, including staff, students, and committee members. Over time, this revealed a complex network of connections and associations. Central to these was the patronage of a select group of Tyneside's prominent industrialists, celebrated for their progressive support of the Pre-Raphaelite painters. I recognised their names from the groundbreaking 1989 exhibition *Pre-Raphaelites: Painters and Patrons in the North East*, held at Newcastle's Laing Art Gallery. The exhibition catalogue (Laing Art Gallery, 1989) made no mention of the group's patronage of the applied arts, as exemplified by the NHC, confirming there was more to add to the narrative. However, it proved useful in providing detailed footnote references to contemporary newspaper articles featuring those involved. Today, searchable newspaper archives make such research relatively straightforward, but in the pre-digital era, uncovering this information involved laboriously sifting through multiple bound volumes of newspapers, relying heavily on both persistence and good luck.

Additional primary material was identified in the archives of the Laing Art Gallery, complemented by connections established with members of the North East England branch of the Victorian Society, museum curators, and various churches where surviving examples of the Company's work remained accessible. The process of primary research proved highly engaging, propelling the project forward and expanding its scope beyond the NHC to encompass broader aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement in North East England, many of which were initially encountered in *The Studio*.

Coming from a visual arts/material culture background, I also prioritised the detailed documentation of artifacts through high-quality analogue photography. This approach was intended to ensure that in the event of my research being published it would highlight as many previously undocumented items as possible, preserving and sharing these artifacts for wider academic and public inspection. This approach continues to underpin my research activities, as I prioritise submitting papers to well-designed,

well-illustrated journals that cater to a broad audience, including both specialists and general readers.

Given the wealth of previously unrecorded information I had uncovered, I recognised the importance of thoroughly documenting and disseminating it to a wider audience. As a long-standing member of The Decorative Arts Society: 1850 to the Present, the preeminent learned society for the decorative arts of this period, it was a natural choice to submit my paper on the NHC to its Journal. The editor at the time, Gillian Naylor—renowned as the first modern academic to critically address the significance of the Arts and Crafts movement—recognised the value of this contribution (Naylor, 1993, p. 2). I will revisit this paper together with my expertise concerning the Arts and Crafts movement in the North East later in the third and final chapter of this supporting statement.

The research initiated for 'The Lost Art Workers' continued after its publication, allowing me to cultivate a thorough understanding of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the North of England. This included examining the activities of numerous local craft classes operating under the auspices of the Home Arts and Industries Association (HAIA), a nationwide organisation aimed at revitalising traditional rural crafts endangered by industrial mechanisation and urbanisation, providing artisans with rewarding, practical hobbies and frequently, a much-needed source of income. My expertise in this field was later recognised in 2003, when I was asked to co-curate the exhibition, *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement in the North East* at the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, one of the country's leading collections of fine and decorative arts.

In parallel, many pieces from my collection, including works by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft and other prominent makers, were loaned to a major survey of Arts and Crafts metalwork held at Blackwell, The Arts & Crafts House, in 2003. Subsequently the museum was loaned additional items from the collection, including furniture and metalwork, for long-term display at the house.

My interest in the work of C.F.A. Voysey deepened significantly during this period, leading me to acquire furniture-making skills to create precise replicas of some of his austere, iconic furniture. The design drawings required for manufacture were accurate pencil transcriptions taken from the original Voysey design drawings housed in the RIBA Drawings Collection. This gave me my first introduction to the scope, potential and academic value of this enormous archive of material. The process of crafting accurate replicas of Voysey's furniture provides a unique, practice-based insight into

his design principles, construction techniques, and material choices. Engaging directly with the physical making of his pieces arguably allows for a deeper understanding of the structural integrity, joinery methods, and ergonomic considerations that characterise his work. This hands-on experience also facilitates a more nuanced analysis of Voysey's approach to functionality. Such experiential knowledge enriches scholarly discourse by bridging theoretical analysis with practical application, offering a more comprehensive perspective on the historical and aesthetic significance of his designs.

The digital age and the development of a new research methodology

The first two papers I published, 'The Lost Art Workers' and 'The Fulham Pottery' share significant thematic and methodological similarities. Both works investigate and bring to light important, previously undocumented aspects of British applied art in the twentieth century, particularly the long-forgotten narrative of the Newcastle Handicrafts Co. The similarities continue with the research underpinning these studies being reliant on comparable primary source materials, centralised within specific archival repositories. These collections are largely composed of ledgers and documents, with the Fulham Pottery archive—held at the Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre—offering additional resources, including detailed company records, artifacts, and photographs.

In the sixteen years separating the publication of these two papers the digital age ushered in significant advancements in the possibilities of recording archival material for research purposes. The formerly labour-intensive process of manually transcribing archival records, compounded by the inherent risk of overlooking important information when surveying extensive collections, highlighted the need for a more efficient approach. The adoption of digital photography as a recording tool, addressed this need, overcoming the constraints of the pre-digital era, where analogue methods required bulky cameras, expensive film stock, and time-consuming processing. Thus, photography was primarily reserved for documenting artifacts for illustration purposes rather than recording archival materials for study. The advent of high-quality, affordable digital cameras transformed this process. Given my physical distance from the archival material at Hammersmith, digital photography enabled me to maximise research time, mitigating delays caused by restricted opening hours and retrieval processes.

In my role as a lecturer in Illustration, the digital documentation and manipulation of analogue artifacts for presentation and analytical scrutiny is essential. I simply applied these skills to enhance my academic research where they enable precise visual analysis and facilitate comparative studies. Digital tools also enhance the detailed examination of textures, handwriting, construction techniques, and stylistic nuances that may not be immediately evident through traditional methods. Additionally, the ability to manipulate and digitally archive artifacts supports interdisciplinary research, allowing for innovative approaches to design analysis, and cultural interpretation. By integrating digital methodologies, I have been able to expand the scope of my research, engage with wider audiences, and contribute to the evolving discourse on material culture.

Utilising high-quality digital photography for the documentation of original photographs, artwork, and physical objects reduces the need to depend on the host archive for digital images to accompany published research. With the necessary permissions from the relevant institution and appropriate credit given to the owner/copyright holder in the published image captions, my own photography serves as the primary visual documentation in my work. This approach allows greater flexibility in the selection of illustrations which are crucial in expanding my written narrative, mitigating the restrictions often associated with reliance on in-house archival photography. Furthermore, it supports my objective of prioritising the inclusion of previously unseen and unexamined artifacts and images within the extensive visual content of my published papers.

The digital images obtained are systematically organised, catalogued, and assigned reference numbers following the classification system of the respective institution. This digital archive is then analysed using traditional research methodologies, benefiting from the flexibility of unrestricted access, which allows for more in-depth examination. While my core approach to photographing primary research materials has remained consistent, technological advancements have greatly enhanced the efficiency and precision of information retrieval. Innovations in software, unavailable when I first adopted digital photography for archival documentation, now enable more sophisticated processing, analysis, and interpretation of printed materials, including books, catalogues, and periodicals. The ability to convert these images into fully searchable, accessible PDF documents has further improved the usability of my personal digital archive, significantly facilitating my scholarly research.

As previously mentioned, as with ‘The Lost Art Workers’, the paper devoted to the Fulham Pottery was published in 2008 in the *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*. By this date the Journal had undergone significant change, embracing the inclusion of

high-quality, full-colour illustrations, its large format enhancing the presentation of visual material, allowing artifacts to be appreciated with greater clarity and accuracy. This advancement not only elevated the publication's visual appeal but also reinforced its reputation as one of the leading scholarly journals devoted to the interpretation and detailed study of material culture. I argue that the integration of full-colour imagery with textual narrative offers significant academic value, as it enables a more nuanced understanding of the artifacts under discussion, capturing subtleties in texture, hue, and craftsmanship that are often lost in monochrome reproductions or text-only descriptions. In this way, it facilitates deeper scholarly engagement and helps to maintain visual analysis as a central component of research in the decorative arts.

The digital documentation of the RIBA Voysey archive

Two factors have been key in enabling the breadth and depth of my published papers exploring C.F.A. Voysey's activities as a designer. The first is the extensive duration and depth of my research into the subject, which spans over four decades. Among Voysey scholars, only the architect John Brandon-Jones has demonstrated a comparable commitment, though his work was focused on his architecture. Voysey researchers have tended to publish selectively on focused aspects of his oeuvre before moving on to explore other aspects of the fine and decorative arts. The second, and arguably more significant factor is my extensive and sustained digital documentation and collation of a huge amount of Voysey research material primarily held in public archives. The most valuable single resource being the vast collection of Voysey drawings, photographs and business records placed in the RIBA Drawings Collection in 1941 by his son Cowles-Voysey. The detailed analysis of this archive has been instrumental in facilitating my focused but varied studies of Voysey's work as a designer. My research interests encompass all aspects of his life and work and focus on drawing the numerous strands of his creative life together by exploring relationships and commonality.

As outlined in Chapter 1, in 1976 Joanna Symonds undertook the enormous task of cataloguing the original drawings within this archive, resulting in a published catalogue (Symonds, 1976) documenting 931 individual projects, many comprised of multiple items. Although comprehensive the catalogue poses challenges for researchers of Voysey's work as the entries are notably concise and provide limited details regarding clients or the specifics of commissions. Additionally, given that this archive features original artworks, it is regrettable that only 120 of the drawings are reproduced, and these are presented as small, low-resolution black-and-white images. While the

published catalogue serves as an invaluable record of the collection, it fails to convey the full diversity, visual richness, and exceptional quality of the materials it documents and offers no exploration or interpretation of the material.

I had long been aware of the challenges associated with consulting this archive. The Voysey drawings are preserved in oversized archival boxes with their contents loosely organised by subject matter. Although a record of the Voysey drawings is now available online via the RIBA Library Catalogue, this only includes the most rudimentary of single-line descriptions with the Symonds (1976) catalogue numbers attached. The remainder of this huge source of primary research material including business papers, photographs, letters, newspaper/journal clippings, personal items, and address and expense books was not catalogued until as late as 2001 by RIBA archivist Eleanor Gawne. Previously available only as a photocopied list on-site, it is now accessible online (Gawne, 2001). Researchers must therefore rely on this very basic list for all non-drawing related Voysey research material together with the long out of print Symonds (1976) for information relating to the Voysey design drawings held by the institution. To add to the difficulty of gaining a complete overview of this expansive material, prior to 2012, the RIBA's concerns over copyright prevented photography of all items in their collection compelling researchers to rely solely on handwritten notes and sketches to document their findings. These challenges and restrictions may explain why no individual researcher, except for the original cataloguers of the material, Symonds and Gawne, have ever achieved a complete overview of this massive and hugely important Voysey resource.

Fortuitously, in 2012, following lobbying from the C.F.A. Voysey Society—of which I was a founding member—the RIBA rescinded its prohibition on archival photography adopting current copyright law which expires seventy years following the death of the creator. Cognisant of the huge opportunity this presented, I undertook the ambitious task of digitally photographing the entirety of the RIBA Voysey collection. With the aid of University of Cumbria research funding I systematically worked on this project over a four-year period, visiting the Drawings Collection annually and completing it in 2016. The resulting digital archive has proven to be of immense value to my own academic research revealing previously unknown designs, biographical information, interrelationships between projects, and insights into Voysey's design evolution and philosophy. By enabling comprehensive cross-referencing, stylistic analysis, and comparative studies, this complete oversight of the archive has deepened my understanding of Voysey's work, contextualised his achievements within the broader Arts and Crafts movement and initiated new avenues of research. I have also

endeavoured to make this material available to fellow Voysey scholars and as such it has facilitated and informed the work of others. A copy of all the recorded digital material has also been supplied to the RIBA. This is particularly significant, as to date, only a small percentage of the Voysey archive has been documented by the RIBA's internal photography department. Additionally, following the publication of Symonds's catalogue, the Voysey material had been subject to theft by a former staff member. Therefore, during the cataloguing of my digital photographs using the same numbering system as Symonds (1976), lost items were easily identified and reported to the RIBA archivist. To further enhance this resource, I have digitised my personal copy of Symonds's catalogue—as previously mentioned, long out of print—converting it into a fully searchable PDF. This advance has greatly improved my ability to locate and cross-reference material in the digital archive I have created, with a precision and efficiency that could never have been achieved in the pre-digital world.

During my study and documentation of the Voysey material originally gifted to the RIBA in 1941, the collection was significantly augmented in 2014 with the bequest of a substantial body of Voysey-related primary research material from the collection of architect and writer John Brandon-Jones. This included previously unseen original Voysey design drawings, correspondence, press cuttings and a large collection of photographs, most of which were unpublished. Other than Brandon-Jones himself, this extensive collection had not been previously studied by Voysey scholars. The initial overview of this diverse archive was facilitated by the Voysey Society, which provided funding for an archivist to create a brief catalogue of the entire collection. Using this as a guide, I undertook the task of photographing, indexing and interpreting all the material that related to Voysey.

My digital documentation of the RIBA Voysey archive and the Brandon-Jones bequest has greatly enhanced my scholarly analysis by providing comprehensive access to an otherwise fragmented and difficult-to-navigate resource. By systematically photographing and cataloguing the collection, I can now efficiently cross-reference materials, enabling more precise and in-depth studies. This sustained commitment to the complete documentation and study of all available materials related to Voysey has been a pivotal foundation for my subsequent research and writing on this subject. By allowing for detailed examination and the identification of the material's interrelationships, this approach has supported my exploration and analysis of previously unexamined aspects of this complex individual's life and work.

The transformative effect of internet-based research and its role in my current research methodology

My prolonged research into the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft will serve as a vehicle for a final, concise examination and summary of the significant transformations in archival research methodologies over the past forty years. These advancements were not accessible to the writers who first established the canon of Arts and Crafts scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, the availability of multiple digital resources and innovative research techniques has revolutionised the field. With ingenuity, lateral thinking, and persistence, these tools enable the creation and exploration of new research opportunities that were beyond the reach of an earlier generation of academics and curators.

My research into the BGH began in the late 1980s and was based on those materials available to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) curators Alan Crawford and Keeper of Decorative Arts, Glennys Wild. Together, Crawford and Wild co-authored the chapter on metalwork in Crawford (1984). Their available resources included a limited collection of BGH artifacts held by the museum, two period catalogues, and Glennys Wild's working files. These contained a small selection of photocopied newspaper clippings and handwritten notes from conversations with descendants of individuals associated with the BGH. Additionally, the Birmingham Library housed the only known company records: a single handwritten volume donated in 1935 containing the Committee Minutes and a membership list covering the years 1890–1899. However, for a researcher heavily reliant on the academic scrutiny of visual documentation, it was concerning that no photographs of BGH members, workshops, or workers appeared to exist.

The subsequent thirty-six years leading to my first published paper on the BGH reflect the challenges of investigating a poorly documented organisation with a complex and dispersed history involving numerous individuals. Nevertheless, the protracted nature of this research has yielded significant advantages, particularly due to the advent of digital resources and specialised databases. Resources such as the British Newspaper Archive (launched in 2011), the Internet Archive (established in 1996), and the National Archives website (also launched in 1996) have proven invaluable. Most notably, genealogy platforms such as Find My Past have enabled the tracing of family trees and the identification of living descendants of those involved with the BGH. Upon contacting these individuals, I have been met universally with generosity, support, and assistance. These connections have facilitated access to critical and previously unknown

primary source materials, held in private hands. These include profusely illustrated company records spanning the Guild's entire history, family photographs, personal correspondence, and privately printed memoirs which have all been digitally recorded, analysed and catalogued by myself.

As a result, I am now in possession of the necessary primary materials to produce the first monograph dedicated to the BGH in all its incarnations. A selection of these previously unpublished sources forms the basis of my 2020 paper, 'Indian Summer: The Reinvention of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft in the Twentieth Century'. The paper serving as a preparatory exercise for the more exhaustive history of the BGH, which remains a forthcoming endeavour.

Before summarising my published papers and outlining their interrelationship, I will briefly reflect on 'The Lost Art Workers', the first and only of my papers to be published during the pre-digital era. Specifically, how the dramatic improvements to research methodologies facilitated by digital technology—as outlined above—might impact a contemporary retelling of this narrative. As with all my work, the research into the NHC was conducted using primary source material and therefore remains an accurate account of the broad narrative of this remarkable enterprise. However, in the intervening years, much more information has come to light regarding the mostly female 'workers' who executed the designs of R.G. Hatton in silver and enamel. The enhanced accessibility of archival resources—particularly through online census records and digitised periodicals—has facilitated the recovery of these previously overlooked artisans, offering greater insight into their lives, contributions, and artistic identities.

This digital transformation has been particularly valuable in reclaiming the voices of female makers, who, despite their evident technical skill and artistic vision, were often marginalised in contemporary accounts and subsequently omitted from design histories. Internet research has not only expanded biographical knowledge of these women but has also brought to light additional examples of their work created independently, rather than under Hatton's direction. These discoveries reinforce the exceptional quality of their craftsmanship and artistry with, for example, the enamel plaques designed and executed by Elizabeth Davies, standing on par with the leading enamel artists of her day, such as Alexander Fisher and Ernestine Mills.

Additionally, while *The Lost Art Workers* was originally illustrated using black-and-white images, the availability of high-resolution, full-colour reproductions would now enable a more accurate and vivid representation of these works. The subtle variations

in enamel tones, intricate silverwork, and the nuanced craftsmanship of these artifacts are far better conveyed through colour imagery to fully appreciate the visual and technical achievements of these 'lost' artisans.

The published papers: a summary

The Lost Art Workers of Tyneside: Richard George Hatton and the (Newcastle) Handicrafts Company

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present, Vol. 17. pp. 13-22 (1993).

My first published paper examines a distinctive and previously unrecorded early twentieth-century initiative aimed at bridging the gap between art school craft training and the economic realities of graduates achieving a 'living wage' through the sale of their artistic creations. The study focuses on a previously unknown Arts and Crafts movement workshop in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and investigates the broader influence of E.R. Taylor's progressive approach to practical craft instruction, developed during his tenure as headmaster of the Birmingham School of Art in the 1880s and 1890s—as outlined in Chapter 1.

Drawing upon primary archival sources and material artifacts, the paper highlights the pivotal role played by R.G. Hatton (1865–1926), a former student of Taylor and newly appointed Art Master at the Durham College of Science. Hatton, inspired by Taylor's radical pedagogy, persuaded his headmaster and members of the Art Committee to visit Birmingham and observe Taylor's methods firsthand. With their endorsement, and with Taylor engaged as an external adviser, a series of reforms were initiated to align the institution's curriculum with the innovative practices adopted in Birmingham.

Supported by the progressive patronage of North-East industrialists, Hatton, by then the headmaster, was afforded the resources to extend Taylor's pedagogical principles to a groundbreaking conclusion: the establishment of The Handicrafts Company. This enterprise was the only Arts and Crafts workshop in the United Kingdom associated with an art school, that actively participated in commercial trading. By doing so, it provided its student members with the opportunity to profit from their craftwork.

The narrative of The Handicrafts Company resonates with that of C.R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft—a story characterised by the tension between idealism and artistry and the harsh realities of the marketplace, where commercial viability ultimately dictated the venture's trajectory.

The Fulham Pottery

Fifteen years after the publication of 'The Lost Art Workers' my second paper, 'The Fulham Pottery' was also published in *The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society*. While this paper did not centre on Voysey, the Fulham Pottery does maintain a connection to both the architect and the broader Arts and Crafts movement.

Voysey's architectural training was largely undertaken in the office of Gothic Revival architect John Pollard Seddon (1827–1906). Notably, Voysey's earliest documented work, produced in 1877, is a highly detailed watercolour drawing of a ceramic capital designed by Seddon and intended for production by the Fulham Pottery in salt-glazed stoneware. This connection spurred my interest in the Pottery, leading me to seek examples of its work. At first glance, these wares closely resembled the 'art pottery' produced by the Doulton factory in Lambeth, London. The advent of the internet proved revolutionary in the field of collecting, as online auction houses offered unprecedented access to antiques and collectibles. During my searches for Fulham Pottery, I frequently encountered a variety of stark, cream-coloured vases, sometimes attributed to Constance Spry and manufactured by the pottery. These immediately piqued my interest. Their primitive simplicity resonated with my aesthetic sensibilities, prompting me to begin a new collection. Despite their frequent appearance, little was known about these vases, including their date of production, designer, or specific relationship to either Constance Spry or the Fulham Pottery, which had historically produced only salt-glazed stoneware. The resulting speculation subsequently proved to be highly inaccurate and misleading.

In September 2007, the University of Cumbria was established, and I transitioned to a higher education contract that, for the first time, included research responsibilities. This shift provided the ideal opportunity to thoroughly research, document, clarify and publish the history of this much misunderstood but historically significant pottery.

The Fulham Pottery 1932–1965 A Return to 'Artistic' Production

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present, Vol. 32. pp. 100-125 (2008).

The Fulham Pottery occupies a distinguished position in the history of British ceramics as the first manufacturer in England to achieve large-scale production of salt-glazed stoneware. Remarkably, the pottery operated on the same site for over three centuries, underlining its enduring legacy. It was established in 1671 by John Dwight, the same

year he secured a patent for an earthenware that attempted to mimic the properties of true porcelain. Although Dwight's attempts were unsuccessful, his experimental efforts did lead to the successful mastery of salt-glazed stoneware, which had previously been imported exclusively from the Rhineland.

By the nineteenth century, the Fulham Pottery had shifted its focus primarily to the production of drainage pipes and utilitarian wares. In the 1870s, however, the pottery transitioned to the creation of salt-glazed Art pottery, producing works influenced by contemporary tastes akin to those of Doulton who started the manufacture of 'art wares' at Vauxhall, London in the 1860s. During this period, the pottery employed Robert Wallace Martin, who, alongside his brothers, would later establish one of the most significant ceramic studios of the Arts and Crafts movement. Furthermore, Fulham Pottery played a role in the Gothic Revival, producing architectural ceramics designed by the architect J.P. Seddon, in whose office the young C.F.A. Voysey was an articled assistant. Nevertheless, by the early twentieth century, the pottery's production had returned to utilitarian stoneware.

Under new ownership in the 1930s, attempts were made to reintroduce the production of art pottery. These efforts culminated in a notable collaboration with Constance Spry (1886–1960), a prominent society florist instrumental in popularising French avant-garde interior design and decoration among Britain's upper classes. The vases produced for Spry's company, Flower Decorations, were predominantly designed by Florence Standfast, a skilled and versatile artist-craftswoman. Standfast, a product of the late nineteenth-century art school reforms initiated by E.R. Taylor in Birmingham, studied in London before finally graduating from the Royal School of Needlework. This partnership resulted in a distinctive collection of avant-garde flower vases that blended artistic innovation with functional design, appealing to the growing market of home flower arrangers.

This paper presents, for the first time, precise dates, identifies key designers, and situates these developments within their broader cultural and commercial contexts. It also examines the significant challenges faced by the British ceramics industry during this era, including the profound impacts of World War II and the Clean Air Act of 1956. The study highlights how these external pressures, alongside shifts in public taste, compelled potteries like Fulham to adapt to maintain relevance. In doing so, it illuminates the dynamic interplay of art, industry, commerce, and societal change in mid-twentieth-century Britain.

Satisfied that the prevailing misunderstandings surrounding Constance Spry's association with the pottery had been effectively addressed and clarified, I resumed my ongoing investigation into the work of C.F.A. Voysey and the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. The Guild will be explored in greater detail later when I turn my attention to the third of my papers published by The Decorative Arts Society in 2020. Returning to the period following the publication of 'The Fulham Pottery', developments would soon be underway that would create the ideal platform for the dissemination of the large body of research I would subsequently undertake devoted to a detailed exploration of focused aspects of Voysey's multi-faceted design work.

In 2012, a group of enthusiasts, academics (including myself), and campaigners dedicated to the work of Voysey came together to establish the C.F.A. Voysey Society. From its inception, the Society garnered the involvement of prominent scholars and curators specialising in Voysey and the Arts and Crafts movement. The inaugural President, Dr Wendy Hitchmough, author of *C.F.A. Voysey* (1995) —which remains the definitive study of Voysey's architectural contributions—exemplified the Society's scholarly prestige. The Society publishes an annual journal, *The Orchard* which features well-researched, richly illustrated articles. This publication serves as a vital platform for in-depth exploration of the multifaceted aspects of Voysey's life and work, enabling a level of scrutiny previously unachieved in the published canon.

The papers devoted to the work of the Arts and Crafts architect and designer C.F.A. Voysey

As discussed in Chapter 1, by 2013 when I first published a paper on Voysey, his architectural contributions had already been extensively documented by numerous scholars over an extended period. However, a consensus regarding his contribution to this field and classification within it has yet to be established. Highly reductive and somewhat simplistic debates persist as to whether he should be regarded as: a pioneer of Modernism, a follower of Pugin and the Gothic Revival, or an individualist defying categorisation. Voysey is widely recognised for his contributions to architecture; however, he distinguishes himself from his contemporaries through the breadth and diversity of his work in design. While other Arts and Crafts architects, such as Baillie Scott, Gimson, Lorimer, Lutyens, Mackintosh, and Walton also engaged in designing furniture, metalwork, and decorative patterns, Voysey's dedication to design was exceptional in terms of the volume of his output, the range of media he worked with, and the duration of his engagement with the discipline. His designs span a wide array

of media, including furniture, textiles, ceramics, tiles, stained glass, metalware, graphic design, and even sculpture. Although C.R. Mackintosh exhibited a comparable level of dedication to furniture design, it is noteworthy that he completed significantly fewer architectural projects than Voysey.

With this vast body of design work preserved in the RIBA Drawings Collection and diligently catalogued by Joanna Symonds in 1976, it was surprising that only two monographs had been devoted to exploring Voysey's activities as a designer. In both cases these documented very specific areas of activity, with Durant (1990) addressing his pattern design and Livingstone (2011) investigating his designs for bookplates and badges. Of the two, it is only Livingstone who addresses, analyses and contextualises the designs in question. Although Durant gives an extensive overview of Voysey's career, only a few pages are devoted to placing the 'decorative designs' in the context of other nineteenth-century designers of wallpapers and textiles. The sixty-four, striking, colour plates featured illustrate a representative sample of the pattern designs held in the RIBA Drawings Collection, but an opportunity is missed with only the briefest of commentary provided for each. Fully aware of the vast scope of his work as a designer, I knew there remained a huge amount of material that had yet to be explored and interpreted.

At the time the Voysey Society was established, I was engaged in the study of a little-known, yet historically significant archive of textile designs owned by the John Lewis Partnership. This archive was housed at the facilities of the textile printers Stead McAlpin in Cummersdale, Cumbria. Comprising over 25,000 designs, this extensive collection offers an encyclopaedic chronicle of the shifting trends, fashions, and design movements of the past two centuries. Despite its importance, the collection was relatively obscure, known to only a select group of textile designers and scholars. Its geographic distance from London and the southeast further limited its accessibility and contributed to its underappreciation as a valuable archival resource.

Uniquely, the original design artwork housed in the collection was not housed in traditional archival boxes but was displayed in an easily accessible racking system of hinged metal frames, akin to those employed in the poster shops of the 1960s and 1970s. This innovative presentation facilitated easier viewing and exploration of the designs. The archive's manager, though not a specialist in nineteenth-century decorative arts, had identified a small number of previously undocumented, signed designs by C.F.A. Voysey and suspected, based on stylistic similarities, that other, unsigned examples might also exist within the collection.

Drawing on my research into the work of C.F.A. Voysey and other late nineteenth-century designers, I was invited to examine the archive and to advise on the attribution and historical context of its Arts and Crafts holdings. My contributions enhanced scholarly understanding of the collection's design heritage, informing its cataloguing and interpretation as it was being prepared for relocation to a newly constructed archival facility in Cookham, Berkshire. This review identified designs that could be firmly attributed to A.W.N. Pugin, Dr Christopher Dresser—a pioneer of industrial design—and two works likely created by C.R. Mackintosh. Additionally, I identified numerous designs created by the Silver Studio, a prominent commercial design studio active during the same period as Voysey and known for producing stylistically similar works.

Exploiting my experience as both an artist and an Illustration lecturer with a deep familiarity of paint materials, I was able to identify several designs previously misattributed to Voysey by the archive manager as the work of the Silver Studio designer Harry Napper (1860–1930). My analysis revealed subtle stylistic differences and discrepancies in the media used. Specifically, the Silver Studio's designs were executed almost exclusively in gouache, an opaque form of watercolour, whereas Voysey consistently employed transparent watercolour washes on Imperial-sized sheets of Whatman paper. However, this process revealed eighteen previously undocumented Voysey designs for textiles and carpets. This important discovery formed the basis of my first published Voysey paper.

Voysey Textile Designs in the Cummersdale Design Collection

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society) Vol.2, pp. 21-27 (2013).

Early in his career, textile and wallpaper design served as a crucial source of income for C.F.A. Voysey, as he worked to establish his architectural practice. Remarkably, even as his architectural career prospered, Voysey continued to create textile designs for various manufacturers. Later, as his architectural commissions diminished, textile design once again became his primary source of income. This is an important aspect of Voysey's design work as he is widely regarded as the preeminent pattern designer of the generation immediately following the great William Morris.

This paper catalogues and illustrates, for the first time, eighteen previously undocumented textile designs by Voysey from the Cummersdale Design Collection, held at the Stead McAlpin print works near Carlisle. These designs are particularly significant as they trace the evolution of his distinctive style throughout his extensive

career as a designer of repeating patterns. Notably, the collection includes what I immediately recognised as his earliest known pattern design, which predates all previously documented examples by one to two years. This discovery is especially important for Voysey scholarship, as it provides the first and only known instance of the direct influence of William Morris. The design in question, catalogued as no. C9834 (1887), bears a striking resemblance to Morris's *Lodde*n (1884) in terms of structure, symmetry, and colour use.

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Voysey's stylistic development, tracing his evolution from his earliest naturalistic designs to a more conventionalised, flattened approach to pattern design, which ultimately proved to be more commercially viable. Additionally, it establishes a provenance for each of Voysey's designs, recognising that not all were commissioned directly by Stead McAlpin. The study also examines the progression of Voysey's use of colour throughout his career, offering new insights into this continually evolving aspect of his design practice. It highlights how, even in his later years, Voysey remained attuned to contemporary trends in colour application and was willing to embrace them. This is particularly significant in the context of commercial textile production, where manufacturers strategically employed colour to enhance the market appeal of their products, responding to shifting consumer preferences and broader design trends. Following the publication of this paper, I was invited to join the editorial panel of *The Orchard* and was subsequently elected as a council member, eventually serving as a Trustee of the Society.

Holding a degree in Graphic Design, I had long been fascinated by Voysey's characteristic designs for hand lettering and had studied them in depth prompting my second paper devoted to Voysey.

Voysey's Lettering Designs

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society) Vol.4, pp. 35-45 (2015).

The renowned German typeface designer Hermann Zapf once observed that: "Typography is two-dimensional architecture, based on experience and imagination" (Zapf, 1954, p. 18). This analogy is particularly apt when considering the work of C.F.A. Voysey, one of the foremost architects of his era, who also demonstrated exceptional skill in the realm of graphic design. Of all his architect contemporaries, only C.R. Mackintosh produced lettering designs that remain so instantly recognisable and inextricably linked to their creator.

However, Voysey's distinctive lettering has often been misunderstood. Through my extensive experience in graphic design and typography, it had become apparent that a pervasive misapprehension exists regarding the stylistic consistency of Voysey's lettering throughout his career. This assumption is unfounded. As discussed in Chapter 1, some scholars, most notably Hitchmough (1995), have remarked on the parallels between Voysey's moral and spiritual defence of Gothic architecture—offered in reaction to the Classical Revival of the early twentieth century, which adversely affected his architectural career—and the actions of his father, the Reverend Charles Voysey. The elder Voysey notably challenged the orthodoxy of the Church of England, an act that ultimately led to his expulsion. It was clear that this late, provocative adoption of the 'pointed Gothic' in his architecture also had parallels in his designs for hand lettering.

This paper represents the first detailed survey of this significant yet understudied aspect of Voysey's work. Utilising my recently created digital archive of Voysey material, the study adopts a systematic and analytical approach to tracing the nuanced evolution and changes in Voysey's lettering designs over the span of his career. Through this method, the published research establishes a detailed stylistic timeline that enables researchers to more precisely assign likely dates of execution to Voysey's undated design drawings and graphic design (see Durant, 2017, p. 135).

The paper further investigates the key factors that motivated the pronounced shift towards a Gothic aesthetic in Voysey's lettering designs around 1907–1908, providing new insights into this pivotal period of his career. Additionally, it documents, for the first time, the entirety of Voysey's known book cover designs, resulting in the compilation of an exhaustive bibliography. During this research, numerous previously undocumented cover designs were identified and included. Moreover, the study addresses and clarifies inaccuracies in existing scholarship. Specifically, it provides corrected execution dates—where possible—for the undated works and omissions in Karen Livingstone's *The Bookplates and Badges of C.F.A. Voysey* (2011), the only monograph dedicated to Voysey's graphic work, as well as revising the dating of a sample of Voysey's lettering as presented in Hitchmough (1995, p. 58). This paper constitutes a solid foundation for the study of Voysey's graphic works, a line of enquiry I further developed in 2021 through a comprehensive exploration of his complete oeuvre as a graphic designer.

Karen Livingstone in Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016) provides only a cursory examination of Voysey's contributions to graphic design, stained glass, and sculpture, addressing these fields briefly in her introductory chapter alongside discussions of his

social and professional life. Recognising there remained a substantial body of graphic material requiring further exploration, documentation, and interpretation I undertook the research that culminated in my 2021 paper, *Modern Symbolism*. This work serves as a natural extension of the investigations conducted for my 2014 paper 'Voysey's Lettering Designs'.

Modern Symbolism: The Graphic Design of C.F.A. Voysey

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.10, pp. 28-49 (2021).

Highly unusually for an architect, C.F.A. Voysey made significant contributions to the field of commercial art or, as we would now call it, graphic design. His work encompassed book jackets, posters, logos, hand lettering, and bookplates—see Livingstone (2011)—characterised by a distinctive style that blended simplicity, symbolism, and natural motifs. This study explores Voysey's graphic design legacy, contextualising his evolution within the broader artistic movements of his time. This is the first, complete survey of his work in this field showcasing previously unseen pieces.

Voysey's entry into commercial art began in 1873, influenced by his education at Dulwich College where he developed exceptional skills in figure drawing and graphic realism. Early works, such as caricatures and illustrations, showcased the influence of contemporaries such as the illustrator John Tenniel and distinguished him from peers such as the great Arts and Crafts architect Philip Webb who, although a confident draughtsman, never mastered life drawing. Voysey's own extensive autobiographical writings are drawn on to contextualise the work. These are frequently questioned when the documented facts prove Voysey to be an unreliable witness.

A pivotal moment in his graphic design career came in 1884 with exposure to *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* a highly influential 'art' journal containing flat, stylised woodcut illustrations which clearly inspired Voysey's minimalist and symbolic approach to the design of advertisements, book jackets, and posters. The work of Selwyn Image—a member of The Guild—is closely examined, demonstrating for the first time its direct influence on Voysey's decorative designs. Notable commissions for firms including Essex & Co. and Arthur Sanderson and Son are also explored and positioned as significant early precursors of what would later be termed 'corporate identity'.

Voysey's later works maintained recurring motifs—birds, hearts, foliage—and often carried philosophical and moral undertones, reflecting his belief in the transformative power of art. During World War I, his designs for the Civic Survey of Greater London

and the Central (Liquor) Control Board exemplified his commitment to conveying symbolic messages through graphic media. Despite a decline in architectural commissions, Voysey's dedication to symbolic design persisted, even as financial and health challenges marked his later years. Direct parallels can be drawn between Voysey's father's extensive use of print media to publicly challenge the established church's beliefs and Voysey's sustained campaign in newspapers and journals, advocating for the widespread adoption of symbolism in contemporary life. The title of the paper is a direct reference to a scrapbook, compiled by the architect in later life, intended to induct and educate the general reader into the meaning of his idiosyncratic and arcane symbolist language (RIBA Collections SKB458-2).

The furniture designs of C.F.A. Voysey

As previously mentioned, my initial interest in the Arts and Crafts movement was sparked in the early 1980s by Voysey's furniture designs, as featured in *The Studio*. While both Brandon-Jones (1978) and Simpson (1979) addressed this significant aspect of Voysey's work, their analyses were constrained by limited space and thus provided only broad overviews. Despite reaching similar conclusions and featuring nearly identical illustrations, their accounts contributed to a strong yet somewhat misleading public perception of Voysey's contributions to furniture design. Recognising the extensive archival materials held by the RIBA that were not incorporated into either publication, I resolved to offer a more detailed examination of Voysey's development in this area. This includes an exploration of his early influences, relationship to his contemporaries and his subsequent impact on a later generation of important designers.

Due to its extensive scope and the substantial number of illustrations, the material was divided and disseminated as three separate papers, published across three consecutive issues of *The Orchard* (2016–2018). Most of the research underpinning these papers was conducted prior to the publication of Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016), with the initial instalment appearing only weeks after the publication of the V&A's extensive monograph. Max Donnelly's significant chapter (Donnelley, 2016) devoted to Voysey's furniture was cited in all three papers, with the illustrations carefully selected to complement and expand upon those featured in the V&A monograph.

The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey, part 1: 1883–1898

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.5, pp. 5-15 (2016).

The finest examples of Voysey's furniture are as well-known and instantly recognisable as his architectural and pattern designs and are highly esteemed within design circles. Many major museums of decorative art hold representative examples, celebrated for their simplicity, refined proportions, and outstanding craftsmanship. However, in today's secular society, there is a tendency to project contemporary values and predominantly aesthetic perceptions onto these artifacts of a relatively recent past. Such an approach, in the case of C.F.A. Voysey, risks misunderstanding his work. Voysey's extensive writings on architecture and design reveal that he regarded his creations as embodying two interdependent yet equally significant dimensions: the moral and the aesthetic.

This paper, the first of three devoted to Voysey's furniture designs, represents a detailed study of this important facet of his activities as a designer. Given that Voysey designed over 250 individual pieces of furniture during his career, yet only a small subset is widely known through reproduction, this study consciously prioritises the illustration of previously unpublished works. By doing so, it aims to provide readers with a broader understanding of the scope and ambition of this critical aspect of his design legacy.

From the outset, this study establishes a psychological framework by drawing parallels between Voysey's design philosophy and surprisingly combative nature, which when closely examined, bears notable similarities to the life of his influential father, the Rev. Charles Voysey. By focusing on Voysey's earliest known furniture designs, the paper situates his work within the broader context of progressive furniture design during the late nineteenth century. It consequently positions Voysey as a proponent of the 'Puginian' Gothic tradition. The analysis further examines his formative collaboration with A.H. Mackmurdo and the Century Guild, tracing the many challenges he had to overcome to finally develop his distinctive and mature design vocabulary, which finally emerged in the late 1890s.

The paper examines Voysey's unique working methods, characterised by his refusal to sketch 'in the round' and his reliance on drawn elevations resulting in an idiosyncratic process of trial, error, and refinement. Utilising my Illustration skills, a particularly important early design for a chair—only known from a working drawing held in the RIBA collection—is reconstructed as a perspective, illustrating for the first time, the

earliest iteration of a chair form he would ultimately refine and develop into the classic 'Voysey chair'.

The research for this paper also uncovered an important photograph published in an obscure Austrian art journal in 1898. This image, reproduced in the paper, documents the architect's first foray into the creation of a 'gesamtkunstwerk' (total work of art), in this case a room setting in which every element is designed by Voysey. This is an approach to design with which he would soon become synonymous and is further explored in the second paper.

The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey, part 2: 1898–1906

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.6, pp. 3-15 (2017).

During the late 1890s and early 1900s, C.F.A. Voysey's small architectural practice reached its zenith, with the architect producing designs for thirty-four completed houses and an additional thirty-five designs for unbuilt projects. This prolific period in Voysey's career did not diminish his contributions to furniture design; rather, it marked the height of his activity in this field. Despite the demands of his architectural projects, Voysey's innovative approach to furniture design flourished, reflecting his dedication to creating harmonious and functional interiors.

Drawing upon my expertise in making replica Voysey chairs, this analysis provides a thorough examination of the construction techniques, materials, and design evolution of a select group of iconic chairs collectively recognised as the 'Voysey chair.' The study delves into the meticulous craftsmanship that characterises these pieces, offering technical insights into their assembly and exploring how Voysey's unique aesthetic sensibilities shaped their form. Additionally, the development of Voysey's cabinet furniture is examined, with particular attention given to a writing desk that uniquely exemplifies an adoption of continental Art Nouveau influences. This desk, illustrated for the first time, serves as a striking illustration of Voysey's ability to integrate emerging design trends into his established architectural and furniture vocabulary.

The paper also includes an exploration of the traditional Georgian country furniture that Voysey identified as sources of inspiration. By analysing the elements of simplicity, functionality, and craftsmanship inherent in these precedents, the study reveals how Voysey reinterpreted these qualities to create his distinctive modern aesthetic. Furthermore, the research examines contemporary critical responses to Voysey's austere and restrained furniture designs. A clear dichotomy emerges between the perspectives of commercial trade publications, such as *The Cabinet Maker*, which

often approached his work with scepticism, and more progressive art journals, such as *The Studio*, which lauded his innovative contributions to the furniture of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Through this detailed examination, the text underlines Voysey's enduring legacy in both architecture and furniture design, highlighting the interplay between his artistic principles and the evolving tastes of his era.

The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey, part 3: 1906–1934

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.7, pp. 3-22 (2018).

This third and final paper delves into the later years of Voysey's career, a period marked by the decline of his prominence as an architect. It begins by examining the years around 1906–1908, a time when Voysey was arguably most active in the domain of furniture design. Central to this investigation are previously unpublished letters exchanged between Voysey and his close friend, the Arts and Crafts furniture maker, Arthur Simpson of Kendal. These letters, which were deposited at the RIBA in 2014 provide a unique and invaluable insight into Voysey's personal and professional ideologies.

The correspondence is significant not only for its volume but also for the depth of detail it offers. Through these letters, we gain access to the private musings of both men on topics ranging from design principles and manufacturing techniques to their philosophical and religious beliefs. The letters also document their financial situations—Voysey's being particularly precarious at times—alongside reflections on health, including Voysey's candid references to physical ailments and recurring bouts of depression. This material constitutes a resource worthy of dedicated study, illuminating aspects of Voysey's life and work that are not otherwise recorded.

The paper also explores significant architectural commissions from this period, highlighting projects where Voysey integrated interior design with the production of bespoke furniture. These examples are contextualised within the broader trends of his career, providing insights into his evolving stylistic preferences. Special attention is given to the factors that led to Voysey's late-career adoption of an overtly Gothic idiom in his furniture designs—a marked departure from his earlier, more restrained approach.

An analysis of the symbolic elements increasingly evident in Voysey's later furniture designs further enrich this discussion. These elements, deeply personal in nature,

anticipate the themes addressed in my 2021 paper, 'Modern Symbolism'—discussed above—which examined Voysey's use of symbolism in graphic design. This continuity between his furniture and graphic work underlines the coherence of his artistic vision, even as his professional trajectory shifted.

Finally, the paper concludes with an exploration of Voysey's relationship with commercial manufacturers. This section seeks to clarify the extent to which specific furniture pieces were directly designed by Voysey, as opposed to being uncredited adaptations—or outright plagiarisms—of his published designs. By addressing these issues, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Voysey's legacy, situating his work within the broader contexts of early twentieth-century design and commercial production.

The ceramic tile designs of C.F.A. Voysey

During the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Britain emerged as the foremost producer of ceramic tiles, catering to substantial global demand. The Victorian and Edwardian periods, characterised by a surge in housebuilding, witnessed the extensive use of tiles in a variety of domestic contexts, including floors, walls, bathrooms, kitchens, fireplaces, and furniture. Beyond the domestic sphere, tiles became indispensable in public settings where health and hygiene were critical, such as hospitals, swimming pools, laundries, public houses etc.

Despite the strong association of tiles with architecture, only a handful of British architects have ever ventured into ceramic tile design. Among them, Voysey stands out as the sole architect of his generation to create designs for production as tiles. His extensive work in this field was profoundly influenced by two notable predecessors: A.W.N. Pugin, whom he deeply admired, and J.P. Seddon, under whom he served as an apprentice. Pugin and Seddon—leading figures of the Gothic Revival movement—designed an extensive range of ceramic tiles for various manufacturers, leaving a lasting impact on this area of design and the inspiration for Voysey to enter this niche field.

Voysey's Tile Designs for J.C. Edwards

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.5, pp. 78-81 (2016).

A paper exploring Voysey's working relationship with the Welsh brick and tile manufacturer J.C. Edwards of Ruabon. A 'Demon' ceramic teapot stand based on a

known wallpaper design by Voysey was made by J.C. Edwards in the late nineteenth century and is well-known in tile collecting circles. However, it was unknown if the design had been plagiarised by the company—the wallpaper design having been reproduced in the influential *The Studio*—or if it had been commissioned from Voysey. During research for this paper, I discovered three previously unrecorded Voysey tile designs for Edwards. These are illustrated in the paper as they are firmly attributable to Voysey, being adaptations of fully documented wallpaper and textile designs. Voysey was apt to sell the same design to manufacturers working in other media and, for example, it is not uncommon to find a design for wallpaper later sold as a furnishing fabric. It was therefore almost certain that Voysey had been commissioned by J.C. Edwards to provide them with a variety of tile designs shortly before he ceased working with the Welsh factory after gaining an 'exclusive' tile design contract with the Manchester-based Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Co. Ltd. The dated textile designs that form the basis of the tile designs provide a specific time frame in relation to his activities as a nascent ceramic designer. The paper also seeks to place Voysey in context with William De Morgan and Lewis F. Day, the leading tile designers of the period.

Karen Livingstone devotes twelve pages to Voysey's tile designs in Livingstone (2016) but only includes a brief reference to a single design for J.C. Edwards—the 'Demon' teapot stand, thus presenting an incomplete survey of this important first collaboration with a mass manufacturer of ceramics. Livingstone also perpetuates some long-standing misunderstandings regarding some misattributed, 'Voysey-style' tiles, something I felt important to address in my 2019 paper, which aims to provide a complete overview and rigorous analysis of Voysey's activities as a designer of ceramic tiles.

Voysey's Tile Designs: A Catalogue Raisonné

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.8, pp. 83-99 (2019).

This paper is the first extensive survey of the architect C.F.A. Voysey's activities as a designer of ceramic tiles and includes a catalogue raisonné illustrating all known Voysey designed tiles and detailing the various manufacturers with whom he worked. The compilation of the catalogue raisonné was necessitated by the large number of tiles erroneously attributed to Voysey on purely stylistic grounds by dealers, collectors, and museum curators. Tile attributions to Voysey based on style alone are problematic as his work was very influential and he had many 'followers', resulting in him being much

copied during his lifetime. Using primary source material and location visits, I catalogued only those tiles that can be proven to have been designed by the architect, establishing a firm chronology and documenting all the manufacturers to whom he supplied designs alongside those with which he had no association. In so doing, many problematic 'Voysey-style' tiles—some held in prominent, public collections—are removed from Voysey's canon and, in some cases, reattributed to their actual designer. The paper also explores the reasons for the rise in popularity of ceramic tiling in nineteenth-century Britain and contextualises Voysey's activities in this field alongside those of other influential architectural tile designers.

Four shorter papers exploring specific aspects of C.F.A. Voysey's activities as a designer

The following papers were researched, written, and published concurrently with other more extensive papers. The exploration of the 'Dalston Hall Hanging' was published in *The Orchard* alongside Part 2 of my survey of Voysey's furniture, while 'The Fourth Painted Clock' accompanied Part 3. The final two papers appeared in the 2020 edition of *The Orchard* in the same year as my extensive analysis of The Birmingham Guild Ltd was published in the *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*. Although these papers are more succinct, they each aim to examine rigorously some significant and underexplored aspects of Voysey's work as a designer. The first paper explores his activities as a designer of hand-worked textiles complementing my 2013 paper devoted to his printed textile designs in the Cummersdale Design Collection.

The Mystery of the Dalston Hall Hanging

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.6, pp. 59-63 (2017).

Under the auspices of the Voysey Society, I gained access to a faded colour photograph taken in 1968 depicting a significant appliqué hanging, designed by Voysey. This textile work, notable for its large scale and displayed at Dalston Hall—a fortified manor in Cumbria subsequently converted into a hotel—was accompanied by a contemporaneous covering letter addressed to Barbara Morris, the late Deputy Keeper of the Victoria & Albert Museum, detailing the hanging's condition at the time. Given that Voysey produced only a handful of designs for hand-worked textiles, the photograph and accompanying documentation pointed to the potential existence of a previously

undocumented, substantial appliqué hanging, designed by the architect. The appliqué, now believed lost, presented a compelling case for scholarly investigation.

Of particular interest was the artifact's temporal context, before the broader re-evaluation of avant-garde Victorian and Edwardian design in the early 1970s. During the 1960s, much of what was then deemed 'Victoriana' faced neglect or destruction, raising concerns that the hanging might have been a casualty of this cultural disregard.

This paper chronicles the investigative process undertaken to authenticate the hanging's designer, trace its provenance, and ascertain its likely fate. By consulting an array of primary sources, the research reconstructs the hanging's chronology, situating it within evolving perceptions of cultural value. Furthermore, the study explores how shifts in societal and institutional priorities influenced the hanging's transition from a private domain to a corporate setting, illustrating the broader dynamics of cultural preservation and loss over time.

The following year I once again returned to Voysey's furniture designs, in this case specifically focusing on an iconic, painted clock.

Was there a fourth painted clock?

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.7, pp. 31-38 (2018).

Voysey's hand-painted clocks stand among his most iconic and recognisable designs, celebrated for their distinct aesthetic and historical significance. One of these clocks, crafted for Voysey's personal use, is held on permanent display at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Another, commissioned by Lady Mary Lovelace (1848–1941)—his most faithful patron—is prominently featured in the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in the United States. In 2006, a third example surfaced at auction, and I played a pivotal role in verifying its authenticity, drawing upon period photographs to establish conclusively its authenticity and likely provenance.

Voysey scholars have long been intrigued by the depiction of a fourth painted clock in a colour reproduction of a watercolour titled 'Reception Room in Miss Conant's House', published by the German periodical *Modern Bauformen* in 1905. This illustration portrays an interior of The Pastures, a small country house in North Luffenham, Rutland designed by Voysey in 1901, showcasing a variety of furniture pieces, all by the architect. Central to the composition is a painted clock, prominently positioned on the mantel shelf above the fireplace. The presence of the clock in this image has spurred considerable speculation within the scholarly community, with Max Donnelly for

instance, referencing it in Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016, p. 174). This image raises the tantalising possibility that at least four of these painted clocks may have been produced.

A significant development in Voysey research has emerged with the recent bequest of extensive archival material to the RIBA by the late architect John Brandon-Jones. This collection includes previously unpublished photographs of The Pastures, capturing the property in two distinct states: immediately following its completion and, subsequently, fully furnished by its owner. By employing digital techniques such as overlaying and comparing these images in Photoshop, I determined that the watercolour illustration containing the clock was derived from a photograph of the unfurnished interior, combined with a photograph of Voysey's own home, The Orchard, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire. This, alongside other corroborating evidence, supports the conclusion that the illustration is an artistic fabrication rather than an accurate representation of the space.

I further examine the motives behind this fabrication, positing that Voysey was not only aware of but also complicit in the creation of an idealised vision of The Pastures as a 'gesamtkunstwerk'—a total work of art seamlessly integrating architecture, interior design, and decorative elements. This deliberate construction of an artistic narrative underlines the architect's intent to present his work as a cohesive and holistic expression of his design philosophy, even at the expense of historical and material accuracy.

In 2020, a year dominated by Covid-19 restrictions and with 'on the ground' archival work impossible, I determined to explore the full research potential of the internet and examine a previously undocumented interior design scheme, commissioned by Westminster School.

Voysey's Work at Westminster School

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.9, pp. 79-83 (2020).

This paper delves into a previously unexplored and relatively early commission undertaken by Voysey between 1894 and 1899. The project involved furnishing, decorating, and providing lighting for Ashburnham House at Westminster School in London. Despite its significance in shedding light on a formative period in Voysey's career, this commission has remained undocumented until now.

The principal source of information regarding Voysey's architectural endeavours is his handwritten record, colloquially known as the 'Black Book' (Voysey, 1890). This document, initiated by Voysey on March 21, 1890, provides an invaluable account of his work. It catalogues numerous projects, including many that are now either lost or thought to be so. Three entries in the 'Black Book'—dated between 1894 and 1899—regarding Ashburnham House captured my attention.

Unfortunately, no design drawings for this project have been preserved in the RIBA or V&A archives. To investigate further, contact was made via email with Westminster School to determine whether any elements of the original design might remain. Although the school archivist confirmed that none of Voysey's work survives in situ, they provided a collection of high-quality interior photographs of Ashburnham House from the late nineteenth century. While many of these images were unrelated to Voysey's contributions, I identified the work of the architect in two of the photographs, fortuitously captured in exceptional detail.

The discoveries include a large, intricate light fitting that reflects the stylistic influence of Arthur Dixon's work for the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft—a connection that merited further exploration in a subsequent study, 'Voysey's Metalwork: A Postscript' (see below). Additionally, the photographs unveil a series of Voysey-designed bookcases adorned with his characteristic lettering style, as well as two previously unknown figurative sculptures, a single example of which remains at the school today.

These findings prompted a broader investigation into Voysey's lesser-known activities as a sculptor. This research culminated in the 2022 paper, 'The Sculpture of C.F.A. Voysey' (see below) which, for the first time, provides an extensive survey of this neglected aspect of his work. Together, these discoveries contribute to a deeper understanding of Voysey's artistic versatility and his influence on late Victorian and Edwardian design.

The fourth paper in this series of shorter works examines Voysey's metalwork designs, which, following his contributions to pattern and furniture design, represents a significant aspect of his work as a designer. They demonstrate an austere clarity that presages the principles of Modernist design.

A defining feature of Voysey's metalwork is its close relationship with his architectural design, something also exemplified in the work of other Arts and Crafts architects including Ashbee, Baillie Scott and Gimson. Elements such as door fittings, light fixtures, and fire grates were conceived as integral components of his domestic interiors, reflecting his holistic design philosophy. This all-encompassing approach

ensured that every detail contributed to the overall coherence of his architectural vision. Decorative motifs frequently incorporated into his metalwork—stylised representations of birds, trees, and hearts—are recurrent symbols in his design vocabulary. Rendered with an economy of detail, these motifs lend a lyrical quality to the designs while also respecting their functional purpose.

Despite my longstanding intention to publish on this critical aspect of Voysey's work, other research priorities had previously taken precedence. However, the editorial panel of *The Orchard*, recognised that this dimension of the architect's legacy had not been addressed in the eight volumes published thus far. Ruth Allford's generous donation to the Society of her 1988 master's dissertation on Voysey—with permission to publish extracts—provided an excellent opportunity to rectify this omission, containing as it did a chapter devoted to his activities as a designer of metalwork.

Although Allford (1988) was diligently researched and drew upon the sources available at the time, upon reviewing it I knew that significant new information had emerged since its publication. Notably, this included previously unpublished material from the Brandon-Jones bequest to the RIBA. Consequently, I deemed it essential to append a postscript to the published chapter, Allford (2020, pp. 63-72). This references the original dissertation and Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016) which contains Karen Livingstone's examination of Voysey's metalwork (Livingstone, 2016). Livingstone's survey is organised by medium and typology—e.g., hinges, hollowware, light fixtures—emphasising details and variations in these typically serially produced items. While Voysey entered this field later than furniture and pattern design, Livingstone notes his metalwork gained widespread recognition around the turn of the century, primarily due to support from *The Studio*. However, Voysey notably distanced himself from the collectivist politics and material fetishism of major Arts and Crafts metalwork designers such as C.R. Ashbee, reflecting an intriguing detachment from the movement's core ideologies although he still collaborated with manufacturers and individual craftsmen.

Voysey's Metalwork: A Postscript

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.9, pp. 73-78 (2020).

This study supplements and updates Ruth Allford's original dissertation on Voysey's metalwork designs, incorporating significant new material discovered and documented by myself over the last three decades, including previously unpublished sources such as the Brandon-Jones bequest to the RIBA. Voysey's foray into metalwork began earlier than most commentators contend, with his designs for crematory urns appearing in

1884, a notably early date for such commissions, reflecting the nascent legality of cremation in Britain. His designs for fireplaces and cabinet fittings also commenced soon after, with a previously undocumented fireplace for Parkes Brothers in 1890 along with hinge designs—influenced by A.W.N. Pugin —dating to the same period. These designs evolved into simplified motifs featuring silhouetted birds, marking Voysey's signature style and inspiring subsequent designers like Baillie Scott and Mackintosh.

Key to Voysey's success was his collaboration with skilled artisans and manufacturers. His partnership with William Bainbridge Reynolds, a leading metalworker, was particularly fruitful, spanning decades and both preceding and succeeding his well-documented commercial arrangement with Thomas Elsley Ltd. The resulting range of cabinet fittings although distinctive in style were costly, limiting their commercial viability and appealing only to a niche, affluent clientele. The cessation of the partnership with Elsley marked a return to Bainbridge Reynolds for smaller-scale production of these items.

Voysey's hollowware designs emerged around 1900, executed by artisans such as R.L.B. Rathbone and Alfred Newey. While distinctive, these pieces also reveal the influence of earlier Arts and Crafts designs by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, positioning Voysey as a follower, not a leader, in this field of metalwork design.

Voysey's metalwork designs align with his broader career trajectory, peaking during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries before tapering into sporadic, unique commissions in his later years. This study underlines the interplay between Voysey's aesthetic ideals, practical collaborations, and the commercial and cultural limitations of his era.

Voysey's Sculpture

Through the extensive analysis of Voysey's contributions to metalwork necessitated by the above paper, together with the identification of the previously undocumented bronze figure discussed in detail in my paper on his work at Westminster School, I became acutely aware of Voysey's significant contributions to the field of sculpture. Despite this, his sculptural work has received only minimal scholarly attention, with Karen Livingstone (Livingstone, 2016) dedicating only three pages to the subject. Consequently, in 2022, I undertook an ambitious research project aimed at thoroughly exploring, documenting and illustrating Voysey's work in this field.

The Sculpture of C.F.A. Voysey

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society), Vol.11, pp. 6-27 (2022).

This paper represents the first extensive examination of Voysey's sculptural work. It explores his multifaceted role as a sculptor of tiles, bas-reliefs, free-standing sculptures, and architectural decorations. While architects have historically incorporated sculptural elements to enhance their buildings—dating back to classical antiquity—by the late nineteenth century, this practice had largely waned. Where it persisted, the prevailing trend involved architects commissioning works from professional sculptors or stonemasons rather than engaging directly in the sculptural process. In contrast, Voysey, consistent with his philosophy of 'individualism', diverged from contemporary conventions. He is among the select few architects throughout history who undertook sculptural work themselves, rather than relegating it to specialists.

Given the limited scholarly attention previously devoted to Voysey's sculptural work, this study aims to function as a catalogue raisonné of his activities as a sculptor. Virtually all known examples of his work in this domain are documented and illustrated here, with many being presented for the first time. Additionally, this paper explores Voysey's engagement with the Art Workers' Guild, of which he was an early and active member, and investigates his interactions with contemporary sculptors. His perspectives on the integration of sculptural elements within modern architecture are analysed, illuminating his broader aesthetic and ideological commitments.

Notably, Voysey distinguished himself by regularly exhibiting his sculptures at the Royal Academy of Arts, an achievement he valued greatly as it cemented his legacy as a validated and institutionally recognised sculptor. This accomplishment underlines his unique position within his era, setting him apart from his peers and exemplifying the spirit of individuality that pervaded his life and work. In doing so, Voysey not only challenged the prevailing norms of his profession but also contributed a singular voice to the dialogue between architecture and sculpture.

C.F.A. Voysey: future areas of research activity

My commitment to Voysey research continues unabated with further significant subjects waiting to be explored. For example, over the past two years, I have been engaged in the transcription and analysis of an extensive correspondence between Voysey and the furniture maker Arthur Simpson of Kendal. This significant collection, spanning the years 1894 to 1918, is part of the 2014 Brandon-Jones bequest to the

RIBA. It provides a markedly unguarded account of Voysey's thoughts, beliefs, and opinions, in contrast to the more polished narratives presented in his numerous public writings. Given the letters' frequent focus on furniture design, I also aim to undertake an additional study of the professional relationship between Voysey and Simpson, examining the mutual influences they exerted on each other's work.

While Voysey's commissioned interiors and furnishings for clients have been the subject of scholarly investigation by myself and others, his personal interiors have received little attention. The Brandon-Jones bequest includes a collection of high-quality, large-format photographs that thoroughly document the interiors of *The Orchard*, the house Voysey designed and built for his family in 1899, as well as his previous, rented property at 6 Carlton Hill, St John's Wood. These images are remarkably detailed, capturing features as specific as framed reproductions of prints and the individual ornaments on shelves. They offer a rich resource for discovery, documentation, and further study, enabling a deeper understanding of Voysey's personal aesthetic and its reflection in his living spaces. Through a thorough analysis of these photographs, I will seek to uncover new insights into the interiors he created for himself and his family.

The papers devoted to C.F.A. Voysey: a summary

In an article published in *The Architectural Review* Voysey asserted:

> All that was necessary for daily life could be, and ought to be, made beautiful. This utilitarian principle began to be put in practice when William Burgess [sic], E.W. Godwin, A.H. Mackmurdo, Bodley and others regarded nothing in or outside a home as too small to deserve their careful consideration. So we find Burgess designing water-taps and hair brushes; Godwin and Mackmurdo furniture; Bodley, like Pugin, fabrics and wallpapers (Voysey, 1931, pp. 91-92).

With the single exception of Mackmurdo, all these figures were architects belonging to the generation immediately preceding Voysey. However, his statement clearly reveals the motivation behind Voysey's own practice of designing for nearly every facet of the domestic environment, encompassing both interior and exterior elements.

Voysey's position as one of the leading architects of the Arts and Crafts movement has been firmly established. However, it can be argued that his contributions as a designer have not received equivalent recognition and remain overshadowed by his architectural achievements. The publication of Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016) was

instrumental in drawing attention to Voysey's extensive contributions to design, yet it still fails to fully encapsulate the sheer breadth, quantity and variety of his work in this field. Consistently, through my published papers, I reiterate Voysey's self-identification as 'the last disciple of Pugin', a title that deserves serious consideration as the most appropriate explanation of his complex design philosophies. Among British architects, only A.W.N. Pugin offers a comparable legacy to that of Voysey in the domain of design. The parallels between the two architects are striking; both produced prolific and diverse bodies of work that included furniture, textiles, wallpapers, metalwork, tiles, graphic designs, and stained glass. Additionally, both were polemical writers who actively critiqued the prevailing architectural norms of their respective periods.

Pugin's work was largely confined to the relatively narrow stylistic parameters of the Gothic Revival, which defined his architectural and design output. In contrast, Voysey developed a far more expansive and diverse design vocabulary, reflecting a remarkable adaptability and breadth that evolved progressively throughout his extensive career. This evolution was not linear but marked by shifting focal points of creative attention, as he engaged with a wide array of materials, forms, and decorative approaches. By expanding the scope of academic discourse to encompass the full extent of his creative output, I aim to highlight the importance of Voysey's designs in shaping the aesthetic and functional values of his time and their lasting impact on subsequent generations.

Through my research and publications, I have conducted an in-depth, focused analysis of Voysey's activities as a designer across a wide range of media and at all stages of his long career. By carefully documenting and contextualising his contributions, I have sought to establish a more detailed and nuanced understanding of his creative achievements. This approach not only highlights the breadth and innovation of his work but also situates him as a pivotal figure in the field of design. Ultimately, my research endeavours aim to reposition Voysey as not merely a preeminent architect but also as one of the most significant and influential designers of his generation, whose work merits recognition alongside the great polymaths of design.

The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft

My longstanding interest in researching and documenting the history of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft (BGH) has consistently paralleled my engagement with the work of C.F.A. Voysey. As noted earlier in this chapter, both these research pursuits began in the mid-1980s, yet their trajectories and intended outcomes differ. While I remain eager to continue exploring and publishing scholarly articles on specific

aspects of Voysey's contributions as a designer, I have no current desire to write a monograph on the subject. Conversely, it has been my long-held objective to publish an extensive monograph dedicated to the BGH since it remains the most neglected, yet I would argue, one of the most important Arts and Crafts 'Guild' metal workshops. The artifacts it created survive in many museum collections and are highly valued by design historians and curators due to their refined and often austere design aesthetic. They stand outside of, and at odds with, most of the elaborately wrought and decorated Arts and Crafts metalwork—such as that produced at Keswick and Newlyn—and display a striking, proto-modernist aesthetic.

All other major Arts and Crafts metalworking enterprises have been subject to extensive academic analysis. Alan Crawford's ambitious monograph, *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (1985), offers a thorough examination of the activities of Ashbee's *Guild of Handicraft*, an organisation that significantly influenced the establishment of the BGH. Similarly, Ian Bruce's *The Loving Eye and Skilful Hand: The Keswick School of Industrial Arts* (2001) provides an in-depth study of the metalworking school founded in Keswick in 1884 by Edith and Hardwicke Rawnsley. Ian Hammerton's (Ed.) *W.A.S. Benson: Arts and Crafts Luminary and Pioneer of Modern Design* (2005) documents and explores the work of this important pioneer of industrial design. Additionally, Daryl Bennett and Colin Pill's work, *Newlyn Copper: Arts & Crafts Copper Work in Newlyn 1890–1915* (2009) documents the history of this important Cornish workshop. Against this background of extensive research into British Arts and Crafts metalwork, the BGH is notable by its absence.

As noted in Chapter 1, Crawford (1984), remains the sole publication to address the activities of the Birmingham Guild. However, within this thorough examination of the city's contribution to the Arts and Crafts movement, little space is dedicated to the BGH. This limited coverage raises an important question: why was this the case? My subsequent investigations into the history of this long-running company soon provided a compelling explanation. Unlike other prominent metalworking enterprises of the period, the BGH was, at the time, characterised by a scarcity of surviving archival material, which had significantly constrained scholarly analysis. As outlined earlier in this chapter, new possibilities created by digital research methodologies finally allowed me to gain access to the crucial primary research material to enable me to publish on the Guild.

Indian Summer: The Reinvention of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft in the Twentieth Century

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present, Vol. 44. pp. 19-45 (2020).

To date, the only publication documenting the work of one of Britain's foremost Arts and Crafts movement metalworking workshops, the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, has been the 1984 exhibition catalogue *By Hammer and Hand* (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery). Within this catalogue, a mere five pages are dedicated to the Guild's formative years from 1890 to approximately 1910. This limited coverage has perpetuated the perception of the Guild as a workshop of idealistic artisans producing exclusively austere, proto-modernist Arts and Crafts metalware. However, this interpretation represents only a fraction of the Guild's complex and multifaceted history.

This paper is grounded in extensive research conducted over many years, marking the first opportunity to present newly discovered primary source material to an appropriate audience. For the first time, it highlights examples of the spectacular and innovative work designed and manufactured by the Guild during its interwar heyday, when it emerged as one of the country's leading architectural metalworking firms.

The paper examines how and why this small-scale, philanthropic craft workshop of the late nineteenth century managed to evolve, adapt, and ultimately reinvent itself as a successful commercial enterprise in the twentieth century. In essence, there were two distinct iterations of the Guild. The first, the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, was conceived by the architect, designer, and idealist Arthur Stansfeld Dixon (1856–1929), who served as the chief designer of the Guild's restrained and refined metalwork and lighting. However, Dixon's involvement and enthusiasm soon waned as the practical realities of operating within a competitive, commercial marketplace clashed with the ideals of Arts and Crafts philosophy. Reorganised early in the twentieth century as the Birmingham Guild Ltd, the company thrived under the dynamic leadership of brothers Hugh and Llewelyn Roberts, whose directorship marked a turning point in the Guild's trajectory.

The paper also situates the Guild within broader trends in early twentieth-century design reform, as exemplified by the efforts of the Design and Industries Association (DIA). Furthermore, it addresses the stylistic impact of continental Art Deco on the Guild's later work, positioning C. A. Llewelyn Roberts (1879–1951), a long-overlooked figure, as one of the preeminent designers of British Art Deco.

Contemporary perspectives on the often-contentious relationship between established architects and their artisans are explored, providing insights into the dynamics of collaboration within this field. The timeframe under consideration encompasses the decline of British labour-intensive 'craft' manufacturing post-World War 2, analysing how the Guild and similar enterprises navigated—or failed to navigate—the dual challenges of evolving design tastes and the rapid pace of industrial change. These factors created a 'perfect storm' that ultimately shaped the fate of many British design-led manufacturers, including the Birmingham Guild in the post-war years.

The Betula Ltd

The origins of my most recent published paper, 'The Betula Ltd' (2024), bear a striking similarity to those of my first scholarly publication, the 1993 exploration of the Newcastle Handicrafts Co. In both instances, my interest was sparked by a single artifact. Initial enquiries quickly revealed that no documented record appeared to exist for either subject, prompting me to investigate further. In the case of The Betula Ltd, the catalyst was a brief, twenty-second reference within the 1990 BBC documentary *Right is Wrong*, written and presented by architectural journalist Jonathan Meades. In this segment, Meades made a passing remark about a piece of furniture attributed to the London-based 'Betula Company' [sic]. The item in question, a large cupboard, exhibited characteristics reminiscent of the furniture of the Arts and Crafts movement but was also infused with a later, Expressionist aesthetic.

This stylistic hybridity immediately caught my attention, as I have long been fascinated by Expressionist design and architecture, a movement that flourished briefly in the early twentieth century, predominantly in Central Europe. Prominent examples include the early works of the Modernist architect Erich Mendelsohn (1887–1953) and the innovative contributions of the Prague-based architects and designers who pioneered Czech Cubism. Concurrently, the Austrian architect, occultist, and educational reformer Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) advanced Anthroposophy, a spiritual and philosophical movement that found tangible expression in architecture and design through an Expressionist lens.

At the time, I could not have anticipated that this fleeting moment of curiosity—triggered by a mere twenty seconds of airtime—would ultimately lead to a thirty-four-year research journey. The endeavour required the discovery and analysis of extensive primary materials, most of which were located in private collections, before

culminating in the publication of a detailed account of this previously undocumented and extraordinary enterprise.

The research process for The Betula Ltd closely parallels the methods employed in my 2020 study of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. Both projects underline the transformative role of digital resources in contemporary scholarship. Online tools facilitated access to previously inaccessible primary materials, offering insights critical to documenting the history of The Betula Ltd. These advances have enabled a reconstruction of its narrative and the contextualisation of its work within the broader cultural and aesthetic currents of its time, demonstrating the continued potential of digital methodologies in uncovering and preserving lost histories.

The Betula Ltd: The Forgotten Radicals of 1930s British Furniture Design

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present, Vol. 48. pp. 58-79 (2024).

The avant-garde, European-influenced modernist furniture produced in Britain during the 1930s has been extensively documented and showcased. Scholarship and exhibitions have primarily focused on two closely linked enterprises: the Isokon company, established by Jack Pritchard and Wells Coates in 1933, and Gerald Summers's Makers of Simple Furniture, founded in 1931–32. These initiatives represent a significant but incomplete chapter in a more intricate narrative. While rational, Bauhaus-inspired design has been the dominant lens through which European avant-garde furniture's impact on Britain has been interpreted, it was not the sole stylistic influence to traverse the English Channel.

A compelling yet underexplored facet of this story is The Betula Ltd, a small London-based woodworking company founded in 1931. This firm was distinguished by its production of furniture inspired by the design principles of Austrian philosopher, architect, occultist, and educational reformer Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). The expressionist furniture crafted by The Betula Ltd embodied the principles of anthroposophical design, a concept derived from Steiner's spiritual philosophy. The term itself, rooted in the Greek words *anthropos* (human) and *sophia* (wisdom), encapsulates a holistic design ethos that evolved within Steiner's broader intellectual and mystical framework. His vision synthesised elements of philosophy, mysticism, and creativity, emphasising the integration of material form with spiritual aspirations.

The Betula Ltd was established by Gladys Mayer (1888–1980), a graduate of the Liverpool School of Art which, like Birmingham, immersed its students in the Arts and

Crafts tradition, giving practical experience of the crafts. Early in her career, Mayer became a devoted follower of Steiner, eventually relocating to Dornach, Switzerland, where Steiner had founded a spiritual and artistic colony. Here, Mayer was deeply influenced by anthroposophical art and design—a tangible extension of Steiner's philosophy that drew heavily on the principles of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, particularly their shared belief in the transformative power of craft.

Upon returning to London in the late 1920s, Mayer established The Betula Ltd as a pioneering enterprise dedicated to producing radical, expressionist, anthroposophical furniture. Her work was significantly supported by Czech refugee Francis Nevel (1911–1993), who had been informally adopted into the family of Arts and Crafts architect Hugh Thackeray Turner (1853–1937). Nevel's education at Rendcomb College near Cirencester exposed him to the Arts and Crafts ethos, particularly the 'Cotswold School' tradition exemplified by Ernest Gimson and the Barnsley brothers, Ernest and Sidney. This background in practical crafts and furniture-making harmonised with Mayer's vision, facilitating The Betula Ltd.'s unique contribution to British design.

Despite its historical and artistic significance, anthroposophical design has only begun to attract academic attention in the twenty-first century, with studies to date exclusively focusing on its manifestations within mainland Europe. The fact that Steiner-influenced furniture was commercially manufactured in Britain has remained unnoticed by both continental scholars and British design historians. This paper seeks to address this oversight by presenting previously unseen primary material related to anthroposophical design in the UK. In doing so, it expands the narrative of avant-garde British furniture design during the interwar period, offering a fresh perspective that situates anthroposophical expression within the broader context of modernist and craft-based movements.

The published papers: a summary

Utilising innovative digital methodologies my published research explores the dynamic interplay between craft traditions, design, and philosophical influences in British Decorative Arts, with a particular focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This body of work rigorously investigates underexplored narratives providing fresh perspectives on the development of design principles during this era which saw the transition from the Victorian to the Modern. Each paper is distinguished by the extensive use of thoughtfully selected illustrations, most of which were previously unseen, to enrich and deepen the narrative.

Alongside my in-depth study of C.F.A. Voysey, I have undertaken a long-term, detailed investigation of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, a cooperative that in its early years epitomised the collaborative ideals of the Arts and Crafts ethos but later adapted to the commercial realities of the twentieth century. Through my published paper and the future creation of a dedicated monograph, this research illuminates the Guild's contributions to design and its role in advancing craftsmanship and artistic integrity into the modern age.

The most recent strand of my research delves into British anthroposophical design, particularly the activities of The Betula Ltd, a firm producing radical, expressionist furniture that bridged spiritual ideals and avant-garde aesthetics. By uncovering previously unseen archival materials, my research places British anthroposophical design within the wider context of interwar European modernism, challenging existing narratives that overlook its significance. This research is on-going with more to add to the narrative I have established.

Taken collectively, these studies provide a further narrative to the evolution of the Arts and Crafts movement, highlighting its integration of philosophical and spiritual currents, innovations in art education, enduring craft traditions, and its engagement with modernist influences that collectively shaped British design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By uncovering neglected histories, examining women's contribution to design and re-examining well-known narratives, my research not only enhances the historiography of British design but also emphasises its ongoing significance in contemporary dialogues surrounding craft, spirituality, modernity and gender politics.

Reflection: the standing of the journals in which I choose to publish

Prior to examining my contribution to the wider state of knowledge in my specialist field in Chapter 3, it is essential to address the rationale underpinning my choice of publications, specifically, *The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present* and *The Orchard: The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society*. Both journals are respected for their publication of well-illustrated, rigorously researched scholarly papers. However, they sit outside the conventional boundaries of 'approved' academic publishing, which prioritises a select group of peer-reviewed journals.

In the field of academic design research, dissemination occurs across a wide array of platforms. Journals serve as critical conduits for reporting research methodologies and findings. Academic authors aim to publish their work in the most esteemed journals available; however, the ranking of such outlets remains a contentious and inherently subjective issue. According to Mansfield (2016), within the context of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), the highest-ranked design focused journals were—in order—the *Design Journal* (Taylor & Francis), the *Journal of Design History* (Oxford University Press), *Design Studies* (Design Research Society) and *The Journal of Modern Craft* (Taylor & Francis). However, Mansfield does conclude his survey with the following observation:

> By using REF as the referee, it is clear that the most commonly used journal metrics (SNIP score and Impact Factor) do not provide an unambiguous indication of the 'originality, significance and rigour' of research outputs in design, according to the independent review panel of UoA34 (Mansfield, 2016, p. 917).

This indicates that the actual place of publication is not the essential element in quantifying rigorous, scholarly analysis. Of the four journals Mansfield ranks highest, only the *Journal of Design History* and *The Journal of Modern Craft* overlap with my areas of study.

Cognisant of the established conventions of academic publishing and with due recognition of the scholarly prestige of these journals, I have also been keenly aware of their likely limitations in effectively disseminating my research. My activities as a design writer specialising in material culture are focused on the exploration of histories, contexts, aesthetics, people and objects rather than theoretical abstraction. Traditional academic journals by their very nature, primarily draw an audience of fellow academics and their students however, my aim has always been to reach a broader and more diverse readership that also includes museum curators, collectors, dealers, and a wide cross-section of private individuals who share a deep passion for the Arts and Crafts movement. A further significant shortcoming of many design journals is their inherent textual bias, relegating the importance of any visual content which, if present at all, is often minimal in quantity and often not reproduced to a satisfactory standard. This approach fundamentally conflicts with my methodology of disseminating the results of my research through the integration of well-reproduced, previously unpublished visual material, woven into the written analysis and narrative thereby enriching the reader's understanding and awareness. Consequently, it became imperative to identify appropriate platforms capable of adequately supporting the visual and interdisciplinary

dimensions of my work, ensuring that it reaches and resonates with my intended audience.

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present

Based on the above criteria, *The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present* emerges as the most appropriate publication for my non-Voysey-related research. Established in 1975, the Decorative Arts Society was founded to address the need for a rigorous and scholarly approach to the study and dissemination of the applied arts in relation to architecture, particularly from the era of William Morris and the advent of modern design. This initiative complemented the missions of other contemporaneous organisations, such as the Victorian Society—founded in 1958 as a campaigning body to preserve Victorian and Edwardian architecture—and the Twentieth Century Society established in 1979 to protect Britain's architectural heritage from 1914 onwards.

The Decorative Arts Society brought together a group of trustees and governors, reflecting its academic and cultural gravitas. These included notable figures such as Professor Asa Briggs, Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University; Sir John Pope-Hennessy, Director of the British Museum; and Dr Roy Strong, Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum. The Society's working committee was equally distinguished, featuring influential individuals such as Elizabeth Aslin and Barbara Morris from the Victoria & Albert Museum's groundbreaking Circulation Department, Philippe Garner from Sotheby's, and J. Stewart Johnson, a consultant curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The Society's annual journal, a large-format (A4) publication, is the cornerstone of its scholarly contributions. Fully illustrated, the journal contains meticulously researched articles that hold lasting value for both academic institutions and collectors. Each edition spans at least 150 pages and includes over 100 illustrations, predominantly in colour, ensuring a visually rich and intellectually authoritative resource. The journal's enduring relevance is underlined by its readership, which includes approximately 500 individual members and 60 institutional subscribers. Esteemed institutions among its subscribers include the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum, the British Library, the Getty Research Institute, the Courtauld Institute of Art, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Bard Graduate Centre in New York.

Academic rigour is ensured through the expertise of highly qualified journal editors, whose credentials and scholarly contributions underline the quality of their insights. My first published paper, 'The Lost Art Workers', was edited by Gillian Naylor, a Senior Tutor in the Department of Cultural History at the Royal College of Art. Naylor was a former editor of *Design* magazine and a pioneering figure in establishing the discipline of design history. As discussed in Chapter 1, her seminal work, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (1971), is widely regarded as the first modern scholarly reassessment of this influential design movement.

Similarly, 'The Fulham Pottery' was edited by Annamarie Stapleton, an authority on nineteenth-century design and author of *John Moyr Smith 1839–1912: A Victorian Designer* (2002). Stapleton also served as a director of The Fine Arts Society, the leading dealership instrumental in re-evaluating and popularising the art and design of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

My two most recent papers, focused on the Birmingham Guild and the Betula Ltd, were overseen by Stella Beddoe, former Senior Keeper of Decorative Art at Brighton Museums. Beddoe's tenure at Brighton included stewardship of one of the UK's most significant collections of design and decorative arts. Asked to provide commentary on how academic rigour is achieved and maintained under her editorship, Beddoe states:

> All submissions are considered for publication by an Editorial Panel comprising six specialists on a wide range of topics covering the decorative arts and design from 1850 to the present. If Panel members do not have the relevant expertise to decide whether an article is of the required standard, with new information and fully referenced sources, the article is read by other acknowledged experts in that field, whether members of the DAS or not. Each article is read and commented on by at least two readers. If accepted, the editor then passes the comments back to the author for revision (Beddoe, 2025).

The Orchard: The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the C.F.A. Voysey Society was established in 2012 by a group of enthusiasts, academics and campaigners committed to the study and preservation of Voysey's work. The Society's mission is to promote research into all aspects of Voysey's life and oeuvre and to ensure the ongoing appreciation and safeguarding of his legacy. From its inception, the Society has attracted the active

participation of leading scholars, curators, and collectors specialising in Voysey and the broader Arts and Crafts movement.

The Society's first President was Dr Wendy Hitchmough, emeritus senior lecturer at the University of Sussex and author of *C.F.A. Voysey* (Phaidon, 1995), the definitive study of Voysey's architectural work. The Society's patron is John H. Bryan III, an American businessman and devoted collector of both American and English Arts and Crafts furniture and decorative arts, with a particular emphasis on Voysey. Bryan serves as the President of The Crab Tree Farm Foundation, an organisation dedicated to supporting education, exhibitions, and publications focused on Arts and Crafts furniture, textiles, and decorative arts.

The Society's annual journal, *The Orchard*, distinguishes itself as an outstanding publication within its field. Unlike the journals of other similar, specialist societies, such as those dedicated to William Morris, A.W.N. Pugin, or Edwin Lutyens—all of which serve valuable academic purposes—*The Orchard* stands apart in terms of design quality, production values, and its extensive use of full-colour imagery. While the academic merit of these other publications is not in question, *The Orchard* is esteemed not only for its scholarly rigour but also for its exemplary graphic design and richly illustrated articles. It serves as a critical platform for in-depth analysis, providing comprehensive documentation and exploration of the diverse aspects of Voysey's life and work, while also addressing significant gaps in the existing scholarship.

The Society has grown substantially, now boasting nearly 300 individual members alongside several prominent institutional affiliates, including the V&A Museum, the Royal Institute of British Architects, Heritage New Zealand, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. These affiliations underscore the Society's international stature and influence. In addition to publishing *The Orchard*, the Society actively supports the field through research grants, an annual lecture series, and international study events.

From its inception, the journal has attracted eminent contributors, including the late Stuart Durant, an Honorary Member of the Voysey Society. Durant, who delivered the second Annual Voysey Lecture, has the distinction of authoring the first History of Design thesis submitted to the Royal College of Art and was later, Reader in Design and Architectural History at Kingston University, where he also directed the postgraduate course in Communication Design. He initiated the *International Design Yearbook* and published extensively on both ornament, design and architecture.

By 2024, *The Orchard* had published over one hundred, original, scholarly articles, delving deeply into diverse subjects related to Voysey's life, oeuvre, contemporaries,

influences, and legacy. This body of work represents a significant and influential contribution to Voysey scholarship, exploring themes with a depth and breadth previously unattainable.

The present editor of *The Orchard* is the Australian architect and architectural writer David Cole. Asked to provide commentary on how academic rigour of the journal is achieved and maintained under his editorship, Cole states:

> From the inception of the C.F.A. Voysey Society, *The Orchard* was established, and has subsequently been maintained, as a strictly scholarly publication. Accordingly, the positions of a 5–6-person Editorial Panel and an Editor were established to oversee and scrutinise all papers submitted based on originality, relevance, thoroughness, veracity, presentation, and primary source research—to ensure all papers are ultimately worthy of publication. In accordance with good governance practice, the Panel comprises individuals possessing a diverse range of skills, all related to the fields of design, academia, architecture, science, and management—commensurate with the nature of the Society's broader goals and those for its journal.
>
> Typically, initially, proposed papers are submitted to the Editor for topic approval, the Editor then consulting with at least one other member of the Panel prior to approval is given to the author of the proposed topic. The Editor and at least one other member of the Panel provides guidance to the author as may be required, the paper ultimately approved in respect of all pre-defined success criteria by at least two other members of the Panel. Over the years, *The Orchard* has featured a variety of papers, in terms of topics, depth of research, and length—the Editorial Panel actively encouraging this diversity among potential contributors. In the fourteen-year life of the Society there have been four serving Editors and around ten serving members of the Editorial Panel.
>
> The Society's journal, *The Orchard*, has always been the pride of the Society—in its presentation and scholarly quality. (Cole, 2025)

As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the dissemination of my research through *The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society* and *The Orchard* has proven highly effective in reaching the most relevant and diverse audience. This outcome would have been difficult to achieve within the confines of traditional academic publishing.

Chapter 3: My contribution to the wider state of knowledge in my specialist field

In this final chapter, I will examine how my published papers exploring aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement have extended beyond the printed page, reaching a broader audience through multiple channels of dissemination. This discussion will be structured around five distinct areas: my contribution to scholarship, my role in shaping public exhibitions, my engagement with public lectures, my involvement in broadcast media, and my contributions to learned societies. In doing so, I will highlight how my research has not only advanced academic discourse but has also informed and enriched public understanding of the subject, demonstrating the dynamic interplay between scholarly inquiry and its wider cultural impact.

Contribution to scholarship

Gillian Naylor, the pioneer of academic research into the Arts and Crafts movement and the editor of my first published paper on the NHC, 'The Lost Art Workers' (1993) provided the following reflection in her introduction to *The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present*, Vol. 17, p. 2, stating:

> Tony Peart describes how these 'Lost Art Workers of Tyneside', and their mentors, battled to reconcile the demands of craft training with the realities of the marketplace. This is as much an account of art school policies and politics as of craft idealism, and it makes a valuable contribution to research into the history of design education (Naylor, 1993, p. 2).

The publication of this research prompted significant developments in the cultural and historical preservation of the Newcastle Handicrafts Company (NHC) and its work. Lesley Richardson, who was then Assistant Keeper of Fine and Decorative Arts at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, recognised the historical importance of this forgotten initiative. Acknowledging the absence of NHC works in the gallery's collection, Richardson undertook an active acquisition campaign to address this. Despite the rarity of such artifacts, the gallery successfully secured representative examples of NHC silverwork and woodwork, primarily through auctions. Notably, 'The Lost Art Workers' continues to inform the cataloguing of NHC pieces when they come to market, being cited by major auction houses, including Lyon & Turnbull (2008, 2014, 2015) and Bonhams (2014).

All my published outputs, including 'The Lost Art Workers' are accessible through the University of Cumbria's open-access repository, *Insight* (Insight, 2025). The enduring relevance of this work is reflected in its consistent readership since it was first made available online in 2010; in the calendar year 2024 alone, 'The Lost Art Workers' was downloaded 35 times.

The Arts and Crafts movement in the North East

Further contributing to the scholarship of the Arts and Crafts movement in the North, I was approached by Barrie and Wendy Armstrong, well-known researchers in the field. Their detailed and prolonged study of the Arts and Crafts movement in Northern England culminated in three published gazetteers including, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the North East of England* (Armstrong, 2013). To inform this work, the authors studied my research files and photographs, a significant portion of this material being subsequently integrated into their publication, including extensive citations from 'The Lost Art Workers', (Armstrong, 2013, p. 224). This volume contributing significantly to the wider general awareness of the contribution of the region to the Arts and Crafts movement.

The papers devoted to C.F.A. Voysey

My first Voysey paper: 'Voysey Textile Designs in the Cummersdale Design Collection' (2013) was the only one published early enough to be cited in Livingstone, Donnelly & Parry (2016). As discussed in Chapter 2, this important work was the first monograph devoted entirely to Voysey's activities as a designer. Linda Parry—Deputy Keeper of Textiles at the V&A—addresses Voysey's repeating patterns in Chapter 1 of this book (Parry, 2016). My paper on Voysey's textile design is cited in the select bibliography (p. 312) and as a footnote where she states: "Since beginning this chapter I have studied an important article by Tony Peart, 'Voysey textile designs at the Cummersdale Design Collection' in The Orchard, No. 2" (Parry, 2016, p. 299).

Additionally, this paper served as the impetus for the MA dissertation presented by Becky May at Northumbria University in 2014: *Point Paper Patterns: An Overview of a Design Archive with Particular Reference to a Collection of Designs for Weave Believed to be the Work of C.F.A. Voysey* (May, 2014). May's research addressed issues of connoisseurship, specifically my attribution of eight unsigned designs to Voysey. Her investigation involved the scientific analysis of the media and substrates of these

designs. Through chemical analysis of paper and pigments, her study confirmed my attribution to Voysey as being correct, thereby providing a methodologically rigorous conformation of their authorship.

In 2017 Stuart Durant, former Reader at Kingston University and world authority on ornamental design, published a revised and extended version of his 1990 *The Decorative Designs of C.F.A. Voysey*, Durant (2017). In this edition I am thanked in the acknowledgements (p. xi) for my help with his research and my paper 'Voysey's Lettering Designs' (2015) is cited in the bibliography where it is described as: "particularly important" (Durant, 2017, p. 135). Additionally, on the same page, Durant recommends his readers explore *The Orchard* and commends the C.F.A. Voysey Society for their published papers and the extensive online archive they curate and host. This archive, to which I regularly contribute, is a valuable research resource and includes the most comprehensive Voysey bibliography available (Voysey Society, 2025).

My trio of papers, 'The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey' (Parts 1-3), published consecutively in *The Orchard* (2016–2018), represents the culmination of extensive research into this important aspect of Voysey's oeuvre. Artifacts designed and definitively attributable to Voysey command significant commercial value, making accurate attribution and provenance essential. My recognised expertise in Voysey's furniture and metalwork designs has frequently led to requests for professional consultation from leading dealers and prominent auction houses handling Voysey pieces.

The four major dealers specialising in the British Arts and Crafts movement—Paul Reeves, Martin Levy (of H. Blairman and Sons) Salah Ben Halim (of Hill House Antiques & Decorative Arts) and Paul Shutler—have each sought my expertise to confirm attributions to Voysey and furnish contextualising information. By exploiting my extensive digital archive, I can usually provide detailed information about date of execution, client and maker for pieces designed by Voysey.

In 2007, I was approached by auctioneer John Dickins regarding a rare painted clock, potentially by Voysey. The clock's overhanging pediment had been significantly altered following damage, casting doubt on its authenticity. Through comparisons with archival period images, I was able to confirm its authenticity. The clock subsequently sold for a record-breaking price.

In 2020 I was consulted by Jeremy Morrison, International Director of Design at Christie's auctioneers, concerning an early and significant example of Voysey's cabinet furniture consigned for sale. The piece, a green-stained Lady's Work Cabinet, was one

of three known to have been produced, all previously thought lost. By comparing the cabinet with period photographs from my digital archive, I identified it as the first example made, an object which garnered significant critical acclaim when exhibited at the 1893 Arts and Crafts Exhibition. My research further enabled me to provide a complete provenance for the piece, documenting its history of ownership.

In May 2022, Caroline Newton, Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts at Lotherton Hall (Leeds Museums and Galleries), sought my expertise regarding a Voysey lamp base in the museum's collection. The lamp required a shade for its display. Although the arms for attachment remained intact, they were too wide to accommodate the hemispherical metal shades typically associated with this model. Having previously investigated the lamp's provenance, I recalled that Paul Reeves, not recognising the original silk shade as a Voysey design, had removed it prior to the sale of the lamp. Remarkably, the silk shade had survived in one of Reeves's warehouses, despite its separation from the lamp for over 40 years. It was subsequently gifted to Lotherton Hall and fully restored, allowing the lamp to be presented in its original form for public exhibition.

The continuing relevance of the papers on C.F.A. Voysey's work as a furniture designer is evidenced by the download metrics recorded in the University of Cumbria's open-access repository, *Insight*. The first paper, published in 2016 and covering the period 1883–1898, has been downloaded 1,342 times as of January 2025, reflecting its widespread scholarly interest. The second instalment, addressing the years 1898–1906, has accumulated 547 downloads, while the third paper, which examines Voysey's activities from 1906–1934, has been downloaded 256 times. The papers collectively attracted over 2,100 downloads, underlining their impact and significance for ongoing scholarship.

The scholarly significance of my 2019 paper, 'Voysey's Tile Designs: A Catalogue Raisonné', published in Volume 8 of *The Orchard*, was immediately recognised upon its release. The editor of *Glazed Expressions*, the publication of the Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society (TACS), expressed the desire to republish the paper in its entirety, including all accompanying illustrations. Since its founding in 1981, TACS has served as Britain's national society dedicated to the study and preservation of tiles and architectural ceramics, boasting an international membership comprising tile museums, conservation specialists, manufacturers—both industrial and artisanal—architects, designers, collectors, and dealers.

I consented to the editor's request, and an expanded version of the paper, entitled 'Voysey's Tile Designs', was subsequently published as Peart (2020) in Issue No. 85 of

Glazed Expressions. Both versions of the paper are accessible through the University of Cumbria's open-access repository, *Insight*. The *Orchard* version has been downloaded 231 times since 2022, while the *Glazed Expressions* version garnered 68 downloads in 2024, further illustrating the paper's ongoing academic and practical relevance in the fields of design history and architectural ceramics.

Scholarly contribution to research and expertise in C.F.A. Voysey studies

My recognised expertise in the work of C.F.A. Voysey has made my research a valuable resource for researchers and scholars pursuing advanced study in related fields. Over the years, I have provided guidance and information to PhD candidates, museum curators, and authors, demonstrating the wide-reaching impact of my knowledge and digital archive on the study of Voysey's designs and legacy.

In 2015, Liz Mitchell, a PhD researcher and freelance curator at the Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design, sought my assistance in her investigation of Voysey's relationship with the Society of Designers. Drawing upon my digital archive, I supplied her with primary research material to facilitate her investigations. Similarly, commencing in 2019, I provided information to Catherine Sidwell, PhD candidate at Kingston University for her thesis, *The Representation of Birds in Society, Culture, and Decorative Domestic Designs (1851–1914), with Special Reference to the Work of C.F.A. Voysey*. My contributions included suggesting material that may be pertinent to her enquiry, providing access to relevant Voysey research material and discussing her analysis of Voysey's use of symbolism and natural motifs within his design.

Beyond direct engagement with doctoral researchers, my expertise has been acknowledged in scholarly publications. For example, Karen Livingstone, who is currently the Deputy Director at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and was previously the Director of Masterplan and Estate at the Science Museum as well as a former curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum, acknowledged me in her monograph *Voysey's Birds and Animal*s stating: "I should like to thank Wendy Hitchmough, Tony Peart, and Peter King who have all been generous with time and help in answering my queries" (Livingstone, 2020, p. 143).

In addition to these specific collaborations, I regularly address enquiries submitted through the C.F.A. Voysey Society website. These requests originate from a global audience, including museum curators, academics, private individuals, auction houses, and specialist dealers in historic design. On a regular basis, I provide guidance on a

range of topics, from authenticating artifacts to contextualising Voysey's contributions to the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft

My research encompasses all facets of BGH's activities. In 2019, I provided Dr Claire Fitzgerald, whose PhD—*Women, Craft and the Object: Birmingham 1880–1930* (University of Warwick, 2018)—explores the work of Birmingham women artists, with an extensive body of material related to the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft Press. This private press initiative, inspired by William Morris's Kelmscott Press, engaged in fine publishing and bookbinding. The information I supplied included the most extensive Birmingham Guild Press bibliography to date, compiled by myself through years of research, together with biographical information about Sophia Pumphrey, who managed the Guild's bookbinding department.

In 2020, following the publication of my work, 'Indian Summer: The Reinvention of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft in the Twentieth Century', I was approached by Katy Owen, a PhD student at the University of Birmingham. She sought information about the Birmingham-based metalworker and designer Annie Stubbs. Although Stubbs was only tangentially associated with the BGH, my digitised research archive enabled me to provide a detailed biography of the artist, accompanied by examples of her work sourced from rare period catalogues. This material will contribute to Owen's forthcoming dissertation, *Making an Exhibition of Herself: Women, Art and Birmingham 1860–1920*.

My specialist knowledge of BGH metalwork has resulted in many enquiries for information and professional evaluations from prominent dealers—including Oscar Graf—and collectors worldwide. These usually concern the Guild's electric light fittings, which are highly valued by the art market.

My DAS paper on the BGH is available via the University of Cumbria's open-access repository, *Insight*. Between 2022 and 2024, it has been downloaded 175 times, underlining its continued academic significance.

The Betula Ltd

Since it was published as recently as November 2024, it is still too early to fully evaluate the impact of my most recent paper, 'The Betula Ltd: The Forgotten Radicals of 1930s

British Furniture Design'. However, the work has been positively received by key individuals and organisations, including Rudolf Steiner House and the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain, both of which provided valuable assistance during my research (Eichstaedt, S., 2025, p.48).

Notably, the paper has established a new scholarly connection with Reinhold J. Fäth, the leading European authority on Steiner-influenced anthroposophical design and honorary professor at the University of Applied Sciences HKS Ottersberg, Germany. Prior to this research, Professor Fäth was unaware of the existence of Betula Ltd—despite his significant contributions to the field in works such as Fäth (2011) and Fäth (2015). He has warmly welcomed my findings, which offer new insights into the intersection of British design and anthroposophical principles. Additionally, he has gratefully received previously undocumented anthroposophical material relating to the architect/designer Paul Bay that I discovered in a UK archive and digitally documented as part of my research for this paper.

Contribution to public exhibitions

Exhibitions exploring the Arts and Crafts movement in the North of England

The research I initiated for 'The Lost Art Workers' extended well beyond its publication, expanding to encompass a detailed investigation into the activities of other northern Arts and Crafts workers, together with those classes affiliated with the Home Arts and Industries Association (HAIA), a national organisation dedicated to reviving traditional rural crafts threatened by industrialisation and urbanisation.

Due to my reputation for expertise in this field, I was invited in 2003 by Dr. Howard Coutts, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts at The Bowes Museum, to collaborate on a significant temporary exhibition. The museum, located in Barnard Castle, is a prestigious institution specialising in art, decorative arts, and fashion. It is housed in an imposing 19th-century French-style château and holds a distinguished collection of European fine and decorative arts. Alongside Dr Neil Moat, an authority on stained glass in North East churches, I co-curated *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement in the North East*, held from October 2003 to February 2004. This groundbreaking exhibition brought to light previously unexamined works created by regional Arts and Crafts practitioners and groups, including the NHC, the Bolton-on-Swale HAIA woodwork class, and the Clarkson brothers, the enameller and sculptor George and his sibling, the silversmith, Frank Finley. My expertise informed the

selection of exhibits—some from my own collection—the development of interpretive materials, including panels, labels and a concise catalogue of the exhibition (Peart, Coutts & Moat, 2003). The exhibition received national acclaim, with 'S.S.' in *The Art Newspaper* noting:

> The most attractive aspect of this show, however, is a revision of the argument that the North East of England was not involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement because the nouveau riche industrialist patrons preferred industrial design. Guest curators Tony Peart and Neil Moat argue that though these patrons did not embrace the ideology of Arts and Crafts, they nevertheless liked it as a 'modern' movement ('S.S.', 2003, p. 57).

The exhibition also had a transformative effect on the Elizabethan historic house museum, Kiplin Hall near Bolton-on-Swale, North Yorkshire, previously marketed solely as the home of George Calvert, founder of Maryland. My identification of long-forgotten works produced by the Bolton-on-Swale HAIA class, long in storage at Kiplin Hall, led to the inclusion of selected pieces in the Bowes Museum exhibition. This publicity prompted the Hall to expand its focus, incorporating the Calvert family's later connection to the Arts and Crafts movement. These rediscovered pieces are now prominently displayed in the Hall, with their significance recorded in updated guidebooks and in-house interpretive materials.

Returning to the Bowes Museum, my ongoing relationship with this institution was further strengthened when I provided research insights and object loans for their exhibition *Pre-Raphaelite Knights: Reinventing the Medieval World* (August – September 2020). This study examined themes of national identity, the sacred, the representation of women, and the ideals of chivalry through a curated selection of paintings, suits of armour, and interactive displays. It analysed how the featured artists reinterpreted chivalric traditions and sacred narratives, demonstrating their aspiration to revive the artistic purity and stylistic simplicity characteristic of the medieval era (Bowes Museum, 2020).

As previously discussed, I have established a longstanding reputation for my extensive research into the BGH. This expertise led to my invitation to contribute exhibits—including a substantial collection of Birmingham Guild metalwork—and catalogue descriptions to the major survey *Arts and Crafts Metalwork*, King (2003), held at Blackwell: The Arts & Crafts House (23 July–2 November 2003). This evolved into a longstanding relationship with Blackwell, a country house designed by Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott and one of England's most important examples of Arts and Crafts

architecture. Since its reinvention as a museum with a focus on the Arts and Crafts movement in 2001, I have loaned many items from my private collection for display in the house.

The Fulham Pottery

My 2008 publication, 'The Fulham Pottery 1932–1965: A Return to 'Artistic' Production', remains the definitive resource on this subject, as evidenced by its metrics in the University of Cumbria's open-access repository, *Insight*. In 2024 alone, the paper was downloaded 382 times. The publication was, in part, intended to clarify and disseminate the correct attribution of the individual designers behind a widely misunderstood group of ceramics, historically and generically attributed to 'Constance Spry.' It is therefore gratifying to see the paper frequently cited in auction catalogues when Fulham ceramics are brought to market. Additionally, I have been directly approached by auction house specialists seeking either information or informed opinions on items they are handling. This growing interest coincides with a notable increase in the prices realised for authentic Constance Spry ceramics in recent years.

My expertise in Spry's ceramics, as articulated in 'The Fulham Pottery 1932–1965', also led Shane Connolly, the royal floral designer, to invite my involvement in a major retrospective exhibition, *Constance Spry and the Fashion for Flowers*, which he curated at The Garden Museum, Lambeth, London, in 2021. With my consent, extensive extracts from my paper were quoted verbatim in the exhibition catalogue (Connolly, 2021), as well as on interpretive panels displayed throughout the exhibition. I am credited in the acknowledgements as follows: "We would like to thank Sophie Leathart, Felicity Hall, Geoffrey Munn, Amy de la Hay, Patrick Duffy (The Fine Art Society) and Tony Peart for their invaluable and enthusiastic support and assistance with research" (Connolly, 2021, p. 71). As the owner of an extensive collection of Constance Spry ceramics, I also loaned approximately 90% of the exhibited vases—25 pieces in total. Although I was scheduled to record a video interview discussing the vases for inclusion on the exhibition's website (Garden Museum, 2021), this was unfortunately cancelled due to a serious accident that resulted in my hospitalisation shortly before filming.

The exhibition ran from 17 May to 26 September 2021 and was met with critical and public acclaim. For example, Rachel Cooke's online review in *The Guardian,* Cooke (2021) highlighted its thorough and innovative approach:

> The Garden Museum's exhibition explores every aspect of Spry's working life. In two cabinets you can see the distinctive, biscuit-fired earthenware vases made by Fulham Pottery to the designs of her assistant, Florence Standfast; also the Crown Vase, a collaboration with the stage designer Oliver Messel for the coronation of Edward VIII... The genius of this show, staged at one of London's best small museums, is that it reminds you not only of Spry's energy and spirit, but also of her singular, sedulous eye; a line may be drawn, you understand, between its revolutionary impulses and so much of design today (Cooke, 2021).

The exhibition was widely praised by critics and well received by the public. This stood in stark contrast to the 2004 exhibition *Constance Spry: A Millionaire for a Few Pence* at the Design Museum—the only other survey of her work—which sparked significant controversy both within the institution and in the wider press. Chairman James Dyson and founder Sir Terence Conran criticised the focus on Spry, with Dyson resigning in protest, arguing that floristry did not align with the museum's mission to showcase industrial design. Underpinning this debate was a strong undercurrent of gender politics, raising questions about the value placed on traditionally feminine creative disciplines within the design canon.

Contribution to public lectures

Following the success of this exhibition, I was invited by DAS—original publishers of my 2008 paper—to deliver an online lecture on Spry and the Fulham Pottery. This Zoom presentation, held on 20 November 2022, was open to both Society members and the wider public. The event drew an international audience, with over 150 attendees, further cementing the enduring relevance and impact of my research.

In 2022, I was also approached by the Furniture History Society (FHS), the United Kingdom's preeminent learned society dedicated to the study of furniture, to deliver a lecture on C.F.A. Voysey to an international audience. My presentation, *A Sense of Proportion and Puritanical Love of Simplicity: The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey*, was delivered on 9 October 2022 to a substantial online audience. The lecture was recorded, archived, and made available to members through the Society's online platform (Furniture History Society, 2022).

Following the success of this event, I was honoured to be invited to deliver a paper at the FHS's 2024 symposium, *New Light on Arts and Crafts Furniture and Interiors,* held on 23 March at the Art Workers' Guild in Queen Square, London. This venue holds

particular significance for researchers of the Arts and Crafts movement, as it is intimately associated with the establishment of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. Sharing the stage with distinguished scholars in the field, including Annette Carruthers, Peyton Skipwith, and Dr Kathy Haslam, I presented a paper entitled *A Question of Attribution: The Contemporaneous Appropriation of Architect-Designed Arts and Crafts Furniture*. The presentation was well-received by an informed audience and was also live-streamed on YouTube to facilitate broader access.

In addition to these contributions, I have delivered numerous online lectures focusing on Voysey's dual roles as an architect and designer. In November 2021, I presented *The Voysey Chair That Changed My Life* to members of the Voysey Society, reflecting on the transformative impact of a particular piece on my research trajectory. More recently, in January 2025, I was invited by the RIBA's Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) to deliver *A Sense of Proportion and Puritanical Love of Simplicity: The Life and Work of C.F.A. Voysey* a critical overview of Voysey's life and work as an architect and designer. This drew a large, international audience eager to explore the interplay between Voysey's architectural principles and his design ethos and is available through the Society's online platform (Traditional Architecture Group, 2025). This has resulted in an invitation to deliver a similar talk to the Philadelphia Institute of Classical Architecture and Art in Autumn 2025.

Furthermore, in September 2023, I delivered an in-person lecture at Kellogg College, Oxford, as part of the International Voysey Study Day. Titled *Voysey: The Last Disciple of Pugin,* this presentation underscored the connections between Voysey's design philosophy and the Gothic Revival tradition, enriching the event's broader exploration of his contributions to the Arts and Crafts movement.

Contribution to broadcast media

In January 2019, I was invited by BBC producer Belinda Artingstoll to serve as the principal consultant for an hour-long radio documentary, *Cumbria and The Arts & Crafts Movement*. The programme, broadcast on BBC Radio Cumbria on December 26, 2019, examined the significant influence of the Arts and Crafts movement in the Lake District. Over the course of a year, I provided extensive guidance and critical feedback, contributing to the documentary's scholarly framework and thematic coherence. The culmination of the programme featured an on-location interview with me at Broad Leys, situated on the shores of Lake Windermere—widely regarded as one of C.F.A. Voysey's architectural masterpieces.

Contribution to learned societies and field study visits

My specialist knowledge and ability to contextualise my private collection of Arts and Crafts artifacts has been valued by various learned societies. Organisations such as the Regional Furniture Society, the Voysey Society, the Surrey Arts and Crafts Society, and the Decorative Arts Society (DAS) have approached me to host visits to my collection. These events, well-received by the academics, curators and private individuals these groups comprise, offer unique opportunities to engage with significant, previously unseen artifacts in an intimate setting.

In May 2022, I organised and led a highly successful three-day study visit to North Cumbria and the Lake District for DAS members. The trip was praised in the Society's Newsletter:

> The visit, based in and around Carlisle, was brilliantly devised and led by Tony Peart, whose enthusiasm and expertise were the bedrock of the trip. His talk on the first night provided a fine introduction to this part of England and its history (Wilson, 2022, p.3).

My itinerary encompassed significant sites showcasing the region's decorative and architectural heritage. Participants visited private homes such as Naworth Castle and Voysey's Broad Leys, and museums including Tullie House and Blackwell: The Arts and Crafts House. Exclusive access, including handling sessions with decorative arts objects, deepened participants' understanding of the Arts and Crafts movement in the North West.

Religious buildings of note included Carlisle Cathedral, Philip Webb's St. Martin's Church, and Sarah Losh's St. Mary's Church, an early Arts and Crafts precursor. Attendees—academics, curators, collectors, and enthusiasts—benefited from scholarly insight and cultural access.

Building on this success, I led a four-day study tour in May 2024 to the North East, complementing the 2022 Cumbria visit. In Newcastle, participants explored classical streets, Grainger Market, and Thomas Heatherwick's Blue Carpet. At the Laing Art Gallery, curator Esme Whittaker showcased the NHC works purchased in response to 'The Lost Art Workers', with further examples inspected at Newcastle Cathedral. Other highlights included the Modernist Civic Centre and commercial architecture of the 'New Art' movement.

Subsequent days featured Arts and Crafts churches, including St. James and St. Basil, Fenham, and St. George's, Jesmond, with their stained glass and mosaics. Participants also visited Durham Cathedral, Ushaw College's Pugin-designed chapels, and Sunderland's National Glass Centre and St. Andrew's, Roker, known as 'the cathedral of the Arts and Crafts movement.'

These tours have greatly enriched public understanding of the Arts and Crafts movement in the North while fostering collaboration among academic, curatorial, and cultural sectors. Through these initiatives, I continue to advance appreciation for this important artistic and cultural legacy.

Conclusion

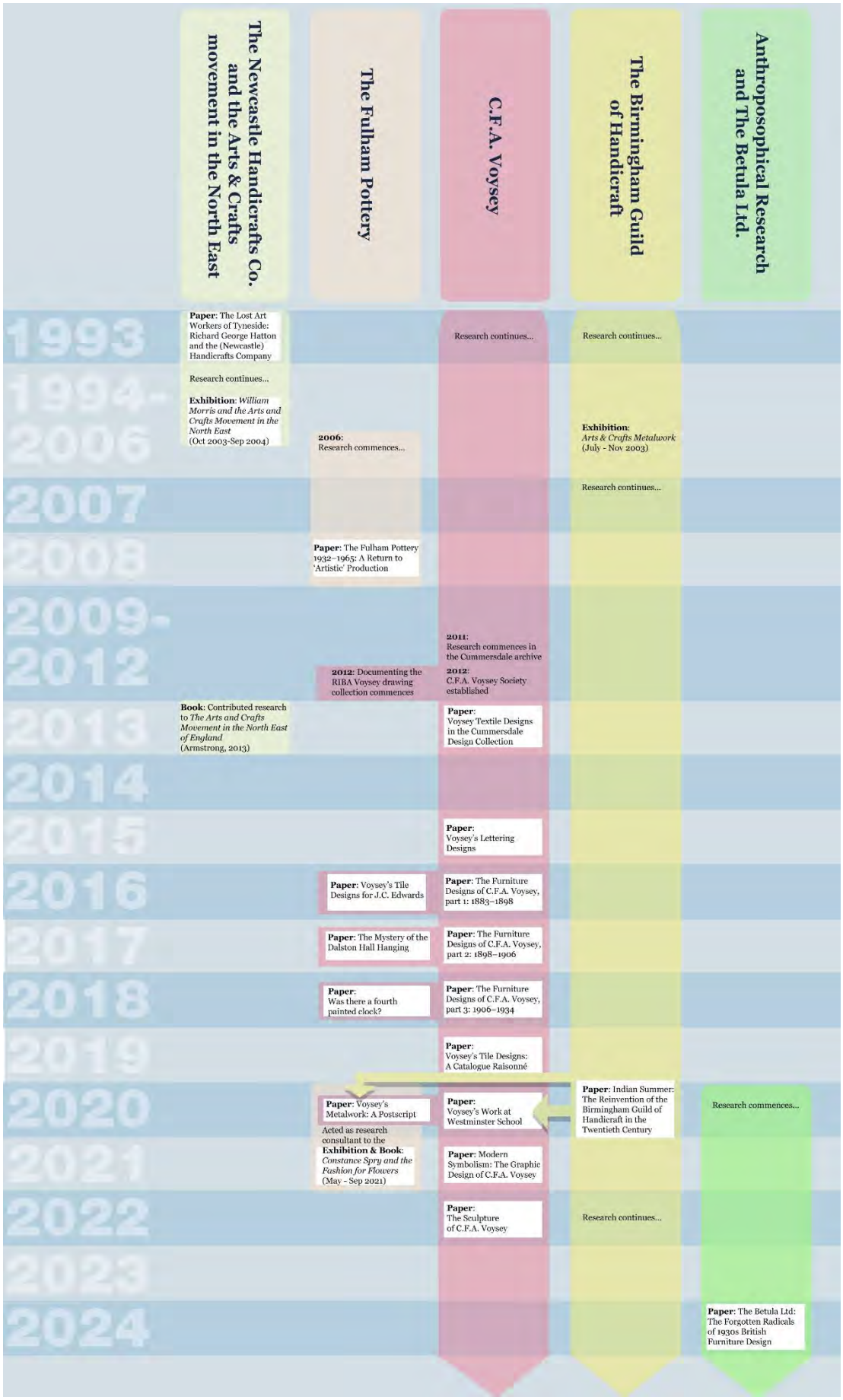
In conclusion, the cumulative impact of my research over the past forty years lies in its capacity to recover, interpret, and recontextualise overlooked aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement and its legacy. By uncovering histories such as The Betula Ltd, The Newcastle Handicrafts Co., and through detailed analyses of C.F.A. Voysey and The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, I have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of how artistic ideals intersected with social reform, education, and production. My publications collectively demonstrate how close engagement with material evidence can reshape received narratives, offering alternative perspectives that challenge metropolitan, canonical, and stylistic biases in design history. Through this process, I have helped to reposition the Arts and Crafts movement as a living network of ideas—interdisciplinary, regionally diverse, and intellectually rich.

My interventions in design and cultural historical scholarship have therefore been both evidential and methodological. Evidentially, I have brought to light new primary material, much of which was previously inaccessible or undocumented, thus extending the empirical foundations upon which future scholarship can build. Methodologically, I have modelled an approach that unites the empiricism of the archive with the interpretive sensibility of the studio—an approach grounded in looking, making, and understanding as interrelated acts. I have also demonstrated how digital technology can be used not merely for reproduction, but as a means of intellectual inquiry—an instrument for visual comparison, analysis, and dissemination. Through these interventions, I have aimed to demonstrate that the methods of the artist and the historian do not stand in opposition, but in fact clarify and enrich one another.

These interventions are shaped by my combined experience as practitioner and scholar. The observational clarity, technical precision, and material understanding cultivated through art and design practice have been invaluable to my research, allowing me to 'read' artefacts not only as historical evidence but as embodiments of intention, craft, and ideology. My experience with photographic and digital documentation has further enabled me to make enduring contributions to the field's research infrastructure, producing visual archives that now serve as resources for others. Equally, my long engagement with archival institutions and scholarly networks has honed collaborative and interpretive skills—those less tangible but equally vital capacities that enable knowledge to circulate, connect, and evolve.

Reflecting upon this forty-year trajectory, I recognise that my research has continually adapted to new contexts, technologies, and critical paradigms. The shift from analogue to digital methods mirrors my own intellectual movement from solitary observer to active collaborator and curator of visual knowledge. I have come to understand that research, like craft, is an iterative process—one that demands patience, skill, and imagination in equal measure. My contribution to knowledge lies not only in the specific findings presented in my publications, but also in the research model they collectively embody: an approach to design history that unites the sensibility of the maker, the precision of the archivist, and the interpretive insight that comes from sustained critical engagement.

Timeline showing the interrelationship of my research and published papers



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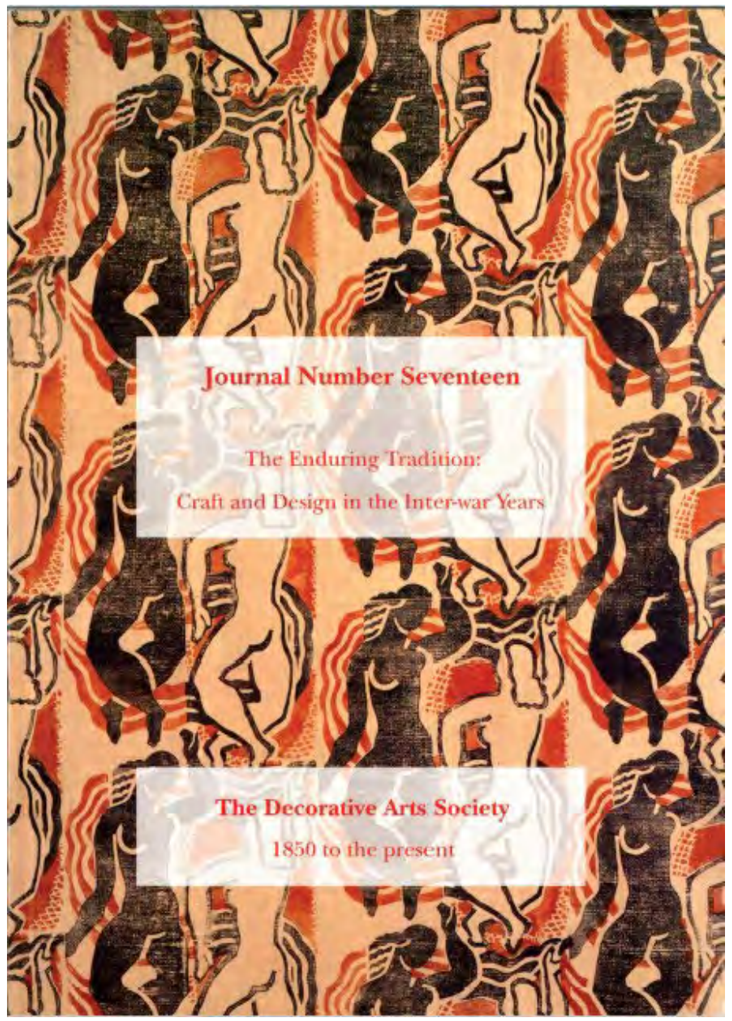


The Lost Art Workers of Tyneside: Richard George Hatton and the (Newcastle) Handicrafts Company

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present
Vol. 17. pp. 13-22 (1993).

The Lost Art-Workers of Tyneside - Richard George Hatton and The (Newcastle) Handicrafts Company

by Tony Peart
Additional photographs and material by Neil Moat

One could have argued that, until recently, late nineteenth century Tyneside was hardly fertile ground for the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement, so pervasive was the sense of technological progress, so grounded the local economy in heavy industry. Indeed, any native allegiance to the new ideals - from patrons, artists or manufacturers - appeared so patchy as to seem of little consequence. Yet the region boasts, in three great churches, splendid examples in turn, of the dawn, high noon, and creative afterglow of the Movement - St. George, Jesmond, Newcastle (1887-90 for Dr. Charles Mitchell), St. Andrew, Roker Park, Sunderland (1906-08 for Sir John Priestman) and St. James & St. Basil, Fenham, Newcastle (1927-31 for Sir James Knott). Significantly perhaps, their patrons were involved in shipping or ship building. However, on first sight, only Jesmond displays any commitment to local craftsmanship,[1] or its founder any demonstrable affinity with the Arts and Crafts[2].

The authors' collaboration in this research began as an attempt to flesh out rumours concerning the hitherto obscure Newcastle Handicrafts Company. That Tyneside could indeed support a group of artist-craftworkers seemed worthy of investigation, but the manner of that support was altogether surprising and indeed remarkable. What follows is necessarily an interim report, but it is to be hoped that the likes of Roker church need no longer be viewed as an isolated southern export amidst hyperborean industrial wastes.

Neil Moat.

By the early 1890s Newcastle's once independent Art School had joined with The Durham College of Science, Newcastle upon Tyne, to become its Art Department. This institution would become Armstrong College in 1904 and, later still, The University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The Art Department at this time was small, the full-time staff being the headmaster William Cosens Way (1833-1905) and a second art master. Although accommodation was inadequate, in temporary sheds, tuition was given in drawing, painting and sculpture. It is not surprising therefore that the standard of work produced was, in Cosens Way's own words, "well below that of the best art schools in the country".[3] Fortunately for the Art Department it was supervised by a supportive and far-sighted Art Committee, determined to rectify this situation.

Although Newcastle showed little municipal support for the arts (it was one of the last major cities to provide a public Art Gallery - as late as 1905), many of its leading citizens had a passionate interest in, and had amassed sizeable collections of modern art. In the case of Tyneside this invariably meant Pre-Raphaelite and allied artists[4]. Many of these patrons were first generation industrialists who had seen dramatic rises in their fortunes over the preceding thirty, or forty years. Their love of progressive art can be read either as an aesthetic equivalent to the modernity of their technologically based businesses, or the *nouveau riche* adoption of the cultural habits of established money.

The Art Committee comprised men such as Dr. Charles Mitchell (1820-95), shipbuilder, art collector and philanthropist (and latterly a partner of Sir William Armstrong), and Joseph A.D. Shipley (1822-1909) a solicitor who, although no match for Mitchell as a philanthropist, certainly out-ranked him as an art collector. The Chairman was James Leathart (1820-95), lead manufacturer and the most notable North-East patron of the Pre-Raphaelites.

In July 1890 the Art Committee appointed a new second art master, Richard George Hatton (1864-1926). Hatton, Birmingham born, had studied and then trained as an assistant teacher at The Municipal School of Art under E.R. Taylor. Birmingham, because of its adoption of Applied Art teaching (ie. design and practical craft work) and the apparent favouring of this work over the traditional 'Fine Arts' (ie. painting and sculpture), was seen by many as one of the most progressive art schools of the time.[5] Certainly Hatton's work and his numerous published writings show him to be very much a product of the Birmingham system.[6] A decorative artist/designer foremost, he seems to have had a wide ranging knowledge of, and interest in, many branches of the applied and decorative arts. His pupils and friends describe him as a likeable, persuasive man and a charismatic, knowledgeable teacher.

Hatton's appointment probably accounts for a fact-finding visit the Principal of the College, William Garnett, made to the Birmingham Municipal School of Art in late 1893. This was timed to coincide with a move by the Art Department to new, more permanent accommodation, an ideal opportunity to consider possible routes for further development. Much impressed by what he saw, Garnett submitted a lengthy report to the Art Committee.[7] It was recommended that teaching staff should be allowed to develop specialist classes as sub-departments, the headmaster adopting a role of supervision. Crucially, all new teaching appointments should be specialists in some branch of the applied arts. Finally either Walter Crane or E.R. Taylor, the headmaster of Birmingham School of Art, should be employed to advise the Art Committee. After Dr. Charles Mitchell also visited Birmingham in January 1894 it was unanimously agreed to appoint E.R. Taylor as external art advisor to the Department.

Taylor's recommendations were adopted for the academic year 1894-95. This scheme provided for a logical education, students moving through different levels of compulsory and optional classes. The classes on offer had a design bias, although at this stage the only practical experience a student could gain was in needlework.

Although provision for Design education was expanding rapidly at a National level, there was much debate surrounding the question as to 'whether or not designers needed practical experience of the materials for which they were designing.' There was no doubt in the mind of the designer, writer, teacher and examiner Lewis F. Day (1845-1910). He visited the Art Department in 1894 on behalf of the Government's Science and Art Department and, although impressed by what he saw, he stressed to the Committee the desirability of extending the curriculum to include pottery, wood-carving, metalwork and stained-glass work

Hatton succeeded Cosens Way upon his retirement as headmaster in 1895. This appointment was almost guaranteed; Hatton understood the newly adopted Birmingham teaching system and the Design Department, which he supervised, was now considered the most important within the School. The following year Charles William Mitchell (1854-1903) succeeded his late father Dr. Charles Mitchell, as Chairman of the Art Committee. The younger Mitchell had, encouraged by his father, trained as a painter in Paris under P.C. Le Comte. He exhibited at the Royal Academy and Grosvenor Gallery regularly between 1876 - 1889 and was from 1884 an early member of the Art Workers Guild. During the 1880s Mitchell returned from London to help his father in business, the pressure of which slowly forced him to give up painting. He endeavoured, however, to be at the centre of artistic circles on Tyneside and was responsible for the purchase and refurbishment of Newcastle's old Academy of Arts, the city's only venue for temporary exhibitions open to the public. The Art Committee gained, therefore, a wealthy chairman, passionately interested in promoting and supporting the arts. Certainly a natural allegiance and probably a great friendship seemed to develop between Hatton and Mitchell.

Hatton was soon visiting businesses in the area who might benefit from sending their workers to the Art Department for design tuition. These firms could in the long term prove to be potential employers of Art Department graduates.[8] Newcastle was merely following a national trend - if businesses could be involved with their local art schools it was thought that the standard of 'commercial design' could be improved dramatically. Another important factor, though rarely mentioned, would be the reciprocal increase in the school's revenue.

George Frampton (1860-1928) visited the Art Department in April 1897 in the role of external examiner.[9] Although he expressed satisfaction with the high standard of work, he would have seen no more provision for practical work than had Lewis F. Day three years earlier. The severe lack of space that denied the department the provision of practical craft classes must have been extremely frustrating to both Hatton and Mitchell, who were aware of the trend in 'progressive' art schools to offer provision for both theoretical design and its practical application in a wide variety of materials. Their solution to the problem was simple and, in its departure from the norm, radical and probably unique.

Hatton and Mitchell both acknowledged the significant gulf that existed between the manufacture of 'art wares' in an art school environment and the reality, denied students, of having to make a living from the sale of their productions in the wider community. A lease therefore was taken on a workshop at 37 Orchard Street (now destroyed) and at the Art Committee meeting held on 17th July 1899 C.W. Mitchell announced the establishment, at his own expense, of the Handicrafts Company, under the superintendence of R.G. Hatton. At the same meeting Hatton was given special dispensation (in the form of a three year contract) to devote half of his college hours to the work of the Company.

In the words of The Principal's report for the 1899 session; "I am glad to be able to report the establishment of the Handicrafts Company, which is designed to facilitate the exercise of the 'Lesser Arts' and to assist students who wish to earn a livelihood by their practice.

In some towns the 'Lesser Arts' form part of the school work. Sometimes they are carried on without any special Art training for the workers at all. The school is the proper place for Art education, the workshop the proper place for production. In the handicrafts Company both these considerations are combined. The sale of productions being a necessary part of the scheme, the Company cannot be part of the College, but by its means the College training is carried to completion and rendered more practical."[10]

Although the Company was in effect the craft workshop of the Art Department, great pains were taken to play down its educational nature; for instance in this context students were invariably referred to as 'workers'. The projected image was that of a free-standing, independent company. A listing was taken in the local trades directory advertising the Company as being engaged in Embroidery, Enamelling, Bronze-work, Silver-work and Cabinet-making. A hallmark was registered with the Birmingham Assay Office on the 28th September 1900, probably in response to the commissioning of an elaborate silver, enamel and bronze processional cross (fig. 1), presented in November 1900.[11]

Fig. 1 Silver, enamel and bronze processional cross, 1900. Cross head approximately 30" high.

In November the Company made its only appearance in *The Studio* when its work was featured as part of a review of the first exhibition of The Northumberland Handicrafts Guild.[12]

Fig. 2 Repoussé bronze and enamel memorial tablet to David Oliphant, 1901. (The Cathedral Church of St. Nicholas, Newcastle upon Tyne).

The Guild, like many similar well intentioned ventures, was established to promote an interest in art-work amongst the people of urban and rural Northumberland and provide them with the possibility of gainful part-time employment. In all, the Company exhibited 42 pieces including examples of embroidery, cabinet-making, utilitarian objects in repoussé bronze, objects in silver (or a combination of silver and enamels). A memorial tablet in repoussé bronze and enamels was also shown in the course of execution. (fig. 2) - memorial tablets would form a regular part of the Company's output during the next few years (figs. 3-5). Company workers also gave practical demonstrations of enamel techniques to the public during the course of the exhibition. Many of the identified pieces produced by the Company during its first few years have yet to be traced (eg. a silver repoussé book cover (fig. 6)), or have been lost (eg. a complete scheme of electroliers for a church in Gateshead). However, a significant number of pieces have already come to light (eg. a silver and enamel cup and cover (fig. 7)), and it is to be hoped that more will turn up.[13]

In October 1902 Mitchell provided the means for the continuation of Hatton's stay as the Company manager. He also provided funds on behalf of The Handicrafts Company to employ a second teacher of Design to act as cover for Hatton, the new arrangement being guaranteed for a further three years.[14] This provision was fortunate as C.W. Mitchell died five months later on February 28 1903, at the relatively early age of 48. Undoubtedly his death came as a great shock to all those involved in the arts on Tyneside. At the time of his death Mitchell had been acting as patron to major refurbishments at Walker Parish Church, employing the Handicrafts Company to produce the sanctuary furnishings - all to designs by Hatton (fig. 8).

The first of two important hexagonal silver and enamel presentation caskets (fig. 9) was produced in 1903. This casket, with enamel panels illustrating passages from Chaucer's The Man of Law's Tale appears to have a confusing history. Hallmarked in 1903, but not presented until 1910 - as a Golden Wedding gift to Sir David and Lady Stewart (of

Fig. 3 Repoussé bronze memorial tablet to Henry Norman Hill, c. 1902.

Fig. 4 Detail of silver-gilt, repoussé bronze and enamel memorial tablet to Charles William Mitchell, 1903. The cross illustrated is approximately 3" high.

Fig. 5 Repoussé cast bronze, enamel & oak memorial tablet to Clarence S. Lindsay, c. 1903-04. (University of Newcastle upon Tyne).

Aberdeen[15]) - it could well have been commissioned as early as 1900 for presentation to Mitchell himself, for in March 1901 he unexpectedly (and with short notice) turned down an honorary doctorate of law, offered by Aberdeen University.[16]

Fig. 6 St. Nicholas and St. Oswin, silver repoussé book cover, 1902. Illustrated in Hatton's book Figure Composition, Chapman & Hall, London 1905, p.64. (Untraced).

The Art Department made two new appointments for the academic year 1903-1904, Elizabeth Davies as teacher of illumination and Louisa Dickson as teacher of jewellery making. Both were recent graduates of the College and both were working members of the Handicrafts Company. By this time the College had the facilities to offer classes in jewellery making, enamelling and light metalwork.It seems that all parties were at pains to maintain a separate if parallel existence for the Company, even though its members were staff or students in the College. Although the Company was primarily a practical 'finishing school' for College trained art students, the Art Department saw no financial

Fig. 7 Silver and enamel cup and cover, 1902. The inscription around the foot reads: "presented by Dr. Ethel Williams & Dr. Ethel Bentham". The Drs. Williams and Bentham were two of the first female General Practitioners in the North East. (The Nicholas Harris Gallery, London).

Fig. 8 Altar; carved oak, gesso and iveroy, 1903. The gesso figures have suffered some damage - little remains of their original colouring and gilding. (Christ Church, Walker, Newcastle).

gain from this arrangement. Also by 1905 it is clear that the Company was offering tuition to non College students. This is not surprising since although the Design tuition given by the Company would be almost identical to that given by the College, its ability to demonstrate a wide range of technical skills (especially in metal and wood) was vastly superior.

The expiry of the Company's lease on the Orchard Street workshop in mid 1905 coincided with the erection of temporary workshop space by the College on empty land adjacent to the Art Department. The Art Committee agreed to use some of this space as a modelling studio and the rest was to provide temporary accommodation for the Handicrafts Company. This geographical proximity of the Company to the College, coupled with the imminent expiry of C.W. Mitchell's financial guarantees, prompted the Art Department to form a sub-committee to "consider and report on the relationship between the School and the Company". Hatton, although still producing designs for the Company, had ceased to act as its manager on the expiry of his contract, returning to full-time teaching at the College.

On February 22 1906 the Sub-Committee reported that the Company was "a voluntary organisation composed of persons connected with the Art Department" and that relations between the School and the Company had been "merely personal and friendly and in no sense legal or financial". It was thought that the relationship should be formalised by having an account of the Company inserted into the College prospectus, and perhaps by employing the manager of the Company as a teacher of Design at the College, with a proviso that part of the teaching should be practical and given in the workshops of the Company.[17]

In the meantime the Company went about its business, fulfilling two commissions for the College, then newly renamed after the late Sir William Armstrong. The first was for the decoration of the newly built Great Hall in the recent completion of the College buildings (the company formed part of the team of craftsmen employed under the supervision of the College archi-

Fig. 9 Silver and enamel presentation casket, 1903. Two of the enamel panels are illustrated in Figure Composition pp. 171 & 187. op. cit (City of Aberdeen, Art Gallery and Museums Collections).

tect, William Henry Knowles). The elaborate electroliers are certainly, and other decorative fittings very likely, the work of the Company (including the bas relief plaster panels, formerly coloured, illustrating the 'Practical' and 'Theoretical' sciences, adorning the barrel vault of the hall (figs. 11-12). The second, was another elaborate silver, jewel and enamel presentation casket with illuminated vellum and silver repoussé box, given to Queen Alexandra at the official opening of Armstrong College on Wednesday II July 1906 (fig. 13).[18]

Later that year, on September 9, the 'Newcastle Handicrafts Company' was registered with the Board of Trade as an incorporated company. This move would have been necessary to establish the limited liability of those now responsible for the Company in the event of a financial failure. The business was registered as "promoting the designing and manufacture of useful and artistic objects".

The following year in 1907 the Company moved to new, more publicly conspicuous premises (an office, showroom and workshop) at Vine Lane (now destroyed). By this time the Company's involvement with the College seems to have been minimal. The more well to do art-workers of its early years, all graduates of the College, had moved on and were now either employed as art teachers or exhibiting independently of the Company.[19] The move towards commercially more viable premises seems to have been an attempt on the Company's part to enable its present art-workers (from a variety of more humble backgrounds) to make a living from their work.

Although no work from this period has so far been identified with any certainty, the Company must have succeeded to some extent. There is no mention of them in Art Committee minutes until 19 July 1909, when a resolution was passed inviting the Council of the Company to confer with the Committee with regard to the maintenance and instruction in handicraft within the College.

By this date it must have been something of an embarrassment to the Art Department still not to be able to offer its students a wide range of practical crafts. The Handicrafts Company had been a temporary solution to a pressing problem, but with C.W. Mitchell's death and R.G. Hatton's return to full time College Duties, the Company and Department had become estranged.

Financial pressures must also have been beginning to take their toll, since when the Company reported back to the Committee on October 19 1909, it recommended a partial buy-out of the Company by the College. The scheme involved giving up the Vine Lane premises and the College purchasing the plant and second workshop off College Road. All design and making would be carried out at the College, the Art Department making arrangements with the Company's workers to allow them continued access to the workshops.

Fig. 10 Silver, two handled bowl with repoussé motto ("Love that well which thou mayst lose ere long") and cloisonné enamel decoration, 1904. This piece was kept by Hatton, eventually passing to his daughter who bequeathed it to Newcastle University. (The University of Newcastle upon Tyne).

The Company would continue to exist, but as a sales department, obtaining orders, arranging exhibitions and selling work.[20]

A decision was postponed until R.G. Hatton had researched and presented a paper on Craft-teaching in art schools to the Committee. He did so on November 22 1909. The paper, a lengthy document, details his findings after visits to Birmingham, Birmingham Vittoria Street, Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds, Leicester and the London Central School of Arts and Crafts.

Fig. 11 'Theoretical Science', bas-relief, plaster figure from The King's Hall, Armstrong College, c. 1906. (The University of Newcastle upon Tyne).

After listing the crafts provided for by these schools, Hatton stressed to the Committee the desirability of providing a separate room and specialist teacher for each craft. He explains that students entering these schools automatically assumed that they will have access to the standard of equipment they would expect as professionals. A clear distinction is made (and one gathers an assumption regarding intellectual ability and aesthetic awareness) between 'Fine Art' (including Design students) and 'Technical Art' students (mainly workers from the 'trades'). Although both types of student would bring in similar Government grants, Hatton points out that "a person of artistic perception will master a craft much more readily than the workman chosen haphazard from the people". In his view art schools of the future will have two distinct components. A 'Fine Art' area which would cater for painters, sculptors, architects and designers and a 'Technical Art' side which, while allowing members of the former group practical experience, would also provide a wide range of technical and artisitc training to persons in, or going into the

Fig. 12 Copper, wrought-iron and zinc electrolier from The King's Hall, Armstrong College, c. 1906. Probably designed by William Henry Knowles, architect. (The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham).

trades. Hatton indicates that it would be advisable to confer with the local trades to avoid the mistrust and suspicion that had arisen through lack of communication in many of the towns he visited. Most of the establishments visited lamented the fact that owing to municipal regulations they were unable to undertake commercial work or sell the products of their students. Hatton states his belief that in the future art schools will be allowed to undertake what he calls 'demonstration-trading'. He concludes that "some students of Fine Art instead of being painters and sculptors, or designers, will be artist-craftsmen". Then, no doubt speaking from personal experience "I confess to some doubt whether the artist-craftsman can live, or live very well, by his art-craftwork and I find that those who do best in it use the aid of, I fear, youthful labour".

Fig. 13 Silver, jewel and enamel presentation casket, 1906. The enamels illustrate passages from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. The parchment covered box is decorated with penwork and a silver repoussé panel of a crowned lion. (Courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria & Albert Museum).

After hearing this report the Committee decided to defer any decision until Hatton had time to confer with the local trades. It made its decision at a special meeting on 6 December 1909, when a resolution was passed expressing the Department's appreciation of the work of the Newcastle upon Tyne Handicrafts Company (Incorporated), but concluding that the time had not yet arrived to adopt the scheme put forward by the Company.

The reason behind this refusal was simple. The College had recently received a gift of £10,000 from Dr. J.B. Simpson for the express purpose of establishing new accommodation for the Art Department - The King Edward VII School of Art and Handicraft. When constructed the Company's equipment could be used to furnish new workshops, while its status as a Limited Company might prove useful if the Department became engaged in 'demonstration-trading'.

During the year 1910 work progressed on planning the new building. At the same time Hatton continued to produce designs, although whether these were executed by the Company, or in the College itself, it is hard to say. For example, an embroidered altar frontal of c. 1910 for a Northumberland church (fig. 14)

The Art Committee took no action in respect of The Handicrafts Company until the following year, when on 17 March 1911 a Sub-Committee, including R.G. Hatton and Percy Corder (one of the Company's directors) convened. The recommendation of this group "that it is not desirable that the Art Department of the College should in any sense have a commercial side" would in a matter of months lead to the end of the Company. The Committee did recommend, however (one assumes in some way of recompense), that when new teaching appointments were made by the Department, workers engaged in connection with the Company should be considered.[21] At a later meeting, on 24 May 1911, it was decided that Hatton and the principal of the College should confer with the Company and purchase such apparatus as they thought necessary. The timing of the Department's move into the new building meant that this option was not taken up until over a year later. A note in the College's Finance and Buildings Committee minute book for 9 December 1912 records the purchasing of plant to the sum of £75 to equip the King Edward VII School of Art. The committee turned down an offer to buy the Company's workshop on College Road for £87.10.0.

No mention is given at this late date to the workers of the Handicrafts Company; in fact their future seemed to be of little concern to the College. Their names are perhaps recorded in a rather pathetic list contained in the 1912 catalogue

to the annual Artists of the Northern Counties exhibition. The number of contributors to the craft section of these exhibitions was usually small, invariably members of the College staff or the more well to do ex-members of The Handicrafts Company exhibiting from separate studio addresses. In this particular catalogue a lengthy list of names, with no addresses (in itself peculiar) appears. Each person shows one or two items, mostly in copper or brass, occasionally silver or enamel. They had not contributed to previous exhibitions, and sadly they would not do so again.[22]

Fig. 14 Embroidered altar frontal (detail - St. Michael), designed by R.G. Hatton, executed c. 1910. This work was restored c. 1988 by Margaret Pooley of Earsdon, Northumberland.

In 1912 The Newcastle Handicrafts Company as a physical reality ceased to be, its trading name passing to Armstrong College in conjunction with the purchase of its equipment. The College finally had the craft facilities it had lacked in 1899.

The 1912-1913 session at the new King Edward VII School of Art and Handicraft saw the Department offering its students classes in Typography, Bookbinding, Jewellery, Metalwork, Enamelling, Stained Glass, Embroidery, Illumination & Decorative Writing, Design for Woodwork, Metalwork, Design for Manufacture, House Decorating, Modelling, Carving, Architecture and Architectural Design. These courses were monitored by a Crafts Committee made up of representatives of the following trades: Pottery, Metal Trades, Interior Decoration, Jewellery, Printing, Cabinet-Making and Stained Glass.[23] The Principal in his report for this session reported that by establishing this body "it is hoped that the teaching work of the Department may be brought still more closely in touch with the practical needs of Newcastle and the district round it". With Hatton now Professor of Fine Art, craft provision was at its peak during the period leading up to the early 1920s[24] (fig. 15).

In the 1920s design and craft provision was maintained by the College, although this was of little use to the local trades. As the Art Department's courses evolved towards degree level the commitment required from students was full-time and for three years, whilst provision for part-time education was gradually decreased. Trade students increasingly went elsewhere in the city for their 'art training'.[25]

By the late 1920s the ideal of the self-supporting artist-craftsman was largely redundant. There had been no manifestation of Hatton's vision of art schools engaged in 'demonstration trading'. The prospect of a revival of The Handicrafts Company, held in suspension, awaiting the day art departments would be allowed limited commercial activity became increasingly unlikely. The end of a unique experiment took place on 13 December 1932, when The Newcastle Handicrafts Company was legally dissolved. Since 1912 the Company had only existed as an idea, at most a vain hope. In truth, the reality had perished twenty years previously, when the whole extraordinary experiment had passed into unsought obscurity.

Fig. 15 Figures of 'Science' and 'Practice', stained glass, designed by R.G. Hatton c. 1920. These windows are sited on the landing of the stairs of what is now the Architecture Department. (The University of Newcastle upon Tyne).

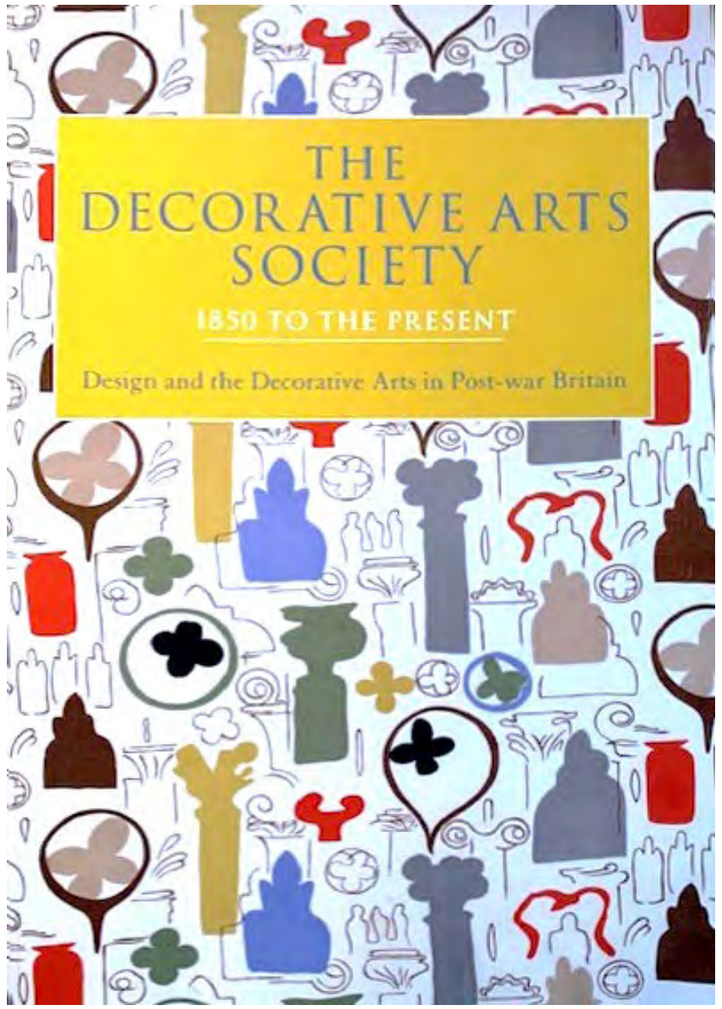
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank: Mr. E.M. Bettenson; The University of Newcastle upon Tyne; The Cathedral Church of St. Nicholas, Newcastle upon Tyne; The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham; The Nicholas Harris Gallery, London; The Victoria & Albert Museum; Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums and, particularly, the many churches which have kindly opened their doors to us.

Notes

1. Roker is very much an outing for the Birmingham and Cotswold schools, whilst Fenham is a late example of the Webb/Lethaby tradition. Jesmond, the 'magnum opus' of its architect, Thomas Ralph Spence (1841-1918), is splendidly clothed in a crafted Gothic derived from G.E. Street and J.D. Sedding. Of the local craftsmen, many, as in the carver Ralph Hedley, or The Gateshead Stained Glass Company, had already had long and fruitful collaboration with Spence during his years on Tyneside.
2. The Mitchell family were consistently notable patrons of several early members of the Art Workers Guild - including George B. Simonds (First Master), George Frampton, Walter Crane and of course T.R.Spence.
3. Art Committee Minute Book 1879-1929; meeting held on 26 March 1895 (Newcastle University).
4. Pre Raphaelites - Painters and Patrons in the North East (cat.) Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne 1989.
5. See The Studio Volume 2 pp. 90-99 and 171-174.
6. R.G. Hatton's publications include A Text Book of Elementary Design, Chapman & Hall, London, 1893.
   Perspective for Art Students Chapman & Hall, London, 1902.
   Design - An Exposition of the Principles and Practice of the Making of Patterns, Chapman & Hall, London 1902.
   Figure Drawing, Chapman & Hall, London, 1904.
   Figure Composition, Chapman & Hall, London, 1905.
   The Craftsman's Plant Book, Chapman & Hall, London, 1909.
   Principles of Decoration, Chapman & Hall, London, 1925.
7. Art Committee Minute Book, meeting held on 15 December 1893.
8. The firms included the ceramic manufacturers C.T. Maling & Sons, Robsons 'The largest furnishing establishment in the North of England' and Reids the jewellers.
9. George Frampton, at this time joint principal with W.R. Lethaby of the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts, was becoming increasingly well known in the provinces thanks to the support of The Studio magazine. The memorial tablet to Dr. Mitchell, of 1897-98 in St. George's church, Jesmond, Newcastle is amongst Frampton's most notable and innovative achievements.
10. The Company could not be part of the College for two reasons. Firstly, municipal regulations prevented the College from engaging in trade. Secondly , as the Art Department was maintaining its drive to establish friendly links with local manufacturers, it could not afford to be seen to be in direct financial competition with these trades.
11. At least in its earliest years, Hatton appears to have been the Company's principal, if indeed only, designer. The obvious Birmingham influences become increasingly overlaid by a stylised flat patterning derived from the designs of Heywood Sumner. However, Hatton clearly kept abreast of developments in the Birmingham school, and his later stained glass designs can be easily mistaken for those of his Birmingham colleague Richard J. Stubington, Hatton's junior by 20 years.
12. The Studio Volume 24 p.135. Mitchell and Hatton were also instrumental in the foundation of this institution, together with Charles Williams (1863-1949), later to be director of education for Northumberland County Council.
13. The Company used two hallmarks - the first, 'THCo.' (for The Handicrafts Company) was used until c.1906 - the second , 'NHCo.' (for The Newcastle Handicrafts Company) was registered with the Birmingham assay office c. 1907.
14. R.J.S. Bertram (1871-1953).
15. Sir David Stewart was Lord Provost of Aberdeen from 1889-95. He was a prominent businessman and Justice of the Peace.
16. The doctorate was turned down as a mark of respect to his father, a native of Aberdeen, who had received the same award from the University.
17. If this plan had been implemented it would have meant that R.J.S. Bertram had taken over as manager of the Company, as his was the only appointment made the following academic year.
18. It is now believed that the example in the Victoria & Albert Museum is a facsimile or trial piece for this casket. It is from an inscription on the base of the box of the V&A casket that we find the only certain record as to who was working as a member of the Company. The inscription reads as follows:
    "This casket was designed by Richard G. Hatton, Master of the Art School. The silver was executed by Ralph Butcher, the enamels by Elizabeth Davies & Eleanor Slater, the ornaments by Louisa Dickson, Hilda Halvorsen, Mary Barber, Amy Dickinson, Alice Armes, Louise Davies & Eva Barber, and the box decorated by Elizabeth Marchbank & René Bowman, all working members of The Handicrafts Company, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
19. See various catalogues of The Artists of Northern Counties. An annual exhibition initiated in 1905, always held at The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
20. By this time the Company was supervised by a council of three men, Percy Corder (a solicitor), Thomas E. Hodgkin (a banker) and Charles Irwin (a businessman).
21. If this recommendation had been adopted it would have meant that the following appointments for the 1911-1912 session: Mr. Longstaff (metalwork), Miss Younger (bookbinding) and a Mr. Stirling had been Company members.
22. The list is as follows: Donald Wilkie, Mrs. Donald Wilkie, Miss Crawford, Mr. Monaghan, Miss Martin, Miss Tait, Mr. M. Sutherland, Mr. Rossini, Miss Rigg, Miss Langlands and Mr. Riddell.
23. The Committee was as follows: Mr. Alfred Emley (Metal Trades), Mr. C.T. Maling (Pottery), Mr. G.G. Laidler (Decorating), Mr. C. Leo Reid (Jewellery), Mr. John Malcolm (Printing), Mr. J.S. Robson (Cabinet Trades) and Mr. Albert Atkinson (Stained Glass).
24. Even Hatton took up design once again, in this case for stained glass. Examples of his work can be found at Newcastle University (fig. 15). Another particularly splendid window to Hatton's designs, is that of 1919-21 at St. James Church, Shilbottle, Northumberland. This was executed in the studios of Reed, Millican & Co., Newcastle upon Tyne, although Hatton had his students executed the lettering of the memorial panelling in the same church.
25. The School of Science and Art, Rutherford College, Bath Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne. a municipally funded institution from which would grow the present day Newcastle College of Art & Technology.

Tony Peart is a painter working in Newcastle, represented by The Piccadilly Gallery, London W1. He teaches part-time at Cumbria College of Art & Design and is greatly interested in the Arts and Crafts Movement, particularly its metalwork.



The Fulham Pottery 1932–1965 A Return to ‘Artistic’ Production

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present
Vol. 32. pp. 100-125 (2008).

THE FULHAM POTTERY 1932–1965

A return to 'artistic' production

TONY PEART

The Fulham Pottery is rightly celebrated in the history of ceramics as the first pottery in England to perfect the large scale manufacture of salt-glazed stoneware and also for the artistic quality and innovation of its early wares. The fact that the Pottery remained in operation on the same site for over three centuries is also remarkable.

By the early twentieth century only utilitarian stoneware was being manufactured but from the 1930s onwards a series of attempts were made to re-introduce the production of 'art' pottery to Fulham. As each of these developments was in some way an attempt to recapture the former artistic standing of the Pottery, it is important to briefly record the key events in the Pottery's long history.

JOHN DWIGHT

John Dwight (1636–1703) 'scholar and master potter' – as he was styled by the Pottery in its later years (Fig. 2) – established the Pottery in Fulham in 1672–73. He had obtained patents from Charles II for the sole rights to manufacture 'transparent Earthenware commonly known by the names of Porcelaine or China and Persian Ware also … the stone ware vulgarly called Cologne ware'.[1] The illusive search for a 'true' porcelain body remained a lifelong passion; however Dwight did independently master the art of producing salt-glazed stoneware. His wares were superior to those imported in huge quantities from the Rhineland by Dutch merchants and this venture was so successful that by 1700 the English market for stoneware bottles and mugs was largely satisfied by Dwight and his imitators.

The full extent of Dwight's importance was largely unacknowledged until the latter part of the nineteenth century when a small number of experimental pieces and finely modelled portrait sculptures were finally exhibited and widely publicised.[2]

Following Dwight's death in 1703 the Pottery remained in the possession of his descendants until 1859 but by the early nineteenth century, the output was essentially utilitarian stoneware. John Doulton (1793–1873), who served his apprenticeship at Fulham prior to establishing his own pottery at Lambeth in 1815, recalled that the wares manufactured were mainly stoneware containers including ink and blacking bottles.

1. Designed by W.J. Marriner in 1936 the FMA shape was the Pottery's most commercially successful design. It was manufactured in far greater quantity than any other vase and remained in production for twenty-seven years. Private Collection

2. The Pottery c.1948. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

C.I.C. BAILEY

The last descendant of Dwight to own the Pottery, Charles Edward White, died in 1859. His executors offered the Pottery for sale but failed to find a buyer until 1862. Two year later it was sold once more and purchased by C.I .C. Bailey who largely rebuilt and enlarged the Pottery. Under Bailey brown stoneware continued to be manufactured but later in the early 1870s the Pottery began to make Doulton-like 'art' wares. It was during this period that Robert Wallace Martin (1843–1923) briefly became a modeller and designer for Bailey and pieces were produced to the designs of the architect J. P. Seddon (1827–1906). By the late 1880s the Pottery had reverted once again to solely producing utilitarian stoneware although with limited financial success as in 1888 the Pottery became insolvent although Bailey was retained, for a short period, as the manager.

THE CHEAVIN FAMILY

Early in 1891 the Pottery combined with a long-established family business of water filter manufacturers in Boston, Lincolnshire. This was a logical merger as the stoneware cases into which the water filters were fitted were all manufactured by Bailey at the Fulham Pottery. George William Cheavin the son of the proprietor in Boston moved to London as first managing director of the newly founded The Fulham Pottery and Cheavin Filter Company Limited. The Pottery would remain in the Cheavin family until 1969.

IAN WINSTON CHEAVIN

Ian Winston Cheavin (1900–1973) (Fig. 3), the second of George William's three sons, was the only one to enter the family business.[3] He joined his father in 1919 the year after a disastrous fire had destroyed much of the Pottery and necessitated a programme of extensive rebuilding.

A wide range of stoneware was produced at the Pottery during the first three decades of the twentieth century. This included: *Saludor* water filters (supplied worldwide and a staple of the company until the 1960s); *Meludor* water softeners; *Adaptable* hot water bottles; *Zerocool* cold storage boxes; ginger beer bottles and a host of other products for the brewing, sanitary and chemical trades. The Pottery also supplied modelling clays to artists and sculptors and advertised that it would undertake 'biscuit firing… for Artists, Modellers, Sculptors and Amateurs'.[4]

By 1928 it was clear that with a narrowing of the stoneware market, a continued dependence on its manufacture would not be in the company's best interest. The Fulham Pottery was incorporated in October 1928 with George Cheavin and I. Winston Cheavin as directors. Other areas of manufacture were then explored in an attempt to diversify the company's activities. The firing of stoneware had virtually ceased by this time but the Pottery continued as an assembly point for water filters and as a distribution point for the utilitarian and industrial stoneware now manufactured for the Pottery elsewhere. The kilns were mainly used to fire the Kieselghur porous 'candle' filters used in the *Saludor* water filters.

In 1929 Fulham Borough Council, with the co-operation of the Pottery, organised a successful Fulham Pottery exhibition celebrating two hundred and fifty years of continuous stoneware production.[5] It is likely that the assembly and exhibition of so many of the artistic triumphs of the past was a considerable motivating factor in Winston Cheavin's desire to re-establish the former 'artistic' standing of the Pottery. The severe economic downturn of the early 1930s proved only a temporary delay as by 1932 the Pottery was advertising 'Hurlingham Ware vases etc. & garden ornaments' alongside its long-running stoneware products.[6]

HURLINGHAM WARE 1932

With the benefit of hindsight it is difficult to understand what market Hurlingham Ware was aimed at. To the modern eye, these heavily potted vases and lamp bases of similar form (often with applied handles) appear to have been primarily a vehicle for experimentation with surface decoration. Recurring techniques are the application of a turgid brown viscous slip sponged to give rough, mottled surface textures or the use, under coloured glazes, of improvised wax spirals as a decorative resist.

There is no indication that anyone other than the potters formerly employed making industrial stoneware was involved in the design and manufacture of this range. Perhaps this was an attempt to re-create a spirit of medieval naiveté. One suspects, however, that to an audience used to the vibrant colour, sophistication, clean lines and 'modernity' of the likes of Truda Carter, Clarice Cliff or Susie Cooper the Hurlingham range simply appeared crude and dull. The range was a commercial disaster and production was quickly discontinued. It is significant that in later years Winston Cheavin never mentioned the existence of this range when talking about the re-introduction of 'artistic' production, however the fact that he continued to explore the development of art pottery after this initial failure clearly demonstrates his dogged determination and the financial necessity of finding commercial success.

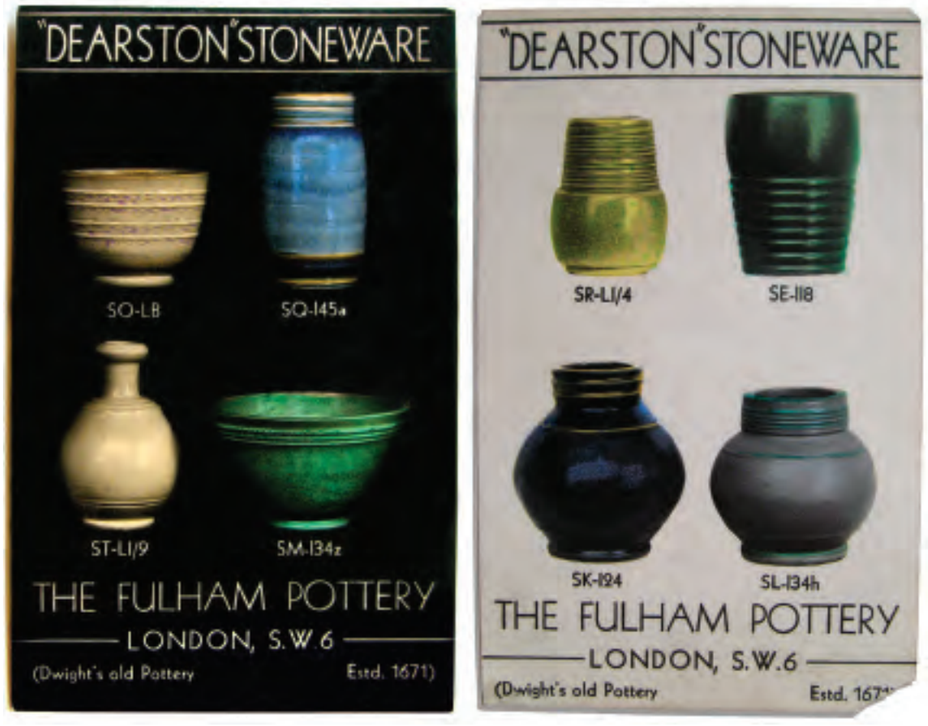
GARDEN FIGURES 1934

At the 1934 British Industries Fair, alongside the usual display of water filters and industrial stoneware, the Pottery introduced its new venture, a range of stoneware garden figures and ornaments designed by A.R. White.[7] This range included the Christopher Robin group based upon E.H. Shephard's illustrations for A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* books (Fig. 4). The promotional catalogue noted 'The whole of the Figures, etc., illustrated… are manu-

3. Charles A. West (the post-war Pottery manager), I. Winston Cheavin and G. T. Furniss (stock manager) photographed in 1948. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

4. Examples from the 1934 Winnie-the-Pooh garden figure range designed by A.R. White. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

factured entirely at the Fulham Pottery where 2 ½ centuries ago John Dwight was granted the first patent for Stoneware.' It was well received by the trade press but from its brief production period one can assume it failed to find much of a commercial market.



5. 'Dearston' Stoneware designed by Ezra Dearing and manufactured at the Barker Pottery, Chesterfield, 1935–6. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

DEARSTON STONEWARE 1935

The garden figures were displayed once again at the 1935 British Industries Fair but were joined by a new range of decorative stoneware vases called Dearston Ware designed in collaboration with Ezra Dearing, a ceramic chemist (Fig. 5). Although trial pieces were made in Fulham the actual production was undertaken by the Barker Pottery in Chesterfield.[8] Dearing was interested in replicating Chinese glaze effects and applied his experiments to a wide range of shapes thrown for him by the Barker Pottery. The 'modern' form of these vases, featuring turned decorative bands, clearly shows the influence of contemporary designers such as Jean Luce and Keith Murray. Once again the range was well received by the trade press; The Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review commented:

> We inspected with interest a number of samples of this new ware and found them to exert an appeal both technically and artistically. Some of the new shapes were especially pleasing, and the way in which crystalline effects – many of them unique – are being developed in the glazes is deserving of especial mention. …the most interesting feature, perhaps, is that one never knows precisely what one is going to get – no two pieces are ever exactly alike.[9]

Examples were purchased at the fair by the Princess Royal and the Duchess of York. In April 1935 an exhibition of Dearston Stoneware was held at Oxley Fine Arts, South Molton Street, London. This was opened by John Drinkwater, the poet, playwright and passionate stoneware collector (he owned examples by Dwight) who commented; 'here is pottery which is equal to any that has ever been produced in this country. It worthily upholds the tradition of the old Fulham Pottery.'[10]

Dearston was stocked by a range of retailers including Heal & Son Ltd. and Fortnum & Mason and it is clear from Winston Cheavin's later comments that this was a range he was particularly proud of.[11] With such widespread praise in the contemporary press its commercial failure within two years must have been especially galling.

In 1935 G.W. Cheavin retired from the business and I. Winston Cheavin became the Governing Director.[12] It was in the same year that the Pottery's 'Town Sales' ledger records a small commission received on April 30 to make some 'special vases' for Constance Spry's company; Flower Decorations Ltd. of 64 South Audley Street, London, W1.[13] This commission arrived at a time when the Pottery was concentrating on the manufacture of its stoneware garden figures and the promotion of the recently introduced Dearston range. It is likely that Spry chose to approach the Fulham Pottery as they advertised in both telephone and trade directories that they would undertake

biscuit firing for outside parties. The Pottery was also conveniently close by for communication and supervision purposes. From this modest beginning a chain of events was set in motion that would, within the space of two years, radically transform the prospects and fortunes of the Pottery (Fig. 6).

6. A very early (c.1935) photograph of the 'special' Constance Spry vases being 'fettled' after removal from their plaster moulds. W.J. Marriner is working upon a 'Two-Handled Urn' and to his left a 'Datura Vase' can be seen. The Pottery's major production range of garden figures can be seen in the background. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

CONSTANCE SPRY

In 1935 Constance Spry (1886–1960), was already running a large and growing floristry company employing over seventy people. With the success of her first book *Flower Decoration* (1934) she was beginning to achieve a fame and influence beyond that which she had previously enjoyed.[14] This was within a small, but influential, coterie of rich, fashionable, upper-class friends, patrons and tastemakers.

Spry's flower decorations broke with the typical stiff, symmetrical compositions of the time by focusing on flowing, dynamic and asymmetrical arrangements (Fig. 7). Her choice of material was also radically different. She was just as likely to use 'finds' from the hedgerow or kitchen garden (kale, vegetables, wild-flowers, foliage with berries etc.) as she was imported, exotic blooms from the flower market. Spry used a vast array of vases and containers for her arrangements but as her style

7. An example of the flowing, asymmetrical arrangement popularised by Spry and easily achievable in wide-mouthed mantel vases. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

developed, conventionally shaped narrow-necked vases were discarded as being too restricting. She favoured open-mouthed bowls and urns that allowed the material she was using to spread and flow. For arrangements placed on mantelpieces, or against walls, what she really needed was wide mouthed but narrow, neutrally coloured vases and these proved impossible to find. As early as 1930, Spry had tasked her assistant, the ex-art student Florence Standfast with the manufacture of vases which fulfilled her exacting requirements.[15] These were hand-made in papier-mâché and were subsequently coated with varnish or plaster.

By 1935 a more regular supply of vases was required and once again Miss Standfast was asked to model a range of shapes that could be manufactured commercially in ceramic (Fig. 8). Although these vases would all carry Constance Spry's facsimile signature together with the words 'designed by' it is likely that 'approved by' would be a more accurate reflection of the truth. Constance Spry was the head of a large commercial concern and would happily delegate roles and responsibilities to those she knew to be more able than her. Florence Standfast was both a friend and one of her most trusted assistants, she was also in charge of the department of Flower Decoration Ltd known as 'The Arts'. Her wide range of art and craft skills, good humour and professionalism allowed her to cope well with the numerous creative challenges, presented to her on a regular basis, by the dynamic Spry.

8. Three of the vases modelled by Florence Standfast for Constance Spry: 'Fleur de Lys'; 'Fern-Sided' and 'Napoleon's Hat'. Private Collections

Through her friendship and business relationship with the society decorator Syrie Maugham (1879–1955), Spry had been exposed to the 'white' interiors created by Maugham in the early 1930s.[16] In *Flowers in House and Garden* (1937) Spry asserts, 'When a wall has been given a great many coats of whitewash, it acquires almost a luminous quality and it certainly gives a full and true value to every flower and leaf set against it'. To complement this ideal of a pale interior, one of her major requirements was that the vases should be light, neutrally coloured and with a matt exterior. Writing in *Summer and Autumn Flowers* (1951) she states:

> 'Well-shaped pottery vases have many good points; they usually hold plenty of water and are heavy enough to carry quite weighty stems and branches. Those with a matt surface seem to make the best foil for flowers, and have the advantage that their colour may be readily changed from time to time with a coat of distemper.'

THE CONSTACE SPRY RANGE 1935

The designs created by Florence Standfast for this range of vases are documented in a catalogue produced by Flower Decorations Ltd. c.1937–38. Of the thirty different designs, ten were made in plaster or papier-mâché by Flower Decorations and only twelve were manufactured in any number by the Fulham Pottery including a 'crown' vase designed by Oliver Messel.[17] The most common form is a narrow open vase on a pedestal base, sometimes with two handles (Fig. 9a–c). The twin-handled 'mantle vase' shape is now so well known that it has almost become a cliché due to its subsequent adoption and mass manufacture in the 1950s by much of the British ceramics industry. It is important therefore to stress that these were the

9a–c. Examples of the vases first made for Flower Decorations Ltd in 1935. The 'Large Mantel Vase' was a huge technical challenge, its shape being unsuitable for press-moulding. The 'Datura Vase' is based upon one of Constance Spry's favourite indoor plants. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

first vases of this type and that they differ significantly from other companies' later 'versions' in terms of their generous scale, unglazed matt exteriors, sophistication of design and sheer physical presence.

Many of the vases in the range show the influence of ancient Greek and Egyptian forms. They also bear a passing similarity to the plaster vases designed by Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966) for the French designer Jean-Michel Frank (1895–1941) which were stocked by Syrie Maugham. As Giacometti's vases mostly date to the following year any resemblance is probably coincidental. A much more likely influence is the neo-baroque decorative plaster-work (lamps, wall lights, vases etc.) of Serge Roche (1898–1988) whose work was used at this time by Maugham, in some of her interior schemes.

Although the vases were technically difficult to realise, the Fulham Pottery employed the same press-moulding techniques that were being used to manufacture their stoneware garden figure range.[18] The matt surface decoration demanded by Spry was replicated by making the vases in white, filter-pressed, Devon earthenware clay. This was biscuit-fired and then glazed on the interior only, leaving the desired plaster-like surface finish. The vases were retailed by Flower Decorations Ltd, the Pottery only acting as manufacturer and thus the only identifying mark used was the stamped 'Constance Spry' facsimile signature.[19]

The initial order for 'special vases' received in April 1935, was repeated and enlarged, each month for the rest of 1935 and the whole of 1936. The positive way in which this range was received by Spry's customers and the snowballing in popularity of flower arranging is clearly demonstrated by the increasing sums involved. The first, modest order was to the value of £9/14/6 and yet by December 1936 Flower Decorations Ltd had spent a massive £1043/5/0 on vases.

As the orders increased exponentially, Winston Cheavin would have been well aware that as simply the manufacturer, and not the wholesaler, his pottery was not reaping the maximum financial reward from the enterprise. While wishing to keep on good terms with Spry and her company, the temptation to move the Fulham Pottery into a similar line of vases ultimately proved too much to resist. In February 1937 at The British Industries Fair the Pottery unveiled its new range of off-white flower vases, named Alber Ware (Fig. 10).

10. The introduction of the Alber Ware range; The Pottery's exhibition stand at the 1937 British Industries Fair. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

ALBER WARE 1937

The growth in orders from Flower Decorations Ltd necessitated the building of a rectangular muffle kiln, sometime in 1936.[20] This purpose-built, coal-fired earthenware kiln was now used to fire the new range of vases to be marketed by the Pottery (Fig. 11). An article in *Pottery and Glass* (January 1946) records the introduction of Alber Ware:

> In the production of these White Fulham Vases, Mr. Cheavin has not placed himself in the hands of any one designer; Mr. Gerard de Witt's group are both original and graceful… one of the company's oldest employees, Mr. W.J. Marriner, who retired last month after fifty-one years' service, has been responsible for some of the most pleasing shapes.[21]

11. The second of the two rectangular earthenware kilns built at the north end of the Pottery yard c.1946. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

12. Vases designed by William John Marriner c.1936–7 for the Alber Ware range and given the 'FM' prefix. Those illustrated are FMA, FMC, FMB and FME. The one shape not pictured (FMD) is a bowl. Private Collection

The success of Marriner's designs is confirmed by Winston Cheavin writing in 1954; 'It is interesting that two of our most popular shapes were designed by W.J. Marriner… It is interesting too, that he should have designed these shapes when 40 years of his 50 was spent on making stone (ware) hot water bottles'.[22]

The vases designed by the untrained Marriner, may have superficial similarities to those designed by Florence Standfast for Constance Spry but a closer inspection reveals them to be the work of a potter who knew his craft (Fig. 12).

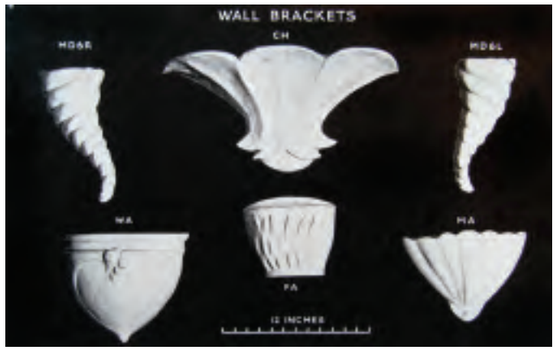
Press-moulding, although a deceptively simple technique, is prone to many technical difficulties. Sheets of clay are pressed into (typically) a two or three part plaster mould (Fig. 13). The parts are then joined using a liquid slip and when sufficiently dry 'fettled' (cleaned up) prior to firing. The number of further hand inscribed details can add greatly to the time spent on making and thus ultimately the price charged. The major drawback of the press-moulding technique however, is that if the clay does not remain at an even thickness distortion will occur during firing. This consistency of 'pressing' proved impossible for the Pottery to achieve and consequently virtually all the vases made suffer from slight to quite major deformations of shape. The most critical area in the mantle vase is the 'stem' that joins the bowl to the foot. The extremely narrow stems designed by Standfast indicate her lack of ceramic knowledge. Although aesthetically pleasing and easy to make in plaster, the slender shape becomes a recipe for disaster when realised in earthenware. Even a moderate stress in the clay at this point will result in extremely pronounced distortions and, one suspects, a high wastage rate. These shapes are consequently seldom seen.

13. S.G. Clarke carefully lays a sheet of Devon clay into one half of an FMA mould prior to 'pressing'. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

The first Alber Ware catalogue produced in 1937 illustrates 58 different shapes (Fig. 14a–d). Some are based on elaborate Etruscan forms (stamped 'EM' prefix) or classical architecture; the *Whirlwind* and *Corinthian* range of tall vases ('WH' & 'CO' prefix) but these were soon dropped: the former because of their complexity, the latter because of their unsuitability for press-moulding. It is also here, in two of the three designs provided by Gerard de Witt ('WD' prefix) that the clear influence of Giacometti is finally evident but these shapes too, were discontinued after a short period of time.

The Alber Ware designs that remained in production for many years (including Marriner's iconic 'FMA' and 'FMC' shapes) all demonstrate the following attributes: stability in the kiln; minimum hand-finishing and a general ease of manufacture. The range soon proved to be as commercially successful as the 'special' vases for Flower Decorations Ltd and many were to remain in production until 1962.

The similarity and close relationship between the Alber Ware vases and those manufactured for Constance Spry ensured that they were readily taken up by the growing mass of amateur flower arrangers and orders grew rapidly. Alber Ware had the advantage of being more competitively priced and more widely available than the 'Constance Spry' range.[23] After a number of false starts Winston Cheavin finally achieved the commercial success he had been seeking.



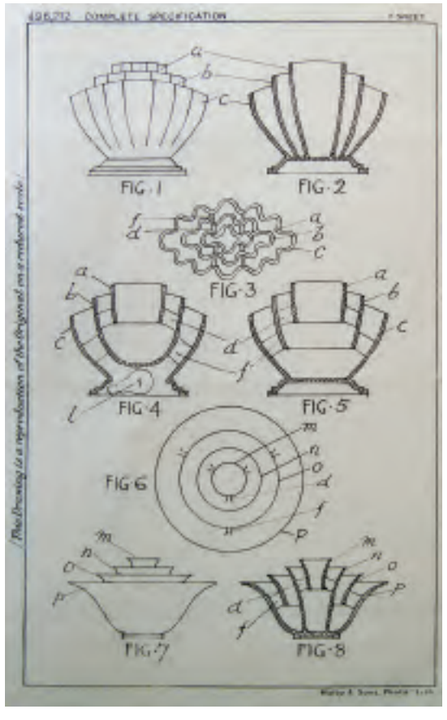
14a–d. Examples from the Alber Ware catalogue 1937. The designs of Gerard de Witt carry the 'WD' prefix and in his shapes WDE and WDF the influence of Alberto Giacometti can be clearly seen. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

THE CORALIE RANGE 1938

On the 25 May 1937 Gerard de Witt applied for a patent for a 'Vase or Pot for Cut Flowers' (Fig. 15).[24] The specification was accepted in 1938 and described the design as follows:

> This invention relates to an improved vase or pot for cut flowers. The principal object… is to provide a vase or pot which simulates the formation of a bud or flower… in addition to possessing great usefulness as a holder of flowers for floral decoration.
>
> …the vase or pot consists of an outer shell and one or more inner shells which… are a repetition of the outer shell but of smaller size. The bottom of the shell may be removed… so that a lamp may be placed in the bottom space for illuminating the exterior of the shell… so that flowers placed in the shells are softly illuminated.

The Coralie Range of vases, as they were called, took their inspiration from the natural



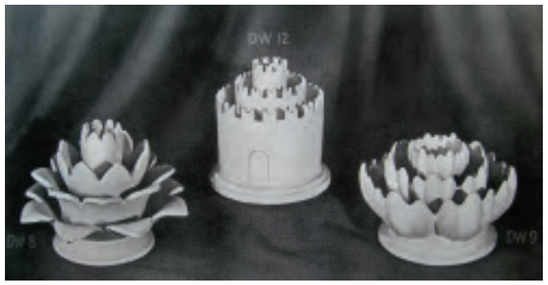
15. Specification drawing for Gerard de Witt's 1938 Patent 496212 Vase or Pot for Cut Flowers. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

forms created by 'cup coral' and their structure from Delft-ware tulip vases (which perform a very similar function).[25] They were introduced at the 1938 British Industries Fair and sold steadily thereafter (Fig. 16). They would never become as successful as Alber Ware as they have two major weaknesses. The first is the complex nature of their design and the precision needed to make the interlocking but removable inserts. As with many of the 'Constance Spry' vases the Pottery was pushing the technical limits of what could be achieved using press-moulded clay. The second weakness is almost ironic as, even though they were obviously designed to capitalise on the huge growth in the popularity of flower arranging this form of vase is the least interesting to those with more than a basic ability in the craft. The stacked form and narrow cylinders that hold the individual stems is too limiting and prescriptive to allow anything more than the most obvious formal, symmetrical arrangement. They did find an audience with those desiring speedy and superficially impressive results from unskilled labour. For this reason they found a ready market in hotels and clubs and some were purchased by Buckingham Palace and were used for many years at the Royal garden parties.

The catalogue *Some Vases from The Fulham Pottery* (c.1938/39) illustrates fourteen different designs, all by de Witt and all using the 'stacking tier' system that he had patented. Some take their form from nature (thistle, crocus and lotus) others from less likely sources. One vase is modelled on the unlikely form of a Martello Tower and the *Metropolis* range of three vases; almost certainly owe their genesis to the 1927 film of the same name (Fig. 17a–c). Only the Coralie vases were manufactured for any period of time, two of them remaining in production until 1960.

Although Alber Ware, the 'Constance Spry' and, to some extent, the Coralie range, were all commercially successful, it should be remembered that during these years the Pottery remained a small and diverse business. Only fourteen men were employed at the factory during 1938 and 1939 and less than half of these were engaged in vase production. This meant that supply could never keep pace with the growing demand. Winston Cheavin continued

16. Gerard de Witt's Coralie vases 1938. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre



17a–c. Vases employing de Witt's 'spaced layer' principal and featured in the catalogue Some Vases from the Fulham Pottery c.1938–9: The Thistle (DW11); Lotus (2) (DW8&9); Martello (DW12) and Metropolis (3) (DW3,6&13). Private Collection and Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

to retail a wide range of utilitarian stoneware, pottery clay and to assemble and distribute the *Saludor* water filters. When compared to the output of a typical Staffordshire pottery the quantity of vases produced was tiny. Nonetheless trade was growing and the fortunes of the Pottery were steadily improving. The declaration of war then brought a virtual halt to production as the government introduced a strict quota on the manufacture of vases, unless for export.

THE WAR YEARS

At least five of the 1939 workforce remained at the Pottery during the war years. A few modest orders for Alber Ware, Coralie and 'Constance Spry' vases were satisfied but production of the vases ended by late 1941. In April 1942 Winson Cheavin briefly explored the possibility of producing some vases designed by Lucie Rie (1902–1995) but this was swiftly rejected.[26] He wrote to her on 29 April 1942 stating: 'I have decided in view of the uncertain future of the vase side of my business and the cost of the experimentation, not to proceed further with this.' A cheque for five pounds was also enclosed to cover the cost of work she had already undertaken. For the duration of the war production now focused on water filters for export.

POST-WAR PRODUCTION

In an attempt to stimulate economic recovery following the war, the Board of Trade actively encouraged export sales to generate much needed foreign currency. It was hoped to stimulate this trade by placing severe restrictions on the sale of ceramics to the home market. In particular, the manufacture of ornamental and coloured ceramics was restricted by a strict 'home' quota system and also subject to a prohibitive 100 per cent purchase tax. It is remarkable that even with these handicaps the Pottery lost none of its pre-war momentum. The manufacture of vases was recommenced a matter of months after the cessation of hostilities and by January 1946 the workforce had returned to its pre-war strength of fourteen (increasing to eighteen by May of the same year). The accounts book for this period show a few token export sales of vases but the majority of sales were to the home market. As orders grew it was obvious that a second earthenware kiln was required and this was constructed c.1946 adjacent to the other earthenware kiln in the North end of the Pottery yard.

The 'RS' range produced around 1946/47 remains something of a mystery.[27] It was short-lived and once again proved a huge technical challenge to the press-moulders (Fig. 18). The designs were almost certainly provided by the Swiss-born, decorative sculptor Raoh Schorr (1901–1991) who worked from the Bolton Studios, Chelsea.[28] Unfortunately, due to the absence of records for the years in question it is impossible to say if these vases were made for sale through the Pottery or simply manufactured for re-sale by Schorr. They certainly demonstrate a post-war continuance of the 'neo-baroque' style as practised by Serge Roche. Their exotically flamboyant and 'unrestrained' decorative treatment may also be an indication that they were intended as an export line.

During these years the company's role as a processor and retailer of modelling clay also grew considerably. Small orders were despatched to numerous individuals (both amateur and professional) and bulk sales were made to schools, colleges and education authorities. Alongside these developments the utilitarian stoneware items remained in stock and found a ready market as did the water filters which continued to be purchased in large numbers by overseas buyers.

18. Examples from the 'RS' range, almost certainly designed by Raoh Schorr c.1946–7. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

THE POST-WAR GROWTH IN FLOWER ARRANGING

The steady growth in the popularity of flower arranging, set in motion before the war by the pioneering Constance Spry, now transformed into a rapidly growing mass movement. Spry had focused the attention of a select portion of society on the decorative possibilities of flowers but it was Julia Clements (b.1906) who, at a time of national privation and shortages, took the message of flower arranging to the masses. Her conversion to the cause came as a 'revelation' during a speech made to the Kent Area Women's Institute in 1947, ostensibly a talk on Clements' war-time experience of America. What she experienced that day changed the subject of her speech and the course of her life. The explanation of both how, and why, flower arranging was so passionately and widely taken up is clearly explained in the following passage from her autobiography:

> The picture was just the opposite to that which I had seen in the USA, for here the women were shuffling into that great … hall looking down at heel, dispirited and grey, shabbily dressed and almost, it seemed, without hope. I looked around wondering what I could do about it. … I put down my prepared notes and said: '…I can't believe … that you who have won the war … are still having to listen to talks about rationing and quotas and under-the-counter goods. Everything seems so negative, there must be something positive we can do.' I looked down at the customary bowl of flowers placed on the president's table and the answer came to me in a flash. 'Flowers,' I cried. 'Flowers we have in great abundance and in greater variety than almost any other country in the world. These are not rationed, or restricted, they are not even held back for export. They are here, free for everyone. We could all be artists with flowers.'[29]

Clements went on to lecture tirelessly, promoting the cause of flower arranging widely around the country, finding receptive audiences wherever she went. Her first book *Fun with Flowers* (1950) had an initial print run of ten thousand copies.[30] It went on to sell ninety thousand before going out of print to make way for her second book published the following year.

From the late 1940s through to the late 1950s flower arranging became one of, if not the, quickest growing practical pastime in the country. The mass of amateur flower arrangers was well catered for by publishers who were more than happy to supply books and magazine articles on the subject written by the likes of Spry and Clements. The advice and illustrations contained in these books was eagerly digested by members of the growing number of flower clubs and societies which had sprung up nationwide. The illustrations contained therein were particularly valued by the amateur readership and many of the vases featured (particularly by Clements) were from the Fulham Pottery.[31]

19. The drying room January 1952. Vases are left on the floor to harden prior to 'fettling'. No 'Constance Spry' shapes are to be seen and Marriner's FMA and FMC clearly outnumber the other vases present. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

Towards the end of 1952 the Board of Trade, after concentrated and prolonged lobbying from ceramic manufacturers, finally lifted all trade restrictions apart from the one hundred per cent Purchase Tax on ornamental pottery. The resulting boom in sales meant that the British ceramic industry reached a production peak in 1953. This national trend was also reflected at the Fulham Pottery where the peak of vase sales was reached in 1953 (Fig. 19).

The name Alber Ware was dropped shortly after 1950 and a four page catalogue of the re-christened Fulham Ware was issued. It features a slimmed down range of eleven different, press-moulded, pre-war, 'Alber' designs (mostly by Marriner), all of the other designs being thrown vases. By 1950 Constance Spry Ltd had handed over the marketing of their vases to the Pottery. A *Constance Spry Vases* catalogue was also issued c.1950 but the range was not added to and many of the more complicated shapes were dropped. It now comprised ten vase designs of which five were mantel vases. The use of the 'Constance Spry' impressed signature was continued but this was now displayed alongside the Fulham Pottery mark.[32] A third catalogue was issued showing the eight different Coralie vases that remained in production and still marketed as a separate range.

NEW DESIGNERS, NEW SHAPES 1954

The Fulham Ware range, featured in the 1954 catalogue was considerably expanded with the introduction of a range of striking mantel vases created by the works manger Charles A. West (Fig. 20).[33] Cheavin's habit of capitalising on the skills of the factory potters was continued with two new 'tulip-form' vases designed by R.W.H. Bolton (Fig. 21).[34] With the bulk of the Pottery's vases being bought by flower-arrangers, it makes perfect sense that two of the shapes featured, were designed in collaboration with Julia Clements ('JC' prefix). Also in 1954 a fourth, short-lived range of vases was introduced in a catalogue entitled *Vases by Elaine Goddard.*[35]

20. Mantel vases designed c.1952–3 by the Pottery Manager Charles A. West and given an 'FW' prefix. Those illustrated are: FWG; FWE; FWF and FWD. Private Collection

Seven different designs were offered, each demonstrating a return to a more conservative, neo-classical form and significantly only one mantel vase is featured. Although the Pottery was probably unaware of it at the time, the two-handled mantel vase (the most common shape produced at Fulham) was beginning to fall from favour with flower arrangers. Classically inspired urn shapes, often based upon the 'Warwick Vase' were becoming very fashionable as is evident by the number featured in the specialist flower arranging literature of the time (Fig. 22a–c).[36] After her brief association with the Pottery, Elaine Goddard found success from the mid 1950s onwards supplying this growing demand for neo-classical shapes with her own, independently produced range of inexpensive slip-cast urns and vases.

21. Unloading the kiln c.1952. The tulip-shaped vase is 'RBA' designed c.1951 by R.W.H. Bolton and at the bottom of the image the tops of 'Constance Spry' Hammamet vases can be seen. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

Although still profitable, by May 1955 income from the sale of vases had been surpassed by that from the supply of clay and potters' equipment and it is from this date onwards that this area of the Pottery's activity became the major focus for investment and expansion.

In December 1955 the Pottery had a total workforce of twenty three men. Ten were employed press-moulding or throwing vases,

22a–c. Neo-classical vases designed by Elaine Goddard and introduced as a separate range in 1954. Private Collection and Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

23a–b. Examples of vases manufactured in Stoke-on-Trent by the slip-casting process. This technique is well suited to making smaller items and Marriner's FMA and FMC range were expanded to include the miniature vases FMA4 and FMC4. Private Collection

five on potters' supplies and the remaining eight on water filters. Three months later the majority of the men involved in vase production had been dismissed, the total workforce being reduced to thirteen, of whom only two were employed on vases.[37] The services of the Pottery manager C.A. West were also dispensed with. The manufacture of vases at the Fulham Pottery had ended abruptly.

THE 1956 CLEAN AIR ACT

Complaints from neighbours about the smoke produced by the Pottery had been received, considered and 'deflected' by the Pottery for well over a century.[38] There would be no avoiding the Clean Air Act (1956).[39] The Act impacted on all polluting industries and its implementation produced massive change across the whole of the British ceramics industry. Although factories were given time to migrate to 'cleaner' gas or electric kilns, for many the financial outlay required did not make economic sense. Many small factories simply closed or were taken over by larger concerns.

The only coal fired kilns at Fulham were those used for vase production as the water filter 'candles' were now being fired in a large electric kiln in the Pottery yard. With the pottery supplies side of the business growing rapidly and the water filters still selling in large quantities it is surprising that Cheavin did not simply end vase manufacture. Instead production was transferred to the firm of S. Fielding & Co. at the Devon Pottery, Stoke-on-Trent.[40] The reasons behind the survival of the vases may never be fully known but it is not unreasonable to speculate. It is known that Cheavin took great personal pride in and status from owning a company that was engaged in something 'higher' than mere utilitarian production. Also the vases were still very popular and orders continued to arrive steadily. If production ended trade would have to be turned away (something of an anathema).

Early in 1956 the best selling shapes of the Fulham, Coralie and 'Constance Spry' ranges were combined as one single 'Fulham' range and manufacture recommenced at Stoke (Fig. 23a–b). The matt-surfaced, irregular, hand-made look of the press-moulded and thrown shapes gave way to the uniform regularity and pristine surface that is indicative of slip-casting.[41] The fact that many of the major technical problems inherent in some of the vase shapes when press-moulded are absent when using this technique, demonstrates just how suitable this method was for their manufacture. However the unique aesthetic of the un-glazed exterior and visual weight of the press-moulded body was sacrificed in the change of production method.

Although the move had a drastic effect on the Pottery and its workforce, it ensured the survival of the vases in a marketplace where bastardised versions of the two-handled mantel vase were now a stock line for many highly efficient commercial potteries (Fig. 24). Fulham could never have competed in this market using the slow speed of manufacture and limited volume that came with press-moulding. The change made great commercial sense; more vases could be made and at more competitive prices. The public was also given a greater choice of vase colour and a black finish joined cream, dove-grey and light green. The last two colours having been introduced c.1954 as an optional finish for the press-moulded vases.

HARRY HORLOCK-STRINGER AND THE FULHAM STUDIO POTTERY

Harry Horlock-Stringer (b.1927) arrived at the Fulham Pottery in late 1955, shortly before manufacture of the vases was transferred to Stoke.[42] He remained until 1960 and provides a rich, first-hand account of the Pottery and Winston Cheavin during these later years.

As a result of exhibiting at the first Craftsman Potters Association exhibition, Stringer received a large order for twenty-two thousand earthenware bottles. The size of the

24. Fulham vases with their respective commercial 'copies' c.1952–65: FMA in vivid orange by an unknown factory; a WF style vase by Price Brothers and Spry's 'Napoleon's Hat' reinterpreted by Beswick. Private Collection

order necessitated an urgent move from the small studio he then occupied (the front room of Caspar John's house).[43] He approached Cheavin with a request for space and access to the Pottery's facilities. Cheavin readily agreed and suggested the exorbitant rent of £50 per week. Happily for Stringer the sum was never paid as a gentleman's agreement was struck whereby he would supply 'technical know-how which was quite a lot needed'.[44] The Fulham Studio Pottery was entirely independent of the Fulham Pottery with Stringer making once-fired earthenware tableware influenced by traditional English 'peasant pottery'. Stringer remembers the factory in a run-down state; 'the buildings were getting rotten; it was falling down around our ears, Winston was a little on the tight side, but nice with it.' He also remembers Cheavin as an 'avuncular figure … always pleased to meet the children who brought in their efforts to be fired.[45] It was almost more of a social centre than a serious business. The workers knew their stuff and got on with it but it all began to peter out slowly.'

25. 'Modern' shapes introduced in 1958. From front to back: JCB open bowl by Julia Clements; HSD & HSB by Harry Horlock-Stringer and TBB & TBA by an unknown designer. Private Collection

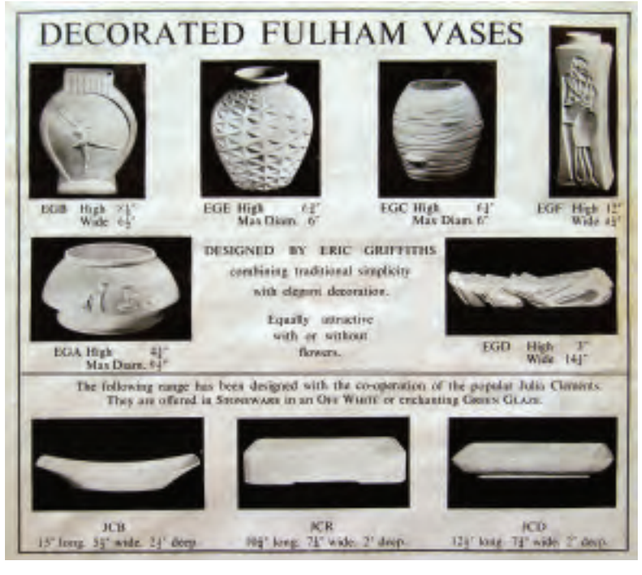
'MODERN' SHAPES 1958

The 1958 Fulham catalogue illustrates four new ranges demonstrating progressive 'modern' styling alongside many of the long-running shapes (Fig. 25). The continued influence and popularity of Julia Clements was capitalised on by an expansion to the range of flower containers bearing her signature. Eric Griffiths provides a range of relief-moulded vases and a separate range of decorative stoneware sculptures.[46] Finally, Harry Horlock-Stringer ('HS' prefix) and an unknown designer ('TB' prefix) provide some striking designs that are a visual complement to the earlier shapes of Marriner and West. Most of these new vessels share the same simplicity of form that characterises the earlier shapes whilst also demonstrating the pronounced 'angularity' popular at the time. It is only in the Eric Griffiths range ('EG' prefix) that a jarring note is found (Fig. 26). A pronounced lack of consistency across his designs is exasperated by complicated surface designs which have no apparent relationship to the shapes used. Significantly these did not sell well.[47]

The adoption of these 'new' designs and designers would seem to show the fifty-eight year old Cheavin as a far sighted proprietor, responding pro-actively to the changing tastes of the marketplace. The reality is very different as is made clear by the recollections of Stringer. He vividly remembers Cheavin's initial approach; 'I think it would be a jolly do if you could knock out a few shapes for us' as being the sum total of the 'art-direction' he received. He continues; 'My designs then owed quite a bit to Scandinavia. I was given a free hand as he wasn't that interested and they were still selling the mantle vases so they didn't really need any replacements.' It is clear that Cheavin was more interested in his social status and according to Stringer 'preferred the softness of his club to the Pottery.' This was the nearby Hurlingham Club and Stringer remembers visiting there one day as Cheavin's guest; 'I was taken for lunch … and introduced to people as 'his' designer… but that was just his swank.' Stringer provided 8–10 pencil designs for different vessels and was paid a fee of £5 for each one put into production. The models, from which the production moulds were cast, were all made at the Devon Pottery in Stoke. However, Stringer did visit Stoke with Cheavin to approve his designs before they were put into mass production.[48]

THE END OF 'ARTISTIC' PRODUCTION

At the 1958 British Industries Fair the Pottery unveiled a novelty item, *Criss the Cresshog* who's dubious raison d'être is recorded in the marketing literature; 'The idea is so simple – every child has grown cress seeds on damp paper – why not a porous pottery hedgehog, the cress seeds sprouting like quills from his back?' It will come as no surprise that '*Criss*' was not taken up by the nation's youth and it was not featured in the 1960 catalogue which illustrates twenty-six different pieces. The Marriner mantel vases are present as ever as are two 'West' vases, two 'Coralie' and one 'Constance



26. Designs by Eric Griffiths and for Julia Clements; from the 1958 vase catalogue. Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre

27. A Julia Clements Ikebana influenced arrangement displayed in a 'JCP' vase introduced c.1962. Courtesy Miss Julia Clements

Spry'. Of the 'modern' designs introduced two years earlier, all have gone apart from Stringer's. This was the last vase catalogue published as the range available in 1961/62 was small enough to be illustrated as one page within the Potters' Supplies catalogue.

Fulham Pottery remained synonymous with flower arranging to the end. The final 'new' shapes produced feature on a one-sided leaflet of 1962 and are more specialist forms 'designed for' Julia Clements. The 'minimal' aesthetic of the Clements vases reflects a growing taste for simple, linear arrangements heavily influenced by Japanese Ikebana (Fig. 27). That the last vases introduced by the Pottery were for a 'celebrity' flower arranger is entirely appropriate as without the endorsement of both Spry and Clements, the Pottery's vases would never have been as successful as they were.

In 1935 when the Pottery took its first commission from Spry, amateur flower arrangers were something of a niche market. Spry has to be credited with creating both an audience and a market for the Pottery's vases. Her influence continued to grow in the early 1950s and the wide-spread take up of flower arranging was given a further boost by the campaigning efforts of Julia Clements. The end of vase production when it came in early 1965 was primarily due to Cheavin's lack of interest in this side of his business.[49] It must be noted however that sales were also falling and this can be traced back to developments within the world of flower arranging. As originally envisaged by Spry and Clements, flower arranging was an art form to civilise and beautify the home. In the case of Clements it was also born out of a desperate desire to create an antidote to post-war gloom and shortage. By the late 1950s the role of flower arranging had evolved beyond all recognition. Independent clubs and societies which had sprung up all over the country were finally rationalised in 1959 into the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies (NAFAS). The members of these societies were far more concerned with creating displays for shows and exhibitions than for the home. The watchword now was individuality and this extended to containers. It would be anathema to have the same vase as a fellow competitor and so all manner of unusual vessels were appropriated or created from scratch. The widespread influence of Ikebana also created a reaction against overly complicated vase shapes which were now seen as 'old-fashioned'. The advent of 'Oasis' further freed arrangers from a need to use containers to hold water.[50] In short, the Fulham vases were no longer required by the audience for whom they had originally been created. The era of the 'designer' flower vase had come to a natural end.[51]

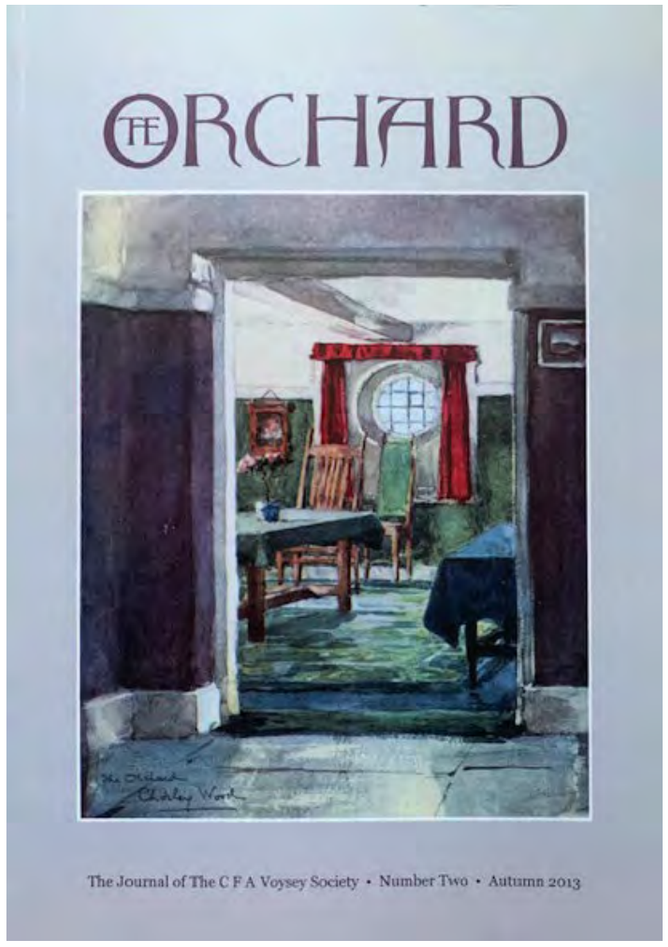
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would particularly like to thank Anne Wheeldon and Jane Kimber of the Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre who greatly facilitated my primary research and also responded helpfully and swiftly to many requests for further information. Harry Horlock-Stringer freely shared his rich memories of Winston Cheavin and the Pottery with great humour. George Smith MBE was gracious enough to share his experience and observations from a lifetime's commitment to flower arranging. He provided a clear insight into the differing approaches and attitudes of Constance Spry and his good friend Julia Clements. Steve Ogden, Principal Lecturer in Ceramics at the University of Cumbria answered my technical questions and drew many helpful diagrams. Roger Lee, also of the University of Cumbria helped enormously with the studio photography. I must also thank the private collectors who allowed me to borrow and photograph their vases. Finally I would like to thank the University of Cumbria Research and Creative Enterprise Service (RACES) for providing financial support which helped facilitate my research.

NOTES

1. Chris Green, John Dwight's Fulham Pottery, Excavations 1971–79 (English Heritage, London, 1999), 2–3.
2. Following the death of Charles Edward White the Dwight 'heirlooms' – perfect examples of his statuary and finewares – were dispersed at auction, finally coming to the attention of collectors and public institutions.
3. Geoffrey, the eldest son, pursued an independent business career as did John the youngest. Harry Horlock-Stringer recounts that 'young John did spend a little time at the Pottery in the mid 1950s playing with glaze effects.'
4. It was widely known among the artistic community that the Pottery would undertake the firing of sculptures and models. At the 1924 British Industries Fair the Pottery exhibited a group of ceramic sculptures modelled by Irene Mary Browne. In the post-war period a range of figures modelled by Jean Potts and retailed by Heals were fired at the Pottery.
5. This exhibition also included the work of other potters who had worked within the borough of Fulham including William De Morgan and the Martin Brothers.
6. Fulham Pottery Letterhead dated 1932 in the collection of Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre (HFA).
7. The British Industries Fair was a huge annual trade exhibition. Organized by the Department of Overseas Trade (Board of Trade) and first held in 1915. It encompassed a vast selection of British manufacturing industries and although primarily aimed at foreign buyers generated much 'home' trade. It grew quickly in size and by 1922 was housed it The White City, London and at the Castle Bromwich Aerodrome, Birmingham. Later still it occupied three sites; Olympia and Earls Court in London and Castle Bromwich in Birmingham.
8. The Barker Pottery supplied stoneware bottles and water filter cases to the Fulham Pottery from at least 1925 until it finally closed in 1957 following the Clean Air Act (1956). I am very grateful to Miss Ann Hodson of Boythorpe, Chesterfield for sharing her memories of the Barker Pottery with me.
9. Dennis Haslegrove and John Murray, John Dwight's Fulham Pottery 1672–1978 A Collection of Documentary Sources (Journal of Ceramic History No. 11, Stoke-on-Trent City Museums 1979), 242.
10. The Fulham Chronicle (12 April 1935).
11. Typescript of a talk given by Winston Cheavin, 2 November 1954 (HFA).
12. George William Cheavin died in 1940.
13. Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre.
14. Flower Decoration was followed by: Flowers in House and Garden (1937); A Garden Notebook (1940); Come Into the Garden Cook (1942); Summer and Autumn Flowers (1951); Winter and Spring Flowers (1951); How to Do the Flowers (1953); Party Flowers (1955); The Constance Spry Cookery Book (1956); Simple Flowers (1957); Favourite Flowers (1959).
15. Elizabeth Coxhead, Constance Spry A Biography (William Luscombe, London, 1975), 17, 56 & 64. Little is known of Florence Standfast (1872–1964). She first met Spry in 1906 when still an art student. Later c.1929 they met by chance and Standfast was persuaded to join the staff of Flower Decorations Ltd.
16. See Richard B. Fisher, Syrie Maugham (Duckworth, London, 1979).
17. Oliver Messel (1904–1978), stage designer, interior designer, painter, socialite and friend of Spry.

18. Although it would have been more logical to slip-cast these pieces, the initial outlay required to equip the Pottery for this specialised process would not have appealed to Cheavin. The Pottery therefore continued to employ press-moulding even though some of the new designs were highly unsuitable for this form of manufacture.
19. Many collectors and dealers now use the term 'Constance Spry' in such a generic way that virtually every white vase made at the Fulham Pottery will at some point be described as 'Constance Spry'. It must be pointed out that only those vases with the facsimile 'Spry' signature or, in the case of later slip-cast shapes, a 'CS' prefix were designed for Spry.
20. The rectangular down-draught muffle kiln was small in size being approximately sixteen feet square and six feet high. Because space was so limited protective saggars were not used. All wares were fired on fireclay shelves supported by props and were closely packed in an attempt to avoid contamination from fly ash. This was rarely successful as a close inspection of interior glazes will show.
21. Little is known about the South African born Gerard de Witt. He enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Halifax, Nova Scotia and became a lieutenant in the 6th Canadian Siege Battery. Some of his war etchings were exhibited in London in 1919.
22. Upon his retirement in 1945 (after 51 years with the Pottery), W.J. Marriner (1881–c.1972) moved to Littlehampton, West Sussex where he established the Littlehampton Pottery, making a wide range of domestic pottery.
23. The Pottery's sales and dispatch ledgers (HFA) show the vases to have been widely available across the country. Large orders were placed regularly by Dickins & Jones, Fortnum & Mason, Heal & Sons, Harrods, John Lewis and Liberty & Co.
24. Patent GB496212 (HFA).
25. The Coralie range are stamped to the base; 'De Witt Design, Fulham Pottery' and carry both the patent and registration number.
26. Correspondence held by the Lucie Rie Archive, The Crafts Study Centre, University College for the Creative Arts, Farnham.
27. The range can be given an approximate date by the presence of a 'v' for victory planter and also from a photograph taken in December 1947 which includes the horse's head vase (HFA).
28. Schorr lived in Paris 1925–1934 and London 1936–1988. He specialised in decorative sculpture, supplying designs for ceramic animals to Royal Doulton (c.1937) and went on to design a wide range of highly surreal and theatrical shop window displays for companies such as Harrods, Boucheron, Yardley, Elizabeth Arden and Baly. See Hildegard Ganter-Schlee, *Raoh Schorr 1901–1991* (Switzerland, 1995).
29. Julia Clements, *My Life with Flowers* (Cassel, London, 1993), 29–31.
30. It was followed by many equally successful books including: *Pictures with Flowers* (1951); *More Pictures with Flowers* (1952); *101 Ideas for Flower Arrangement* (1953); *First Steps with Flowers* (1955).
31. Neither Clements nor Spry ever indulged in an overtly 'hard sell' of their signature ranges. This would have been viewed by both as vulgar. However, by inclusion in some of the photographic illustrations the vases could be promoted in a subtle and tasteful manner.
32. Pre-war vases carry the impressed mark 'Designed by Constance Spry, Flower Decorations Ltd.'. During 1941 the company name was changed to 'Constance Spry Ltd. and accordingly the name 'Flower Decorations Ltd.' was removed from the post-war mark.
33. C.A. West joined the Pottery in 1946 as works manager. He was a very able designer and thrower contributing mantel vases and thrown shapes to the Pottery's catalogue of designs ('FW' and 'WT' prefixes). He left the pottery on 23 March 1956 when vase manufacture was transferred to Stoke-on-Trent.
34. R.W.H. Bolton was with the pottery for only a short period around 1951–52. His two tulip-shaped vases carry the 'RB' prefix.
35. These vases are stamped 'Elaine Goddard Ltd.' Very little is known of Elaine Goddard (1914–1986). She studied under Constance Spry and formed her limited company on 28 November 1938. At this time she ran a shop 'Elaine Goddard Flower Arrangements' at 33E Kings Road, London, SW3. In January 1941 she married Second-Lieutenant Patrick Reid R.A. and seems to have closed the shop. Many of her vase designs were manufactured for her company by the Dartmouth Pottery in the late 1950s. Elaine Goddard Ltd. was dissolved in 1994 at which time its registered address was Elms Gardens, Glaziers Lane, Normandy, Guildford.
36. Now in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow; this massive Roman vase is so named because for many years it was in the possession of the Earls of Warwick.
37. By February 1957 this number had reduced to one. The remaining worker was the long serving G.T. Furniss who as stock manager also looked after the quality control, packing and dispatch of the vases. He died while in the company's employ on 26 December 1960.
38. There are records of complaints and legal summonses against the Pottery for smoke pollution dating back to at least the 'Bailey' period. Various short lived experiments were tried to reduce the smoke including using peat as a fuel. Winston Cheavin recalled that as a boy, one of his tasks was to visit the Alkali Inspector for Fulham each Christmas with a complementary box of cigars. Latterly, in an attempt to placate the neighbours, only one firing (lasting three days) was undertaken per week. The kilns were tended for over thirty years by Bill Hunt who as fireman had one of the most important and highly paid jobs in the Pottery. The earthenware was fired at 1,200 degrees centigrade, a temperature only achieved after three days of continuous stoking at half-hourly intervals and using four tons of coal.
39. The act was a response to the 'Great Smog' of December, 1952 which killed over 4000 people living in London.
40. The owner of the Devon Pottery, Reginald Fielding was a great friend of Winston Cheavin.
41. Similar to press-moulding in its use of plaster moulds, slip-casting uses liquid clay which is poured into the mould and left for a controlled period of time. This technique ensures an even thickness of clay throughout the body of a vessel and so dramatically reduces the risk of distortion when being fired in the kiln.
42. Harry Horlock-Stringer was born in Warrington and trained as a painter at the Birmingham School of Art. He moved to Taggs Yard in Barnes, south-west London, in 1960 and for many years he ran his own school there. He experimented widely with glazes and firing techniques and wrote a book on raku pottery. Stringer is a founder member of the Craft Potters Association. He has lectured widely and now lives in semi-retirement in Somerset.
43. Sir Caspar John GCB (1903–1984), Admiral of the Fleet and Augustus John's second son.
44. Information provided during interviews with the author 2008.
45. Alongside the children, Stringer remembers quite famous Royal Academy sculptors arriving at the Pottery with work to be fired. Many were seen later, removing the shattered remains of their sculpture because it had been fired too quickly and exploded in the electric kiln.
46. Eric Griffiths (d.1994) would go on to become art director at Royal Doulton, Stoke-on-Trent from 1972 until his retirement in 1991.
47. Enough of the range remained in stock in 1964, for Cheavin to produce a leaflet in an attempt to generate sales.
48. The Crown Devon Pottery seemed to Stringer years ahead of the Fulham Pottery in every respect.
49. Fulham Pottery stock books, 1966–1969 (HFA). The potters' supplies side of the business maintained its profitability and continued until 1969 as did the supply of water filters for export.
50. Oasis™ is a porous chemical foam that soaks up (and holds) water. Most importantly it also holds flower arrangements in place. First manufactured in 1954 it quickly became a worldwide phenomenon as it allowed flower arrangers to dispense with their traditional tools of chicken wire and pin holders hidden within the water container.
51. Cheavin sold the business in 1969 to the Portals Group, who absorbed the water filter operations into their own at Tonbridge, Kent. The potters' supplies business continued at the Pottery, now trading as the Fulham Pottery Ltd. The Portals Group applied to replace the existing buildings with a modern office block which would also include a shop/showroom for the Pottery. Amid much controversy the old Pottery was finally demolished in 1974–75 with one stoneware kiln being saved and incorporated into the unremarkable office block that replaced it. The company was sold again in 1976 to Edward Woolf who continued with the potters' supplies business and also re-introduced pottery manufacture to the site in conjunction with the ceramic designer David Birch. In 1978 a range of his red earthenware food containers and tableware were produced. Following Birch's departure (c.1982) Fraser Macrae took over, producing a similar range of red earthenware ceramics, Quentin Bell (1910–1996) was invited by Woolf to work at the Pottery (c.1980) as 'artist in residence' and produced a wide range of hand decorated 'studio' pots which were exhibited in 1981. Bell was followed at the pottery by John Piper (1903–1992), Ivor Abrahams (b.1935) and finally Bruce McLean (b.1944) before the Pottery moved south of the river to Battersea an 1986 and Philip Sutton (b.1928) took up residency. In 1992 The Fulham Pottery Ltd was bought by Rewaard-Clayglaze of Stoke-on-Trent and was finally dissolved in 1996.



Voysey Textile Designs in the Cummersdale Design Collection

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.2, pp. 21-27 (2013).

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Voysey textile designs at the Cummersdale Design Collection

Tony Peart

The Cummersdale Design Collection, owned by the John Lewis Partnership, is a remarkable working archive of over 25,000 textile designs, which provide a comprehensive overview of the evolving trends, fashions and design movements of the last 200 years. Until the summer of 2012 the collection was housed at the Stead McAlpin print works at Cummersdale, a small village on the outskirts of Carlisle in the north of Cumbria. Although known to some textile designers and scholars, the collection's geographic remoteness from London and the south east meant that it was rarely visited and, as a result, its true significance as a resource has yet to be widely appreciated. The collection has recently relocated to a purpose-built heritage centre at John Lewis's Odney Club in Cookham, Berkshire, and is due to open in September 2013. In its new, more accessible home, the archive will attract many more design scholars and hopefully its immense value as a unique resource will be more widely recognised and fully exploited.[1]

K 8915

For the design researcher the sheer volume of material available in the collection is both exhilarating and daunting. For the last few decades the archive has been lovingly and diligently curated by Alan Cook (former manager of the collection) and Alan James (former print manager of Stead McAlpin). They have organised the collection chronologically and recorded all those designs which bear an artist's signature. However, a huge amount of material remains to be identified, documented and studied by the specialist scholar.

C 9859

The collection contains a veritable "Who's Who" of 19th century designers, including examples by: A W N Pugin; Christopher Dresser; William Morris; John Henry Dearle; Lewis F Day; Lindsay P Butterfield; Harry Napper and Cecil Millar. The archive also contains hundreds of designs from Arthur Silver's Silver Studio and the previously undocumented designs by C F A Voysey that form the basis of this article.

What is now named the Cummersdale Design Collection was, for nearly two centuries, the design archive of the fabric printers Stead McAlpin. The business was established in 1835 at Cummersdale, Carlisle, by Thomas McAlpin (1777-1849) and his stepson John Stead. Remarkably, the factory has remained in continuous production to the present day. The contents of the archive come from a number of sources and were assembled over a long period of time. It was company policy to actively acquire the designs and equipment of competitors who had ceased trading. The earliest designs, dating from 1799, were acquired when Stead McAlpin purchased the design collection of the Bannister Hall Print Works on its closure in 1893. Ten signed Voysey designs dating to the late 1880s came into the archive from this source. The remaining

1
The opening times for specific research by appointment will be 10am–4pm weekdays. The collection will also be open to the general public between10am–4pm on Saturdays. Contact:
Judy Faraday
John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre
Odney Lane
Cookham
Berks
SL6 9SR

C 9854 (top)
K 7075 (bottom)

C 9860 (opposite top)
K 8903 (opposite middle)
C 9871 (opposite bottom)

Voysey designs were commissioned directly by Stead McAlpin or were printed by Stead McAlpin as contract printers for other textile firms

Voysey's earliest design in the collection, C9834, is signed and dated September 1887 and has some claim to being his earliest recorded decorative design.[2] At this date Voysey was 30 years old and living at 7 Blandford Road, Bedford Park. He had been married for two years and had been in independent practice as an architect for five years. Voysey was advised by Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942), of the Century Guild, to take up decorative design as a way of supporting himself until he became fully established as an architect. The "advice, encouragement and sympathy"[3] Mackmurdo offered was far sighted. Although Voysey established his architectural practice in 1882 and sold his first designs for wallpaper in 1883, he had to wait a further five years until his first house was built in 1888.[4] His flair as a designer of pattern was remarkable and would ultimately outlast his career as a practising architect. Of the generation who immediately followed William Morris (1834-1896), the towering figure of the decorative design of this period, Voysey would arguably become the most widely known and influential. At this time, early in his career, the influence of established designers such as Lewis F Day (1845-1910), Walter Crane (1845-1915) and, in particular, Mackmurdo, has been widely recognised and documented. Design C9834 is unusual in Voysey's oeuvre as it so clearly shows the influence of William Morris. Both in structure, use of symmetry and colouring, C9834 is very close to Morris's Lodden, designed three years earlier in 1884. Although futile, it is tempting to speculate whether this design is typical, or atypical, of the lost designs that preceded it.

All designs in the collection with a "C" prefix were produced for the firm of Bannister Hall of Higher Walton near Preston. The company, which specialised in the printing of calico, was first established in the 1780s and was one of the first to take up copper roller printing.[5] This was the method used to print all of the designs Voysey supplied to the company. Roller printing, or machine printing as it is known in the trade, involves engraving each colour of the design onto an individual copper roller. The design of the pattern repeat, either a single repeat or exact multiples, is dictated by the roller's circumference. Once engraved, the rollers are chromed to help protect the delicate copper. At this time machine printing was restricted to around four colours, as is evidenced by Voysey's designs. Varying the depth of the engraving could create different tones within a colour. The designer exploiting areas of "fall-on" could also create the illusion of extra colours. Here one colour is printed across another to create a third. A close scrutiny of Voysey's designs shows him occasionally exploiting both of these techniques. Roller printing was widely used at this time by the print trade as it provided a more cost effective alternative to the highly labour intensive, and therefore expensive, hand block printing.

Designs C9854 and C9856 have both had Voysey's address carefully removed from the bottom right hand corner. Slightly later designs, created when he was residing at 45 Tierney Road, Streatham Hill, have not. This would indicate that these designs, along with the consecutive C9857, which today only exists as a printed sample, were executed

2
The earliest decorative design previously recorded, no 655 in the Voysey Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects, is inscribed with his Tierney Road address and must therefore date from after June 1888.

3
"A H Mackmurdo", *The Studio*, 1899, Vol XVI, p 189.

4
The Cottage, Bishop's Itchington, Warwickshire.

5
Copper roller printing was invented by Thomas Bell in 1783.

in early 1888 while still living at Blandford Road, before moving to Tierney Road in June of that year. The design K7075 also dates to early 1888 but, unlike the previous Bannister Hall examples, the "K" prefix indicates that it was commissioned directly by Stead McAlpin. This is Voysey's first design for the fir . It is dated April 1888 but, as Voysey has crossed out the Blandford Road address and inserted Tierney Road, it can be assumed that it was not delivered until after June of 1888. These designs of 1888-89, which also include more designs for Bannister Hall, C9858, C9859 (in both a blue and yellow colour way) and C9860, show a designer familiar with the work of Walter Crane, Selwyn Image and A H Mackmurdo, but still far from finding his own individual voice. The designs writhe restlessly across the sheet. Edges are fussy with intricate and jagged, linear brushwork. Widely differing colour palettes, limited by the colour restrictions of machine printing, are used and then dropped.

Four years later in "An Interview with Mr. Charles F. Voysey Architect and Designer" (*The Studio*, 1893, Vol I, pp. 232-237) Voysey would advocate the simplification and stylization of the designer's subject matter. This was known as "conventionalizing" at the time. These designs are a snapshot of a man part-way on the journey to what would become his "mature" style. When compared to the designs Voysey chose to illustrate *The Studio* interview they could almost be by a different hand. They exist in an unresolved state; although they are partially "conventionalised", they also contain too many jarring, naturalistic elements. By the time of *The Studio* interview the naturalistic elements had been expunged and a unique voice was emerging. In the interview Voysey advocates selection, analysis, balance, repetition and individual taste as the key to producing work with a human interest. He goes on: "If he (the designer) does this although he has gone directly to Nature, his work will not resemble any of his predecessors; he has become an inventor." At this stage Voysey is still a follower.

His use of such unrestrained, dynamic designs with their large scale motifs and vivid colouring for furnishing fabrics is undoubtedly explained by Voysey's thoughts on wallpaper design – his designs make little distinction between the two disciplines. He expounded to The Studio in 1893: "A wallpaper is of course only a background, and were your furniture good in form and colour a very simple or undecorated treatment of the walls would be preferable; but as most modern furniture is vulgar or bad in every way, elaborate papers of many colours help to disguise its ugliness." He went on: "There is no doubt that it is better to have large and bold than small and timid patterns, both in papers and printed or stencilled friezes. If you wish to reduce the effect of its scale and force, these can be modified in the colouring." The fact that Voysey could be so critical of the taste in furniture of the people who would potentially become his clients, in this his first, major magazine feature, speaks volumes. Here is a man with little in the way of self-doubt; an uncompromising, outspoken designer who speaks his mind without couching his words more diplomatically. The "difficult" Voysey of later years is already here, fully formed.

C 9834 (top)
K 7966 (bottom)

C 9858 (opposite top)
K 8953 (opposite bottom)

The two final Bannister Hall designs in the collection, C9867 and C9871, do capture the emergence of what would become Voysey's characteristic "mature" style. Both designs were produced while he was living at Tierney Road and probably date to late 1889 or early 1890. He would move to Melina Place, St John's Wood, in March 1891. The patterns, and in particular the linear elements, are becoming simplified and strengthened. The fussy edges are fast disappearing, being replaced by graceful, dynamic curves. The underlying structure of the design is much more evident, resulting in a greater feeling of order and control. The colour palette is starting to exhibit his characteristic preference for muted greens and blues. The chaotic urgency and visual confusion of the earlier designs has gone; to use his own words Voysey is becoming "an inventor".

Chronologically, the next Voysey design in the collection is K7966, dated 4th October 1895 and printed by Stead McAlpin for Warner & Sons. At this date Warner's were well-established weavers, commissioning designs from many of Voysey's avant-garde contemporaries, but would not become printers in their own right until the 1920s. This design, named Saladin when produced by the wallpaper firm of Essex & Co in 1897, is quintessential Voysey. Clearly delineated edges, visually interesting contrasts of scale, negative space reduced to an absolute minimum, the inclusion of a bird, a habit that almost became a cliché, the closely related tones and colours of the blue-green palette, lifted with touches of contrasting red and yellow.

Alexander Morton & Co, with Stead McAlpin acting as their contract printers commissioned virtually all the remaining Voysey designs in the collection. Alexander Morton (1844-1923) came from a weaving family and founded his company in his place of birth, the village of Darvel, Ayrshire. Darvel had a long history as a centre for independent handloom weavers and the company began in 1867 when Alexander employed neighbouring weavers to produce a range of curtain nets, which were to be enthusiastically embraced by the furnishing trade. The company grew quickly and by the 1890s had diversified into most areas of woven textile production. Morton's were first and foremost a family concern and by 1895 the management of the firm had been taken over by Alexander's sons James and Guy. Their cousin Gavin Morton headed the company's design studio. It was James Morton (1867-1943) who understood the commercial importance of embracing contemporary design trends and actively sought to commission work from the leading designers of the day. Voysey was approached immediately upon James taking joint control of the company in 1895. By the following year, a close and what was to prove long lasting understanding and friendship between the two men had been established.[6] The commercial success of the designs that Voysey created for Morton's was such that by 1897 they had entered into a five-year contract, renewed thereafter on a yearly basis, where for the sum of £120 per annum Voysey would provide a minimum of 10 original designs and his exclusive services in the field of all woven textiles other than carpets. Voysey, at the height of his powers as both an architect and decorative designer, wrote to James Morton in 1896:

6
Jocelyn Morton, *Three Generations in a Family Textile Firm*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971, p114.

C 9857 (top)
S 3662 (middle)
C 9856 (bottom)

"You will find in all my designs a clearly marked contrast between the small, rich, intricate or elaborate parts of the design and the plain simple bare pieces. This is the quality that produces 'breadth' – breadth is on the side of simplicity and repose."[7]

Between 1900 and 1902 over 40 new Voysey designs were introduced into the firm's tapestry ranges making him the most important freelance designer working for the company at that time.

The recent discovery of over one hundred of Voysey's carpet designs for Tomkinson Carpets of Kidderminster, as featured in the first issue of *The Orchard*, filled an important gap in the Voysey design record.[8] Previously less than a handful of carpet designs had been recorded. Lodged within the Cummersdale Design Collection are a few more.

Voysey's involvement in designing for Morton's hand-knotted Donegal carpets, which went into production in 1898 in Killybegs, County Donegal, is well documented. Frustratingly, the original designs are now lost. Less well known is that he provided designs for a collection of woven carpets that Morton's manufactured during the 1890s; their Caledon range. Caledon carpets were machine-made, flat-woven tapestry carpets, or "art squares", as they were known at the time. Initially made at Darvel, their production was transferred in 1900, along with virtually all of Morton's weaving activities, to a new base in Carlisle. Introduced as a cheaper alternative to Kidderminster carpets, they were described by James L Caw in *The Art Journal* (March 1900 p80): "The chief elements in the designs are flowers and foliage, drawn in a flat conventional style, and treated in a manner broad and simple."

It would be satisfying to claim designs K8903 and K8916, both attributable to Voysey on stylistic grounds, as lost Donegal designs, however a sceptical approach must be adopted. It should be pointed out that Donegal carpets were, and are, extremely durable. The fact that no extant carpets featuring these designs have been recorded makes it more than likely that these are examples from the Caledon range. Also, at this date, the Donegal range was just becoming established and the designs for the hand-knotted carpets would almost certainly have been required at Killybegs. A fi al argument that supports the Caledon attribution are the dates they were first printed by Stead McAlpin, 17th October 1903 and 11th January 1904 respectively. Executed on point paper, these are patterns that were obviously designed to be woven, not printed. It is likely that when no longer required by Morton's for their original purpose, they were transferred to Stead McAlpin to be block printed, Morton & Co not being in a position to print in-house until as late as 1912. This reinterpretation of the designs in a different medium was no doubt an attempt to extend their commercial life. Within the Cummersdale Collection are fents – printed cotton samples – of both. The individual squares and stepped edges produced by working on point paper have been slavishly preserved, creating an unsatisfactory, awkward and blotchy effect in the printed versions.

A further small group of designs, all on point paper and all created for Morton during 1903 and 1904, are likely to include some by Voysey.

K 8916 (left)
C 9860 (right)

Most appear to be designs for woven tapestries, although one or two follow the convention of utilising crosses rendered in red and green, identifying them as designs for net curtains. Two in particular can be strongly attributed to him on stylistic grounds. Design K8915 was with Stead McAlpin by 12th January 1904. It is a delicate, relatively simple design of wild flowers which are rendered in a manner that is very close to those that feature at the base of Voysey's iconic hand-painted mantle clock of 1895, now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.[9] A formal, repeat pattern of tulips and bluebells, K8953, dated 25th February 1904, executed in rich blues, greens and reds, relates closely to a design sketch of c.1902 in the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects.[10]

Almost 20 years pass before we reach the final Voysey design in the Cummersdale Design Collection. Signed and dated December 1923, design S3662 was printed by Stead McAlpin for the firm of William Foxton Ltd. The design is very similar to another work, also produced in December 1923 in the RIBA Drawings Collection.[11] The design motifs of flowers, foliage and birds have all been central to Voysey's grammar of design since the 1890s, but other elements have subtly evolved. Now there is a greater flamboyance in the treatment of the delineating edges. Employing a consistent, white outline across the design, irrespective of the object it defines, creates a unifying effect. Contrasts of scale are reduced but the closely matched tones of the design are thrown into sharp relief against the tonally darker background creating a sparkling, filigree effect. Voysey, now in his 60's, also shows himself to be receptive to the spirit of the age by employing a typically vibrant 1920s colour palette.

At this point Voysey's career had come full circle. His work as a practising architect was all but over and he would only design a few more pieces of furniture. Voysey was no longer a fashionable designer and he found it much harder to sell his work. However, the sheer quality of his textile and wallpaper designs ensured that they did sell and continued to be commercially produced into the 1930s. Voysey was the greatest decorative designer of his generation, his reputation as a designer of pattern preceded his fame as an architect. It somehow seems appropriate that he would spend the final years of his professional life, as he had started, producing wonderful decorative designs.

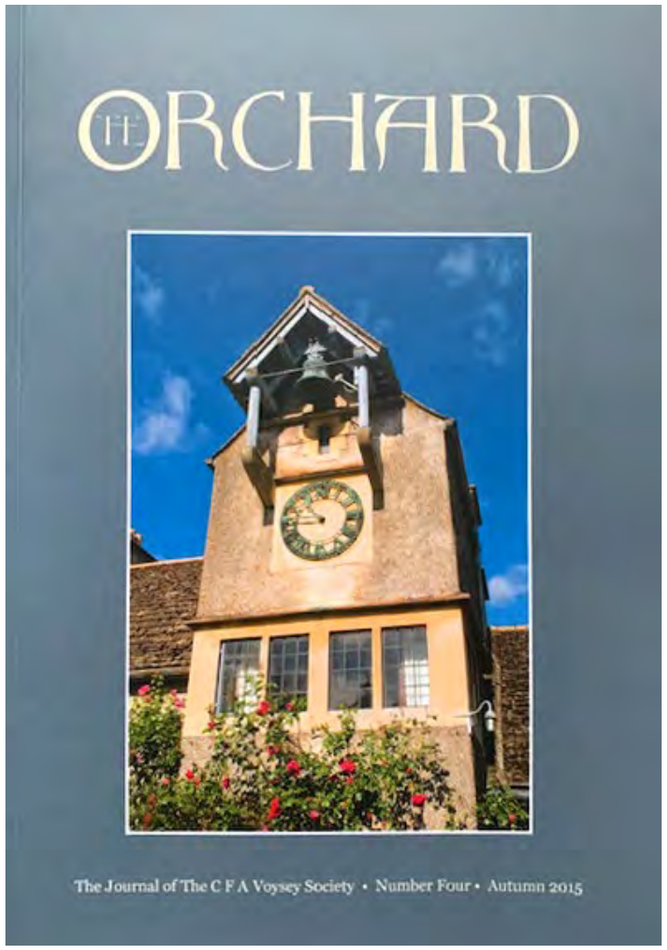
7
Morton, p116.

8
Stuart Durant, "Voysey's designs for Tomkinson Carpets", *The Orchard* Number One, 2012, pp38-42.

9
V&A accession number: W:5:1, 2-1998.

10
RIBA Voysey Collection: no 698. Illustrated: Stuart Durant, *The Decorative Designs of C F A Voysey*, Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1990, p26.

11
RIBA. Voysey Collection: no 753. Illustrated: Durant, p79.



Voysey's Lettering Designs

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society) Vol.4, pp. 35-45 (2015).

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Voysey's lettering designs

Tony Peart

Typography is two-dimensional architecture, based on experience and imagination, guided by rules and readability. And this is the purpose of typography: the arrangement of design elements within a given structure should allow the reader to easily focus on the message, without slowing down the speed of his reading.

So wrote the great German typeface designer Hermann Zapf (1918–2015) in *Manuale Typographicum* (1954). As one of the leading architects of his day, it seems entirely fitting that C F A Voysey should have also excelled in that discipline. In his time, his graphic work was highly regarded, widely disseminated and very influential. Of all his architect contemporaries, only C R Mackintosh produced lettering designs that remain so instantly recognisable and inextricably linked to their creator.

From the outset it should be made clear that Voysey was not a typeface designer. Each character of a typeface, once designed, never alters because it is mechanically reproduced, thereby giving text a consistent appearance. Voysey produced bespoke hand lettering, redrawn for each application and frequently subject to spontaneous alteration and variation – this is lettering as individual and subtly nuanced as its creator.

Before the advent of rub-down lettering and digital typography, an ability to create legible, professional-looking inscriptions was an essential skill employed in the production of "finished" design drawings. It was a craft that any architect or designer would be expected to master early in their training. Interestingly, in the case of Voysey (and unlike his early architectural designs), it is difficult to discern little if any stylistic influence in the development of his characteristic lettering style from those architects to whom he was apprenticed.

Voysey was first articled to the Gothic Revival architect J P Seddon (1827–1906) in 1874. Looking at the drawings produced by the Seddon office, it is readily apparent that there was no attachment to any particular lettering style; in fact the inscriptions invariably feature various forms of calligraphy. Lettering and calligraphy are often confused but are quite different activities. Calligraphy is made with a single stroke of the drawing instrument be it pen, pencil or brush, whereas hand lettering is slowly built up with the use of multiple strokes, often in pencil and subsequently "inked in" with a brush or pen. Calligraphy is visually closer to hand writing, whereas hand lettering is much closer to typography (the use of prefabricated, consistent letters). Certainly the Seddon drawings exhibit a wide number of different

"hands", probably junior draughtsmen and apprentices, and range from traditional copperplate, through various Gothic scripts to simple, sans serif treatments.

There is even less variety in the lettering found on the drawings of Voysey's final "master" George Devey (1820-1886) to whom he was apprenticed during the years 1880-81. Devey was a habitual user of copperplate script for inscriptions, in combination with an inked rubber stamp which featured his name and office address, set in a stylised Roman typeface.

The earliest extant example of Voysey's lettering is a change of address card dated 1882 (figure 1) and comes from the earliest days of his independent practice.[1] The lettering is rendered in an awkward, heavily ornamented Gothic "Blackletter" script that in places is almost illegible. It utilises a combination of both upper and lower case letters arranged somewhat haphazardly alongside a line drawing of a medieval herald (possibly intended as a self portrait). The "olde-worlde" grammar – "Un to alle + sondrie. Know ye hereby yt ye Architect Master C.F.A. Voysey heretofore of Queen Anne's Gate..." – would seem to indicate a gentle parody of the then, still influential, Gothic Revival style and may well

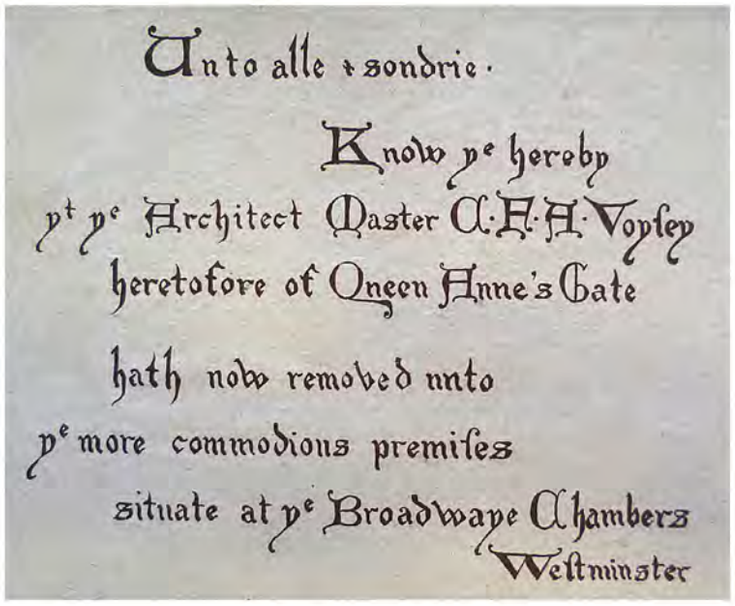


Figure 1 – Change of address card (detail) 1882.

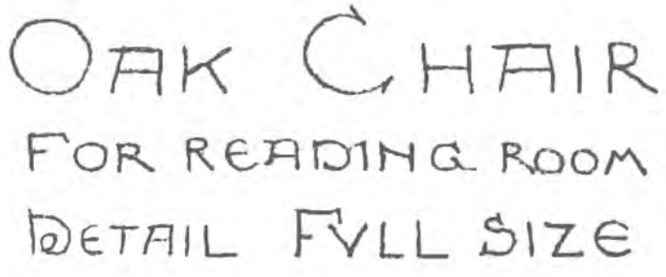


Figure 2 – Detail of lettering on the construction drawing for the Swan chair c1882–85

have been an isolated one-off. The most likely source of inspiration is a 12th century alphabet from the British Museum featured in *The Book of Ornamental Alphabets, Ancient and Modern* by F Delamotte; the first edition being produced in 1858 and proving so popular it was still in print well into the 20th century. This influential work, documenting many Gothic alphabets, was required reading for any architect or designer and would have been seen by Voysey whilst working in J P Seddon's office. This early, isolated example shows none of the clarity, precision, consistency and individuality of his mature style.

The advice and influence of Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) during the early years of Voysey's practice is well documented, particularly in the fields of wallpaper, textile and furniture design. Mackmurdo and the Century Guild's influential and beautifully designed periodical (first published in April 1884) was read by Voysey. The woodcut illustrations he saw there clearly influence his pictorial work; however, the magazine appears to have had little effect on the design of his lettering, although its use of "justified" text (copy arranged so that both the left and right sides of the text block have a straight edge) is the layout style that Voysey would adopt and apply obsessively in his later lettering work.

Figure 3 – Bedford Park Summer Ball invitation 1885

1
Voysey opened his first office at 8 Queen Anne's Gate in 1881.

2
SB 114/Voy [207] in the RIBA drawings collection.

Figure 4 (below left) – Essex & Co advertisement from The Studio, c1898

Figure 5 (below middle) – Essex & Co advertisement from The Studio, 1901

Figure 6 (above) – Decorative cloth binding for The Studio, 1893

Figure 7 (below right) – Cover design for The Kyrle Pamphlets – St Paul's Cathedral, 1896

In most cases it took Voysey many years of trial and error to master designing for any particular application or medium, be it architecture, furniture or patterns. It could be argued that, although he started in independent practice as early as 1881, his work across all three disciplines did not fully mature until the mid 1890s at the commencement of what was to be a "golden" decade (roughly the years 1896-1905). Against this background of slow, painstaking development it appears that Voysey's early prowess with lettering was the one exception to that rule.

The carefully rendered pencil lettering (figure 2) found on the construction drawings for his well known "swan" chair[2] (made sometime between 1882 and 1885) show his nascent alphabet to be already well on the way to its fully resolved, final form. He has dispensed with lower case (small) letters and uses only upper case (capitals) although there is still a variation in scale created by his use of small capitals. The characteristic Lombardic[3] "E" and "A" (with its flat top and vertical right stroke) are present, as is the classical v-shaped "U". By mid 1885 the lettering featured on Voysey's design for the Bedford Park Summer Ball invitation (figure 3) has become even more sophisticated, maintaining a uniform scale. He now begins to employ a gently swelling line, giving his lettering visual rhythm and movement, although the "ghost" of a Gothic influence can still be discerned in the decorative curlicues attached to some letters.

The earliest reference to graphic design (and, by inference, lettering) found in Voysey's own Black Book[4] is in 1889 for the "design of advertisements" for Essex & Co a wallpaper company founded two years earlier by Richard Walter Essex (1857-1941). Concurrently, Voysey was also commissioned to design the company's showroom interior and furnishings. He enjoyed a long working relationship with Essex, providing his company with many wallpaper designs, and was ultimately commissioned to design his house, Dixcot[5] in South London (1897). Voysey continued to provide a range of inventive advertisements for Essex & Co for over 15 years (figure 4), many appearing in *The Studio* magazine, including this playful design (figure 5) which was also reused as a bookplate for the company's founder. Here the "S" of a punning "S"

158. FROM A COVER DESIGN BY C. F. A. VOYSEY.

157. ALPHABETS (ORIGINAL) BY C. F. A. VOYSEY.

FROM THE FONT OF SAN GIOVANNI, SIENA, A.D. 1430.

and "X" (Ess-ex) is fancifully created from the turbulence created by a flock of dislocated, flapping birds' wings!

Voysey's Use and Beauty design (figure 6) created for the cover of the first two bound volumes of *The Studio* (1893) disseminated his graphic design work to a wide audience. His highly personal lettering style, as exemplified by this design for The Kyrle Society (figure 7), became so well known that by the latter part of the decade it was featured in Edward F Strange's comprehensive survey of historical and contemporary lettering – *Alphabets a Manual on Lettering* (1897).[6] Strange described the work as follows:

"Mr. C. F. A Voysey supplies us with two alphabets and a set of Arabic numerals of considerable value and interest. They are evidently based on early Italian Renaissance forms; and following the useful practice of the masters of that period, many of the letters are modified to suit the exigencies of effective combination."

A comparison of Voysey's alphabets (figure 8) to an inlaid inscription round the font of San Giovanni, Siena, by Jaob della Querica (1430) (figure 9) clearly shows his indebtedness to early Renaissance treatments of classic, Roman forms. Voysey was far from alone in looking to the Roman past for his inspiration, as William Heyny pointed out in his book *Modern Lettering, Artistic and Practical* (1913): [7]

It may be said that practically all the lettering now used in architectural offices in this country is derived, however remotely it may seem in some cases, from the old Roman capitals, as developed and refined during the period of the Italian Renaissance.

It is impossible to precisely define Voysey's lettering of the 1890s and early 1900s simply because each application is subtly different. The two alphabet examples illustrated by Strange (figure 8) are broadly similar; however closer inspection reveals many small differences. To

Figure 8 (left) – Two alphabets illustrated in Edward F Strange, Alphabets a Manual on Lettering, George Bell, 1897

Figure 9 (middle) – Early Italian Renaissance lettering illustrated in Edward F Strange, Alphabets a Manual on Lettering, George Bell, 1897

Figure 10 (right) – Carved inscription, 1899

3
The Lombards were a Germanic-speaking people who settled in North Italy during the sixth century.

4
Voysey's own chronological record of his works, commenced c1890.

5
A disagreement between architect and client resulted in Voysey abandoning this project. A revised version was built under the supervision of Walter Cave.

6
Strange, Edward F Alphabets a Manual of Lettering for the use of Students with Historical and Practical Descriptions, London, George Bell and Sons, 1897.

7
Heyny, William, Modern Lettering, Artistic and Practical, New York, W T Comstock, 1913.

complicate the matter even further, Voysey introduced elements from one alphabet to another at whim. An inspection of the designs held at the RIBA drawings collections gives an insight into his typical working methods: sketching and refining his design freehand, in pencil, before carefully tracing it and transferring it to another sheet (often a paste board manufactured by O W Papers) and finally inking it in with either brush or pen. However, although there are many subtle differences between examples, it is possible to create a general description of the typical Voysey lettering of this period. The incised tablet recording the completion of what is probably his most well known building, Broad Leys in 1899 (figure 10) will serve as an example. It clearly demonstrates Voysey's love of justification and his abhorrence of negative (empty) space. His denial of negative space within the body of text at times bordered on the obsessive and would remain with him throughout his career. Word spacing (the gaps between words) are an important element in creating "readable" copy, but Voysey freed himself from their use by employing bullets to signify the break between words. The ligature – two or more characters joined together – was another favoured device frequently employed to create the words "THE" and "AND", and can be seen in this example in four distinct combinations. There are also playful (often daring) liberties taken in the arrangement of individual letters such as the vertical stacking of the word "BY", and the "nesting" of awkwardly shaped letters – in this case exemplified by the "L" and "T" of "BUILT" and the "L" and "E" of "HELEN". The letter "O" in combination with certain other letters could also create visually awkward, negative space. In this case Voysey solved the problem by tucking the "O" under the "V", although he frequently employed decorative "filler" elements placed under the "O", thereby giving a circular form a more rectangular appearance – a device C R Mackintosh probably took from Voysey, along with the elevated crossbar that creates a greater feeling of stability. Remarkably, this radical treatment of letter forms does little to impede the readability of the text and, in combination with the "standard" letter shapes, creates an inscription with an internal grace and rhythm. Although speaking of furniture, Voysey's words of 1894 would also seem to throw light on his approach to the design of lettering:

"Is it faithful work? And for love's sake ask, is it proportioned, coloured and disposed as the natural beauties in creation? Are its lines and masses graceful and pleasing? Do any of its parts quarrel? Does it express sobriety, restraint, and purity?" [8]

There is undeniably a warm, dynamic and, one could say, optimistic feel to Voysey's lettering of this time, coinciding as it does with his most prolific period. It was certainly popular and influential enough to spawn many imitators (figure 11), none of which captured the grace, detail or playfulness of the "original".

Voysey designed New Place, Haslemere, for the publishers A M M Stedman (later Sir Algernon Methuen) in 1897. Five years later, in 1902, he was commissioned to design a range of simple, pocket-sized, gilt-stamped book covers (figure 12) for Methuen's Little Library series. He also designed a small, hand-lettered title for the series,

8
Voysey, C F A, Domestic Furniture, RIBA Journal, 1, 1894, pp15–18.

Figure 11 (above) – Examples of contemporary lettering from Victor T Wilson, Free-hand Lettering, Chapman and Hall, 1906

Figure 12 (top right) – Pocket-sized editions from The Little Library series, Methuen, 1902

Figure 13 (above) – Little Library title design, Methuen, 1902

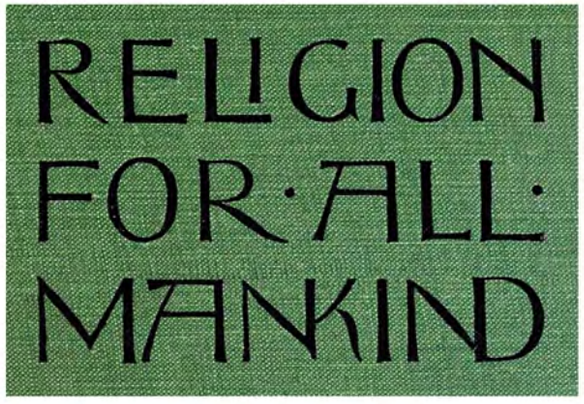


Figure 14 (above) – Cover design for Reverend Charles Voysey, Religion for All Mankind, Longmans, 1903

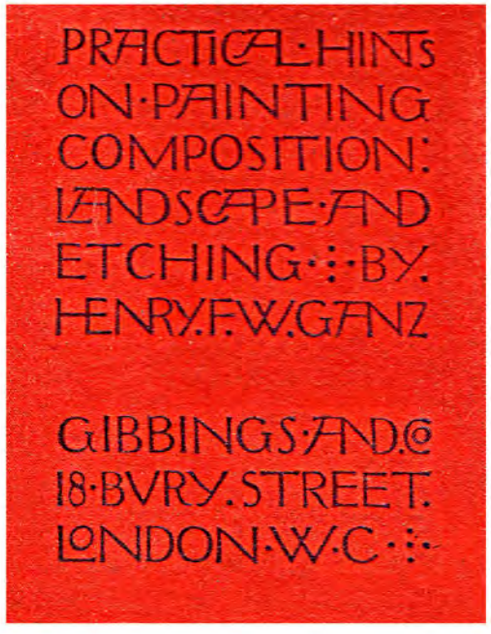


Figure 15 (right) – Cover design for Henry Ganz, Practical Hints on Painting, Composition, Landscape, and Etching, Gibbings & Co. 1905

which appeared as a frontispiece in each volume (figure 13). This is probably Voysey's most inventive and extreme lettering composition as he condenses and combines elements into a tiny, confined space. That it remains instantly readable borders on the miraculous and shows him at the height of his lettering prowess.

Further commissions followed: a cover design for his father's *Religion for all Mankind* (1903) (figure 14); advertisements for Sanderson's wallpaper (1905); another "variant" alphabet featured in *Dekorative Kunst*[9]; and the previously undocumented cover for Henry Ganz's *Practical Hints on Painting, Composition, Landscape, and Etching* (1905)[10] (figure 15). Ganz was a member of the Rev Voysey's Theistic Church and a landscape painter and etcher whose work occasionally featured in *The Studio*. The Ganz volume also contains a Voysey-designed circular monogram for the author and a lettered advertisement for The Rowley Gallery in yet another "variant" alphabet (figure 16). This highly flexible alphabet which had served Voysey well for over 20 years, made one of its last public appearances on the cover of his own *Reason as a Basis of Art* (1906) (figure 17), an elegantly understated and beautifully resolved piece of lettering.

By the time Voysey produced the hand-lettered cover to Ganz's second book *Practical Hints On Modelling, Design, And Mural Decoration* (1908)[11] a much more formal, austere style was in the ascendancy (figure 18). The majority of the characters had now adopted classical form; a sea-change had taken place and there would be no return to the romanticism of his earlier style. By cross-referencing the inscriptions on Voysey's designs for furniture it is possible to date this dramatic shift to the period between late 1907 and early 1908. The change was not a result of gradual evolution but a conscious decision to adopt a more conservative, traditional form of lettering. Although retaining a basic classical Roman form, Voysey's lettering from this point forward gradually develops more overtly "pointed", Gothic decorative elements – a transformation that was also reflected in his architectural and furniture designs from the same period. The greater consistency of letter scale required to create this more austere, regular body of text

Figure 16 (left) – Advertisement for The Rowley Gallery, 1905

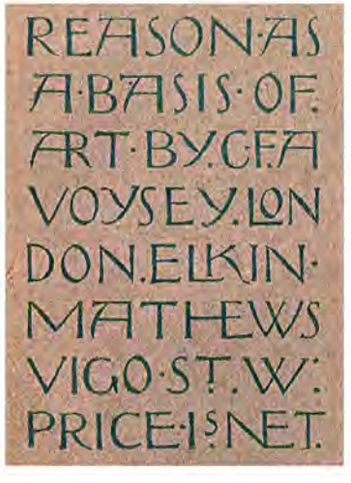


Figure 17 (middle) – Cover design for Reason as a Basis of Art, Elkin Mathews, 1906

Figure 18 (right) – Cover design for Henry Ganz, Practical Hints On Modelling, Design, and Mural Decoration, Gibbings & Co 1908

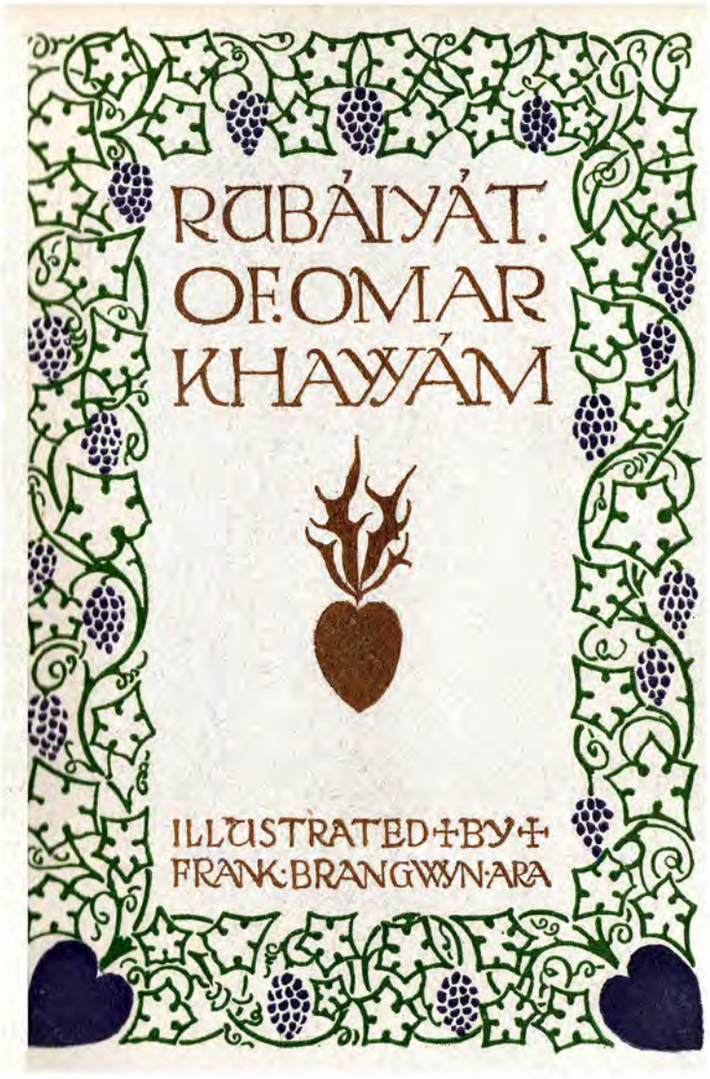


Figure 19 (above) – Alphabet designed for the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), 1916

Figure 20 (left) – Cover and title page design for The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, T N Foulis, 1910

would not allow for the playful distortions of size previously used to fill areas of unwanted space. Voysey's solution to this problem was to employ a decorative version of the Teutonic cross (known in heraldry as a "cross potent") alongside the familiar bullet used to signify word spaces. The cross visually complemented the letter forms and was so central to this new way of working that Voysey actually designed it as an additional character (glyph) in this new, classically inspired alphabet (figure 19). Apart from fulfilling an important visual role, Voysey was well aware that it had rich symbolic meanings. Writing in 1932, Voysey described his attitude towards it as follows: "The cross is used as a symbol of faith, not necessarily Christian." [12]

In 1910 Voysey designed the cover, title page and decorative borders for *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*[13] (figure 20). This lettering shows even less variety in line weight, and the letter forms have started to resemble Gothic calligraphy, created at a single stroke, with a chisel tipped pen. Perversely however, this was not the case as the artwork

9
Konody, P G, C F A Voysey's Neuere Arbeiten, *Dekorative Kunst* ,Vol.14, 1906, pp. 193–8.

10
Ganz, Henry F W, *Practical Hints on Painting, Composition, Landscape and Etching*, London, Gibbings & Company, 1905.

11
Ganz, Henry F W, *Practical Hints on Modelling, Design and Mural Work*, London, Gibbings & Company, 1908.

12
Symbolism in Design, unpublished manuscript in RIBA Drawings Collection, 1930.

13
FitzGerald, Edward, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, London,T N Foulis, 1910.

Figure 21 – Cover design for Individuality, Chapman and Hall, 1915

was still sketched in pencil and subsequently inked in methodically with a brush or pen.

The widely reproduced "blueprint" alphabet (figure 19), previously dated to c1895, was actually produced over 20 years later and can now be confidently dated to 1916. It forms part of a flurry of lettering and graphic design that Voysey designed for the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) between 1916 and 1918. The CCB was an attempt to solve a massive drink problem involving the workers at various munitions factories, which had escalated to such a point that it was in danger of threatening the war effort. Voysey produced a wide range of graphic work to be displayed in the public houses taken into state control. These comprised such items as morally "uplifting" coloured poster decorations, lettered notices, pub signs and year calendars. This final alphabet (with a few minor variations) would be used for the rest of his career. It is essentially a further refinement of the one he had employed the previous year, for the cover of his second book, *Individuality* (1915) (figure 21) – although at this point the "E" has not yet gained its characteristic curving top stroke.

As with his contemporaneous architectural and furniture designs, Voysey's lettering had embraced an uncompromising "pointed" Gothic style, perversely at odds with prevailing fashion. The playfulness and rhythmic variety of his early lettering designs was abandoned in favour of a much more formal approach which although gaining in legibility loses the fluidity and warmth of his earlier style. This is lettering that exudes conservative austerity, and in the context of its time can be read as provocative and reactionary.

As his architectural practice dwindled Voysey was forced to turn to both pattern and graphic design as his primary source of income. The major focus of his graphic/lettering work in these later years was fulfilling a wide range of bookplate and badge commissions for various clients, friends and family. An activity no doubt facilitated by exposure in a two-page feature on his bookplate designs in the February 1915 issue of *The Studio*[14]. This was the only published article devoted solely to his graphic work and featured six bookplates, the majority very recent designs featuring his late, "pointed" lettering. The anonymous author states:

"... So many and varied are the forms in which his decorative genius has expressed itself that a bare enumeration of them would fill a considerable space. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should have bestowed his attention upon a class of design which, if lying outside the broad ambit of his practice as an architect, is yet one calling for the play of the decorative faculty which he possesses in such a marked degree..."

A compilation of the majority of this later graphic and lettering design can be found in *The Bookplates and Badges of C F A Voysey*[15]. Frustratingly many of the designs featured are not given a date[16] but an analysis of the lettering style employed, clearly indicates whether they were designed before or after the "watershed" year of 1908. A very late design featured is an undated bookplate for Dora Isabel Williamson (figure 22) – actually dated April 1935 on the reverse of the original drawing. The lettering is almost identical to that first documented nearly twenty years earlier in the Central Control Board alphabet of 1916 (figure 19) and clearly demonstrates Voysey's stubborn attachment to his "pointed" Gothic lettering remaining in place until the very end of his career.

It has been convincingly argued that Voysey's dismay at the classical revival of the early 20th century, popularised by younger architects such as Lutyens and supported by the architectural schools and many leading critics, resulted in a reactionary retreat to the Gothic idioms of his youth (as is clearly evidenced in his later architectural and furniture designs). In 1911 he wrote:

"Surely a national style would be both possible and desirable as it was in the Tudor period, if allowed to develop out of national conditions and requirements. It is the ingrafting of a foreign style, or manner of buildings, which is so poisonous and utterly subversive of any national growth." [17]

As Voysey increasingly saw himself as the last disciple of A W N Pugin, so he sought to acknowledge and illustrate the profound link that tied him to his origins through his work. He valued the traditions and architectural styles of medieval England and, in particular, its fundamental influence on the nascent Gothic Revival as personified by his hero Pugin, and his first master, Seddon. The form of lettering he adopted during his later years also demonstrates Voysey's return to what he considered to be the "moral high ground" of the Gothic style.

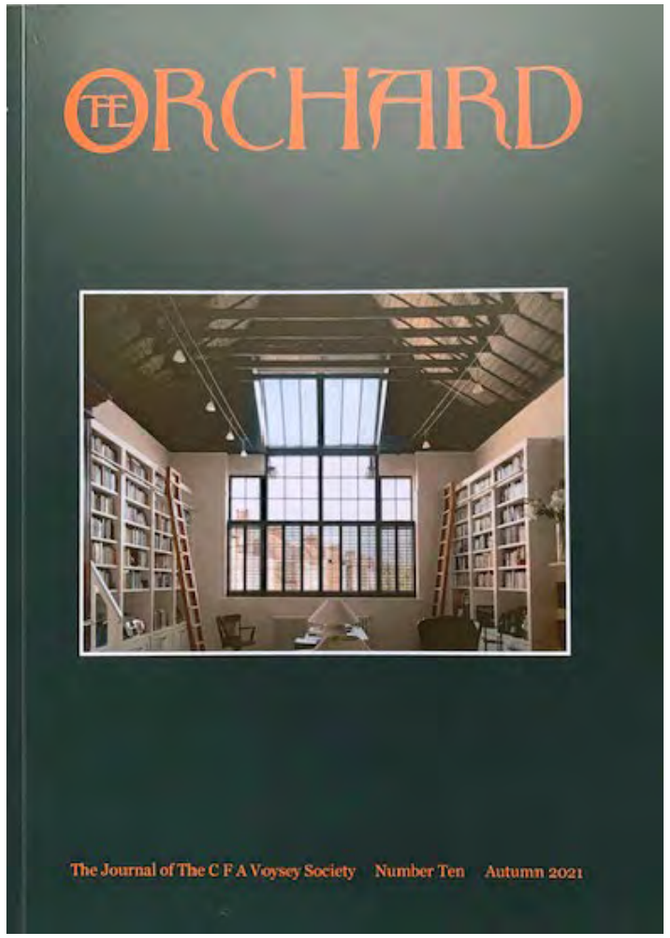
Figure 22 – Bookplate for Dora Isabel Williamson, 1935

14
The Studio Vol 64 No. 263, February 1915, pp50–51.

15
Livingstone, Karen, *The Bookplates and Badges of C F A Voysey*, Antique Collectors' Club, 2011.

16
Most of the undated bookplates can be given an exact date by reference to the original designs in the RIBA drawings collection or by simply referring to Joanna Symonds excellent catalogue of the RIBA's Voysey holdings.

17
Voysey, C F A, The English Home, *British Architect*, Vol 75, 1911, p60.



Modern Symbolism: The Graphic Design of C.F.A. Voysey

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.10, pp. 28-49 (2021).

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1
Change of address card (detail), 1882 (RIBA Collections)

Modern Symbolism: The Graphic Design of CFA Voysey

Tony Peart

Over the course of a long career CFA Voysey created a large body of commercial art or, as we would call it today, graphic design. It encompasses everything from book jackets, to posters, to hand lettering, to badges (logos) and most famously bookplates. As space is limited, I have avoided any detailed exploration of his activities as a typographer and bookplate designer and would refer the curious to two further sources of information. The first is my own *Voysey's Lettering Designs*, The Orchard Number 4 (Autumn 2015) which can be viewed as an adjunct to this paper. The second is the profusely illustrated *The Bookplates and Badges of CFA Voysey* by Karen Livingstone (Woodbridge 2011).

Voysey's earliest recorded foray into commercial artwork is both obscure and bizarre; a copyright application made in November 1873 by Thomas Bowden Green, a tea merchant of Mincing Lane in the City of London in respect of a drawing entitled '*Tichbourne as a Boy (a buoy with a human face)*'.[1] The artist of what, one assumes, is a caricature drawing is the sixteen-year-old Voysey, then living with his parents at Camden House, Dulwich. The image is now lost as is much of its context although the date is shortly after Voysey left Dulwich College, ending an unhappy period in his life later recalled in the third person as follows:

"When School was over, eagerly he rushed home to be with his parents… …he made a few friends among the Students of the Upper School sixth form boys and those in the painting Studios… …When the Art Master (the sculptor John LC Sparkes RA) was asked by the father as to the fitness of his son to any of the artistic professions, he said that the boy was no good at all, and quite unfit for an Artist's Career." [2]

As life drawing played no part in the training of an architect, it must be from his brief time at Dulwich, mixing with the likes of Henry Herbert La Thangue (1859-1929) and Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947), that the young Voysey gained the confidence and knowledge to draw the human form, a skill he would call on for the rest of his life and something that would set him apart from the architects of his generation, including the remarkably versatile Philip Webb (1831-1917).

John Pollard Seddon (1827-1906), to whom Voysey was articled for five years from 1874, certainly recognised his ability as a talented graphic artist allowing him to carry out a decorative scheme at a church in an *"important provincial town"* where he pained *"life sized angels."* During this period Voysey also produced an elaborately

illustrated rent roll book (now lost) for an extensive Irish Estate featuring watercolours of *"street after street, with pigs and peasants going in and out of the doors."*[3]

Portrait drawings are the earliest of his dated works to survive and seem to have been something of a passion for the aspirant architect.[4] During the 1870s and early 1880s Voysey was yet to find his own graphic 'voice' and these works are executed in a highly realistic, relatively anonymous style, the one exception being a printed change of address card dated 1882 featuring a confidently rendered young man (most likely an idealised self-portrait) attired in Tudor garb *(figure 1)*. This figure is drawn with a fir outline with simple, contoured hatching giving a strong sense of directional light and shows the twenty-five-year-old architect to be well aware of contemporary illustration techniques and, in particular, the work of Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914).

It is well known that Voysey's independent architectural career took many years to establish, and it proved necessary for the young architect to explore alternative sources of income. An early attempt was recalled later in life with the elderly Voysey explaining that a friendship with a young *"painter and etcher"* resulted in them sharing a studio, he explains:

> *"Together they worked and sometimes sat up all night etching copper plates. There was a certain religious sect with which the painter's father was connected and so the painter conceived the notion of etching portraits of their notable preachers. Some of the Ministers objected to having their portraits taken and sold to the members of their flock. So the painter and architect attended the service of these good people and during the sermon made careful sketches, slipping out stealthily unobserved, and in their Studio prepared plates from which many prints were made and sold to the brethren."*[5]

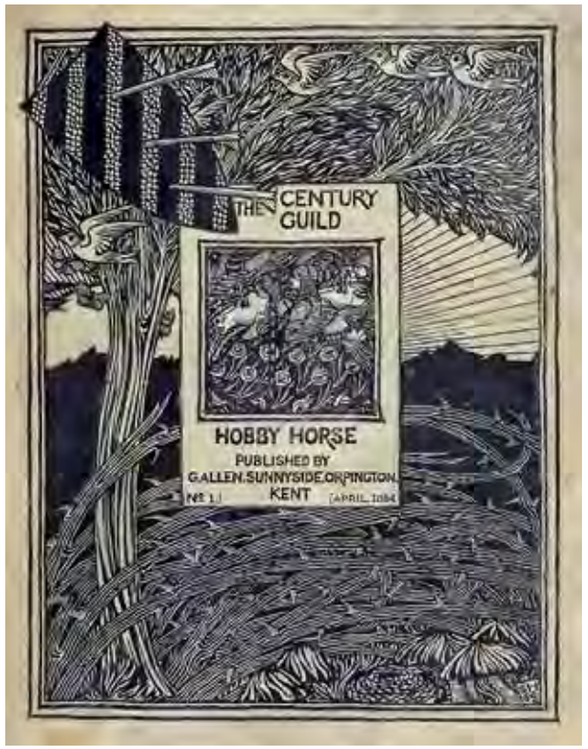
Voysey places this enterprise during his years of pupillage, however this immediately proves him to be an unreliable witness as the small group of etched portraits that survive all date to late 1883 and early 1884 when he had been in independent practice for two years. A drawing from this period, probably by Henry Ganz (the most likely candidate for Voysey's painter/etcher friend), survives and shows the young architect engrossed in sketching *(figure 2)*. It also seems likely that the *"certain religious sect"* referred to was not that of the painter's father but his own father's Theistic Church in Swallow Street, Piccadilly with Voysey mis-representing the facts to maintain his lifelong assertion that he never exploited any of his father's extensive social connexions to further his own career.[6]

The most profound and long-lasting influence on Voysey's graphic and decorative art was undoubtedly the publication, commencing in April 1884 of *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*

2
Voysey sketching. Probably drawn by Henry Ganz c.1883 (RIBA Collections)

the radical and exquisitely produced art journal established by the architect Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) along with the poet, architect, designer and art historian Herbert Horne (1864-1916) and the artist, designer, writer and poet Selwyn Image (1849-1930). The importance of Mackmurdo's help, advice and encouragement in establishing Voysey's career as a pattern designer is well documented but that influence also extended to the work he would go on to produce for advertisements, posters and book jackets. Voysey would later recall:

> *"It was by Mackmurdo that the journal entitled 'The Hobby-horse' was started, in collaboration with Professor Selwyn Image and P. Horn. For those days it was beautifully got up and printed on good paper, before Morris came on the scene. The ordinary Press were not accustomed to notice artists' work, so "The Hobby-horse" was only ridden by its sympathetic professional brethren, and consequently short-lived as a publication. But the extent of its influence was impossible to measure."*[7]

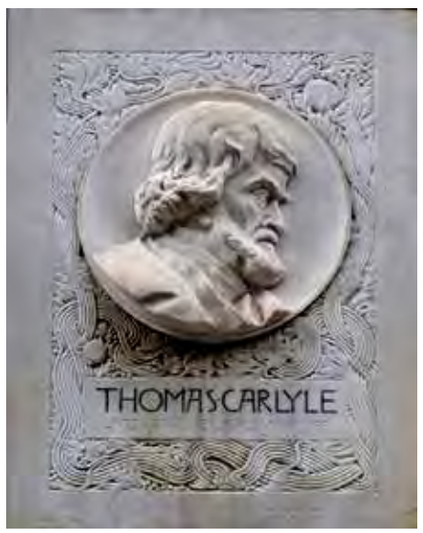


3
Cover design for The Century Guild Hobby Horse by Selwyn Image, 1884

Many assume *The Hobby Horse* was an extensively illustrated publication whereas, in reality, it contained very few illustrations making its visual influence on the generation of artists that were to follow all the more remarkable. Voysey, along with many of the illustrators who would go on to find fame in the 'nineties', must have pawed for hours over the striking cover design and the few scattered illustrations contained in each issue.[8] All three of the journal's founders provided illustrations but it is undeniably those created by Selwyn Image that had the greatest influence on Voysey. Here he found not only the simplified, 'flat' stylistic treatment with an emphasis on outline that he would follow for the rest of his life but also many of the motifs that are now considered to be quintessentially 'Voysey'. The journal's cover is a case in point *(figure 3)* as here can be seen the genesis of the 'Voysey bird', the parallel 'whiplash' curves that characterise much of his early textile and wallpaper designs, not to mention his design of 1885 for the Thomas Carlyle memorial plaque (sculpted by Benjamin Creswick an associate of The Century Guild) *(figure 4)*. Perhaps a memory of the cover, featuring as it does a setting sun and silhouetted mountains, would also later serve as the inspiration for the famous painted clock!

The firs , 1884 issue of *The Hobby Horse* proved to be a one-off until the publication was successfully relaunched in April 1886 as a quarterly. A series of decorative vignettes drawn by Selwyn Image for this new edition, all featuring highly stylized birds, can also be

4
Thomas Carlyle memorial plaque; background designed by CFA Voysey, executed by Benjamin Creswick, 1885



5
Vignettes drawn by Selwyn Image for The Hobby Horse, 1886 together with Voysey's air vent grille designed c.1893

6
Advertisement for Ben Parkes & Son, 1888. The metalwork depicted was most likely designed by Voysey (RIBA Collections)

seen to have had a huge influence upon Voysey. A comparison of these with Voysey's iconic bird air vent, probably designed in the early 1890s, graphically demonstrates this point *(figure 5)*.

The first reference to graphic design in Voysey's *'Black Book'* is an entry for 1888 that records him providing designs for 'chimney pieces' and 'grates' together with 'advertisements' for the firm of Lewis & Co. however, as dates prior to 1890 were added from memory, it is likely Voysey is mistaken in his recollection.[9] No such company is listed in his address book nor has an advert come to light. An early advertisement for a manufacturer of fireplaces and fire accessories does exist for the West Midlands firm of Ben Parkes & Son, and this is probably to what he was referring *(figure 6)*. The crisply delineated line drawing not only gives a tantalising view of what are likely to be Voysey's first forays into metalwork design (the fender is pierced with galleon motifs) but also show his detailed knowledge of Tudor Gothic design motifs. At this early date the association of Voysey's name with the product was not considered to have a marketing value. However, the architect has ensured his name, as the designer of the advertisement, has been recorded for all to see. From the beginning we see Voysey's drive to not only produce pattern and metalwork design to commission but also his desire to actively participate in the marketing of these products and when possible, promote his own name. This would soon reach an early highpoint with the long-running series of advertisements, commencing in 1889, he would design for the wallpaper manufacturers Essex & Co.

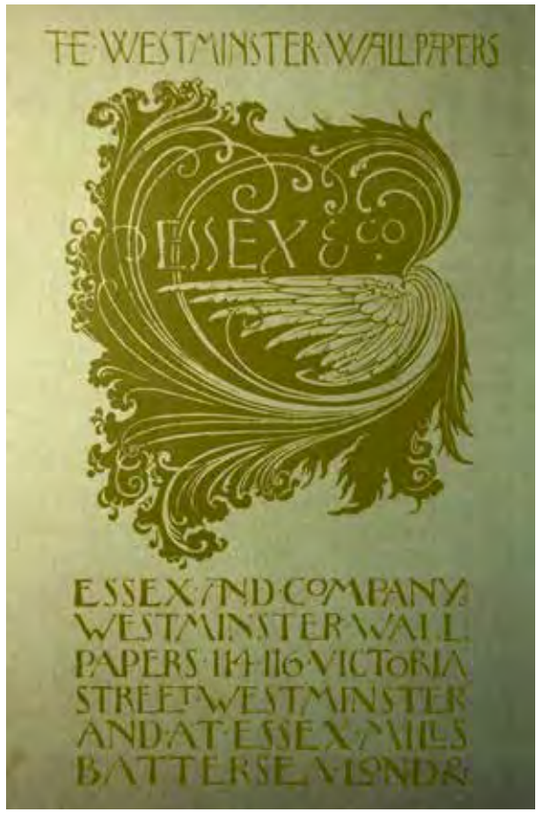
Voysey's first contact with the firm was a small commission to design bespoke furniture for the recently established company's showrooms.[10] This quickly expanded to not only include the design of wallpapers but also the creation of a long-running series of playful press adverts and promotional material. In a world before marketing departments, Voysey seems to have been given remarkable freedom to design as he saw fit, allowing him to develop a series of highly personal, instantly recognisable, and quirky advertisements rich with symbolism. In representing the public face of the manufacturer for approximately two decades it can be argued that, in hindsight, Voysey created a proto-corporate identity for the company.[11]

Although difficul to date accurately, both the style of the execution and that of the associated hand lettering allows for a likely sequence for this body of work to be postulated. The earliest pieces were probably executed around 1890 and include an address label featuring a galleon motif that Voysey seems to have quickly developed as a company badge or logo and a pair of large, full-page adverts featuring complicated, swirling, asymmetric designs. These can be seen to directly parallel the elaborate dynamics of his pattern designs at this time and feature in one case a highly wrought abstracted angels wing *(figure 7)* and in the other an almost 'Blakeian' vision of a guardian angel providing a

guiding light.[12] As with his designs for pattern, as time progresses the graphic workbecomes more simplified with less emphasis on complicated, 'busy' outlines as evidenced by another full-page advert featuring a more realistic angel dating to 1896 *(figure 8)* and a likely contemporary design depicting a punning 'SX' (Essex) device. The relationship with Essex & Co. continued into the new century with a series of less bombastic, more charming, quarter-page adverts featuring Voysey's characteristic motifs of birds, hearts, wildflowers, angels and bucolic characters *(figure 9)*. The advertisements Voysey created for Essex & Co. exposed his graphic work to a mass audience resulting in further commissions which grew steadily as the decade progressed.

The most influential journal of the day *The Studio*, founded by Charles Holme in 1893, was an active supporter of Voysey and featured examples of his work in its very first issue. This was followed in September 1893, by a lengthy illustrated interview with the architect focusing primarily on his work as a designer of pattern. Following these features, Holme went on to commission Voysey to create an illustrative cloth binding to house the six individual monthly issues that would comprise volume one of the journal. However, the resulting complex, highly symbolic image of two slightly androgynous figures kissing in a garden was soon dropped by the publisher in favour of a much simpler, purely decorative design that would appear from volume three onwards. One wonders how many readers of *The Studio* were able to decipher the image's idiosyncratic symbolism, in particular the use of the 'governor' of a steam engine (held by the male figure) which, in Voysey's mind, typified *"useful control"* ?[13] In retrospect, most of what typifies Voysey's relatively narrow design vocabulary of birds, figures, flowers and foliage is present in this image. As with most areas of his creative practice, once he found an approach that worked, he tended to stick with it.

In the early 1890s Voysey became involved with Octavia and Miranda Hill's Kyrle Society, a



7 & 8
Full page adverts for Essex & Co., c.1890, 1896

9
Quarter page adverts for Essex & Co., late 1890s

philanthropic organisation formed to bring 'beauty to the homes of the people' and supplied various decorative schemes for their London meeting rooms. Around 1893 this involvement extended into the field of publishing when he provided the Society with a striking and highly appropriate cover design for a series of architectural guidebooks, although the only example known to exist is that to St. Paul's Cathedral.[14] The style of execution is very

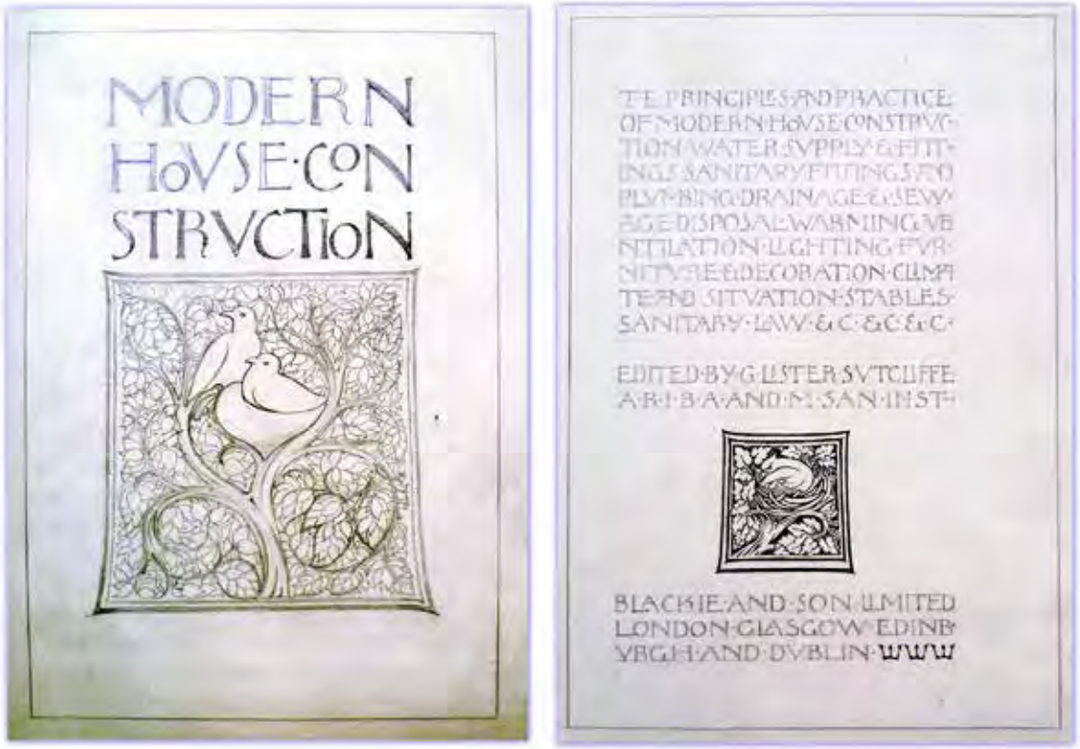
similar to that of *The Studio* cover but here a greater use is made of solid black to pick out the negative space and thus highlight the positive elements, a stylistic approach learned from Selwyn Image. The characters depicted, 'Love and the Pilgrim', feature in Chaucer's *The Romaunt of the Rose* and will appear again later in Voysey's graphic oeuvre. A similar graphic approach was taken for the design of the cover of a parish magazine for St. Mary's Church, Chatham in 1895 a commission that came about after Voysey had repaired and decorated the church rectory for the incumbent, the Rev. J T Rowe *(figure 10)*.

This commission was not unusual. Over the course of his career, Voysey received the majority of his graphic commissions as extensions to other, unrelated design work he had provided to the customer. In the early days this was primarily in the field of pattern design but as his architectural practice developed these contacts too often resulted in commissions for graphic work. However, one suspects that the majority of these designs including many of the later bookplates, were simply produced as favours to the client, not through any drive for financ al renumeration. Things were a little differen in the early days of his architectural practice and there are a handful of designs from the 1890s that can only have arisen because Voysey was actively pursuing paid graphic work. These pieces include a 'masthead' design for *The Girls Own Paper* executed in March 1894, a press advertisement that appeared in German publications during 1895 for Blank & Co. a German braids and trimmings manufacturer and two heraldic pieces: a letterhead for the London branch of piano manufacturer C Bechstein and somewhat surprisingly, a coloured label design for bottles of 'Holder's Pale Ale' *(figure 11)*!

By 1897 Voysey's graphic work was well enough known for one of his Essex & Co. adverts to be reproduced as an illustration to accompany *'Art in Advertising'* a survey of recent developments in commercial art written by the well-known designer Lewis F Day for *The Art Journal*. This was followed a year later with the special winter number of *The Studio* devoted to 'Modern Book-Plates and Their Designers'. This lengthy survey, written by Gleeson White, saw Voysey being represented by a badge recently designed for his children's school, The King Alfred School, Hampstead, and a bookplate for Charles Stewart King. This public exposure of his recent graphic work coincides with the commencement of Voysey's busiest, most productive spell as both as an architect and a designer of pattern. It is remarkable that during the time he was engaged with the design and building of houses such as: Greyfriars; Dixcot; Norney Grange; New Place; Broad Leys and Moorcrag and was also under contract to various wallpaper and textile manufactures, his output of graphic design continues unabated. Voysey found the time to design further adverts for Essex & Co., book jackets for the Glasgow publishers Blackie and Son and an elaborate certificate for The Home Arts and Industries Association.[15] Sadly, the designs for *Modern House Construction (figure 12)* provided to Blackie were

10
Cover design for St. Mary's Parish Magazine, Chatham, 1895 (RIBA Collections)

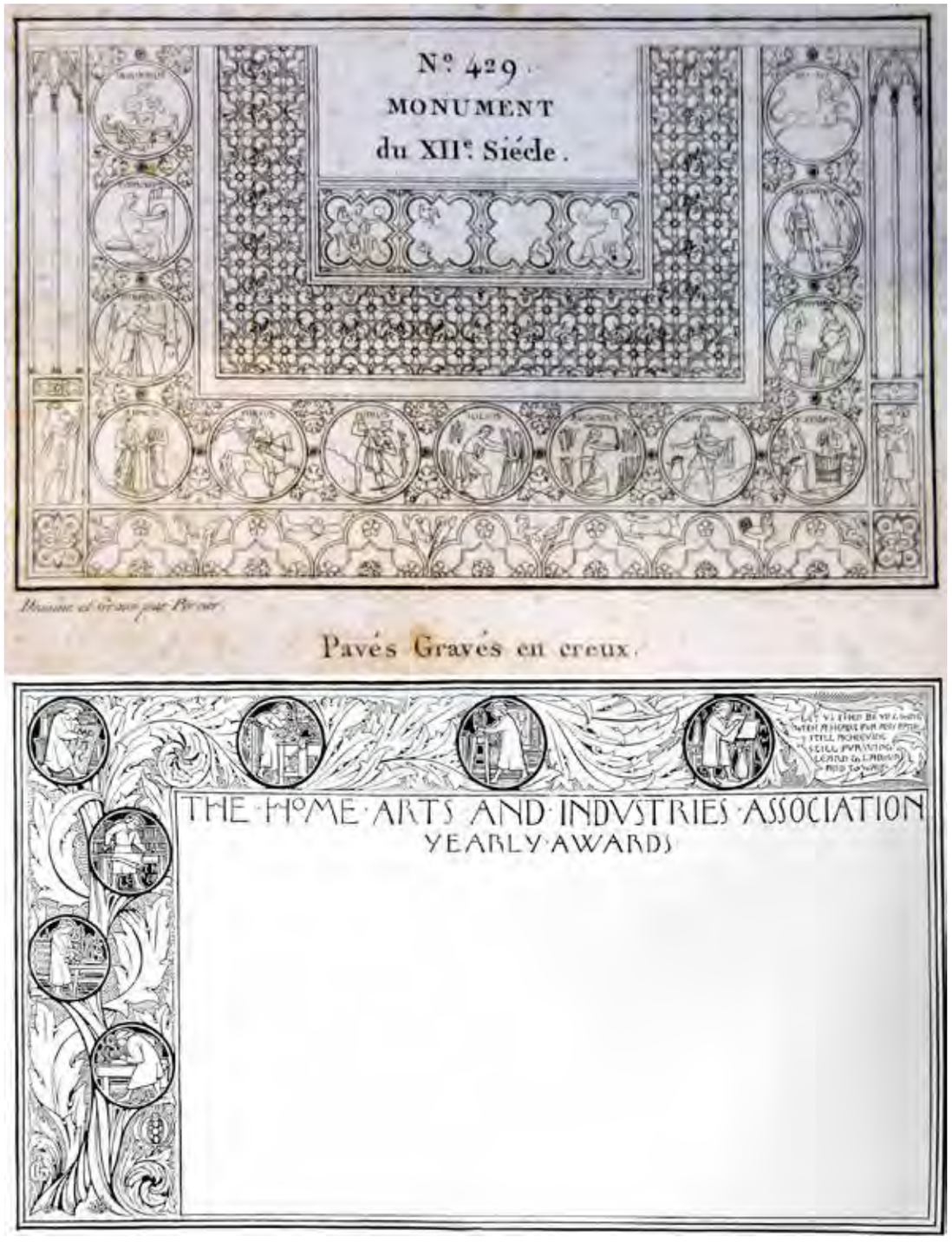
11
Label design for Holder's Pale Ale, mid-1890s (RIBA Collections)



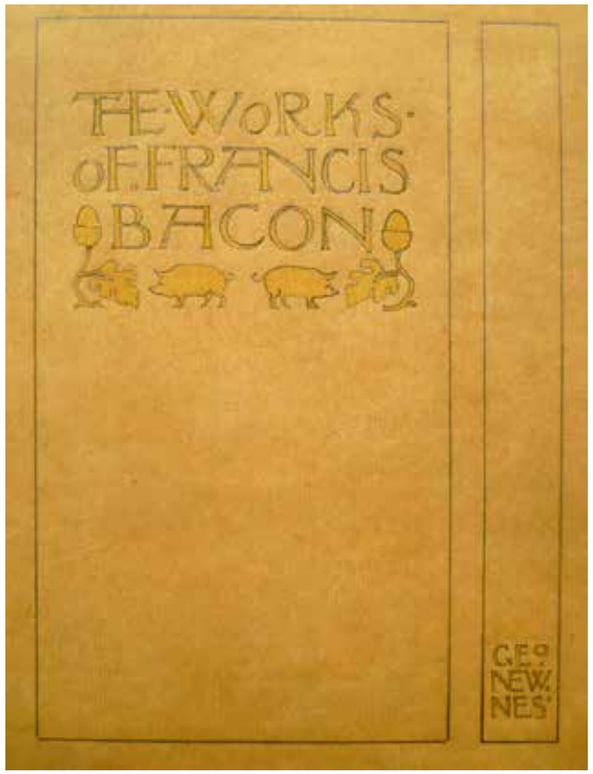
12
Rejected design for cover and title page of Modern House Construction, c.1897 (RIBA Collections)

rejected and the edition appeared with a cover designed by the company's in-house art director, Talwin Morris (1865-1911). Motifs from the HAIA certificate would later reappear on tiles designed for Pilkington's but it is interesting to note that Voysey's original inspiration seems to have come from a line engraving of a twelfth century French pavement tomb *(figure 13)*. This print is one of many graphic images he preserved for future reference in an envelope he entitled *"Miscellaneous photos and prints by various authors."* This collection of 'inspirational items' now with the RIBA contains many photographic details of various plants (for use in his pattern design) but also many graphic images removed from various books and magazines, some of which clearly informed this aspect of his work. Early woodcuts and illuminated manuscripts from the fourteenth century predominate but works from the Renaissance also feature including a delicate engraving of *'Tobias and the Angel'* by an unknown artist (in the manner of Raphael), which likely served as the initial inspiration for Voysey's *'Love and the Pilgrim'* pair. More recent images include a collection of Thomas Bewick wood engravings of birds and an Edward Burne-Jones woodcut illustration for the Kelmscott Press.

It is only as the new century dawns that one sees a slowing of Voysey's graphic output, but it did not cease. Book jacket designs were commissioned (and rejected) by George Newnes publisher of *The Strand Magazine* in 1902. One regrets that Voysey's playful and punning response to *The Works of Francis Bacon*, a design featuring pigs rooting for acorns *(figure 14)*, was not used! Further forays into



13
An engraving of a French, 12th century, monumental paving slab providing inspiration for Voysey's design for a certificate for the HAIA, c.1898 (RIBA Collections)



publishing followed as in the same year he was commissioned to design a range of simple, pocket-sized, gilt-stamped book covers for Methuen's *Little Library* series. He also designed a small, hand lettered title for the series, which appeared as a frontispiece in each volume.[16] A hand lettered cover for his father's *Religion for All Mankind* was designed in 1905 along with another hand lettered design for his friend Henry Ganz's *Practical Hints on Painting, Composition, Landscape, and Etching*. The Ganz volume also contains a Voysey designed circular monogram for the author along with a typical Voysey advertisement featuring birds for The Rowley Gallery in Kensington Church Street. Finally, in 1906 Voysey designed the cover for his own *Reason as a Basis of Art* rejecting a treatment featuring pictorial elements *(figure 15)* in favour of an entirely hand lettered approach. This proved to be one of the last outings of his 'free form' lettering before he adopted, in 1907, a more regular and austere 'Gothic' script.[17]

The early 1900s also saw Voysey designing widely circulated press advertisements for the wallpaper manufacturer Arthur Sanderson and Son, a company he had occasionally provided with wallpaper designs since the late 1880s. These adverts often appear in magazines alongside the superficially similar designs Voysey had provided the previous decade to Essex and Co. which were successful enough to run well into the new century. This undoubtedly caused much confusion for the reader, featuring, as they do, virtually identical lettering alongside similar decorative motifs. Voysey was aware of this and sought to create a different identity by ensuring his Sanderson adverts always featured a lone, elongated male figure dressed in eighteenth century garb. However, the highly individual, and immediately recognisable nature of his graphic style somewhat negates this. Although deceptively simple, these designs were also full of symbolism as he later explained in reference to a design featuring the

14
Rejected cover design for The Works of Francis Bacon, 1902 (RIBA Collections)

15
Alternative cover design for Voysey's own Reason as a Basis of Art, c.1906 (RIBA Collections)

16
Original pen & ink design for Arthur Sanderson advert, c.1903 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

lone figure bending to inspect a rose bush *(figure 16)* saying it was: *"intended to attract artists with a reverence for nature. The humble lover with delicate touch, is humble because conscious of Nature's Divine origin."* In designing a coloured Christmas card for Arthur Sanderson's brother Harold, Voysey overtly proclaims his design philosophy showing a pair of angels displaying a scroll bearing the statement *'Symbols May Express More than Words Can Utter' (figure 17).*

The year 1907 proved to be a watershed; as many of his fellow architects embraced neo-classicism, Voysey reacted histrionically by embracing the Tudor Gothic. As the secular, modern world dawned, he responded by adopting design motifs from an idealised, religious, medieval past. His father, the Rev. Charles Voysey (1828-1912), had relished his prolonged conflict with the established church, using every opportunity to disseminate his views through the press or by self-publishing. Mirroring the approach of the father, the son viewed the arena of graphic design as the most eff ctive way to widely disseminate his beliefs and values to the public no matter how obscure or arcane! This was surely the motivating factor that saw Voysey producing graphic designs regularly throughout his career. Frustratingly for the designer, his clients tended to responded to his graphic work in terms of style and aesthetics but there was always a subtext to Voysey's work and for him the intention was to encourage his

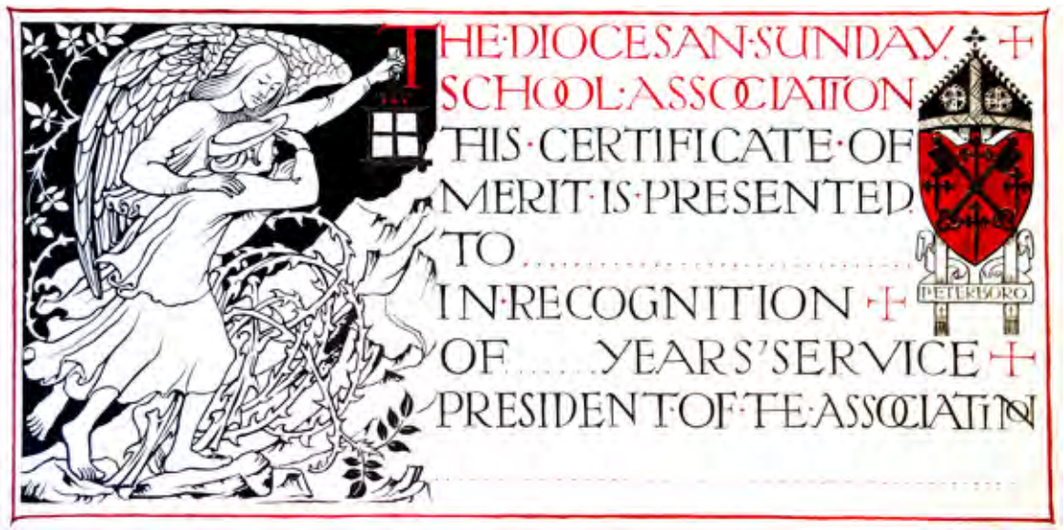
17
Christmas Card for Harold Sanderson, 1901 (RIBA Collections)

18
Badge for The Design Club, 1909

audience to: *"love that which is symbolised and never sink into a materialistic contentment with the symbol only."* [18]

As the new century wore on and his frustrations grew, Voysey felt a growing need to publicly lobby for a return to the widespread use of symbolism. Contradictorily, in also seeking opportunities to explain the symbols he makes a tacit admission that much of his symbolism's meaning was lost on a contemporary audience. A case in point can be seen when *The Builder* reproduced Voysey's circular badge design for The Design Club *(figure 18)* stating (probably at the insistence of Voysey) that the 'mystical symbol' is: *"intended to express the essentials of design – head, heart and hand, the head crowned with the band of restraint."* [19] Rather cuttingly, the anonymous author goes on to say: *"The meaning of the symbol is better than its decorative effect, which is not very attractive."*

19 *a & b*
Certificates commissioned by Voysey's brother, the Rev. Ellison Annesley Voysey, c.1911 (RIBA Collections)



However, this was not an issue to Voysey whose claimed sole intention was to encourage the viewer to: *"see beneath the surface of things"* as it *"enriches our lives and develops character"* and further cautioned: *"our materialistic temper has caused us to count only sensuous qualities in things material..."* [20]

As Voysey's architectural work slowed towards the end of the decade, graphic and pattern design would once again become his primary source of income although designs were frequently provided to friends and family for little or no renumeration. As Voysey had more time available to spend on his graphic work the complexity of his designs often increases, culminating in the years preceding The Great War with a small group of designs commissioned by his brother and close friend, the Rev. Ellison Annesley Voysey (1867-1942). The earliest dates to 1911 and features a reworking of *'Love and the Pilgrim'* a design created eighteen years previously for The Kyrle Society. The symbolism used in this group is relatively straightforward; all feature angels *(figure 19)* but in one example, a prize certificate for the Alderley Edge Music Festival (*figure 20)*, Voysey did not blanche from including a written description of how the image is to be 'read' as part and parcel of the image!

The March 1915 issue of *The Studio* featured a double page spread illustrating six of Voysey's badges and bookplates and an editorial celebrating his *"decorative genius"* and noting it was not surprising that: *"he should have bestowed his attention upon a class of design which, if lying outside the broad ambit of his practice as an architect, is yet one calling for the play of the decorative faculty which he possesses in such a marked degree."* [21] This article was probably seen by Campbell Dodgson (1867-1948), Keeper of Prints and Drawings at The British Museum, who requested examples of Voysey's graphic work to add to the museum's collection. Flattered, Voysey donated a selection of his bookplates, badges and advertisements in a series of bequests, the last occurring only four years before his death. *The Studio* article certainly had a positive impact on this aspect of Voysey's design practice with bookplates and badges comprising the bulk of his output across the remainder of his career.

Around July 1915 Voysey became involved with The Civic Survey of Greater London, a body originally founded in 1894 by CR Ashbee as the Committee for the Survey of the Memorials of Greater London. A loose association of like-minded architects and conservationists including Voysey's good friend, the architect George Walton (1867-1933), their task was to complete a register, parish by parish, of any important buildings under threat and alert Londoners of the situation by reporting to the London County Council. Shortly before Voysey joined the 54-year-old architect Harry Redfern (1861-1950), a fellow member of The Art Workers' Guild, was appointed Assistant Director. Voysey's involvement lasted only a few months but saw

20
Detail of certificate for the Alderley Edge Musical Festival, c.1913 (RIBA Collections)

21
Soldiers & Sailors Map of London, 1916

him designing a circular badge to act as an identity for the Survey. This striking design appropriately features: *"two good spirits, one casting light while the other is recording. That is to say, the collecting of facts and the making of diagrammatic records of the same."* [22]

In January 1916 he also designed and drew for the Survey a large scale, full-colour map for use by servicemen on leave in London. The *Soldiers & Sailors Map of London (figure 21)* indicates the location of accommodation, food, baths, swimming pools, YMCAs and various military clubs. This would be his last work for the Civic Survey's as their activities were suspended due to the outbreak of war.

During the early months of the conflict, widespread concerns about the negative effe ts upon munitions production of excessive drinking amongst the workforce, prompted David Lloyd George, the Minister of Munitions, to set up the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic) on 30 June 1915 under Regulation 1 of the Defence of the Realm (Liquor Control) Regulations, 1915. Those men not eligible for the armed forces through reasons of age or health currently employed on The Survey of London by The London County Council (under whose remit its operation fell), were transferred to the Ministry of Munitions and a group including Voysey, Redfern and Walton were allocated to the Central Control Board. Thus, during August 1916,

on the eve of his seventh decade, Voysey became an employee of HM Government.

The solution to excessive drinking in the areas surrounding the larger munitions factories was solved by taking local pubs into state management and employing a disinterested management system that removed the incentive to sell liquor and promoted the provision of entertainment, food and non-alcoholic beverages. Three areas were involved in the scheme: Carlisle, Enfield and Cromarty Firth with the main focus being on Carlisle, close to the massive armament factory at Gretna. In what became commonly known as the 'Carlisle Experiment', many sub-standard establishments were closed or radically re-modelled and many new 'model' pubs were designed and built. Harry Redfern was appointed chief architect to the Central Control Board with George Walton, his junior by six years, acting as his assistant. Walton's remit was to assist Redfern with site surveys and supply the interior decoration and furnishing of the premises. Voysey, who certainly was a much better-known architect than either Redfern or Walton, was simply tasked with designing the Board's badge, a few hand lettered notices, a year calendar and a series of posters for use as decorations in the scheme's public houses and canteens *(figure 22 overleaf)*. The select group of large-scale images that Voysey created to be framed as posters are his most colourful body of graphic design work and comprise illustrations of well-known nursery rhymes and aphorisms with the occasional oblique statement thrown in for good measure! It would appear he was given complete freedom in relation to subject matter and made little attempt to design images that specifically relate to either place, time or context. Many also feature images and motifs that had been employed previously.[23] They have the appearance of charming, anachronistic images seemingly ripped at random from the pages of a children's book of fairy tales. Their means of reproduction was somewhat tortuous with Voysey drawing each full-size on brown wrapping paper (probably because of paper shortages) and then carefully inking in the design. From this a black and white line image was transferred to linen following which the drawing on wrapping paper was coloured using relatively opaque watercolours. The black and white image on linen was then sent to Charles Thurnham Printers of Carlisle who produced multiples using the 'sun process' which were then shipped back to Voysey in London for hand-colouring in watercolour.[24] Finally, these signed, hand-coloured prints were returned to Thurnham's in Carlisle for framing and distribution. One suspects that the supportive Redfern had devised a cunning way to help Voysey prolong his involvement with the scheme and so maximise the modest income he would receive from his somewhat tangential involvement with the war eff rt!

As previously stated, from the war until the end of his life in 1941, Voysey's graphic design activity accounted for much of his modest income. This preoccupation probably led to him selecting it as the

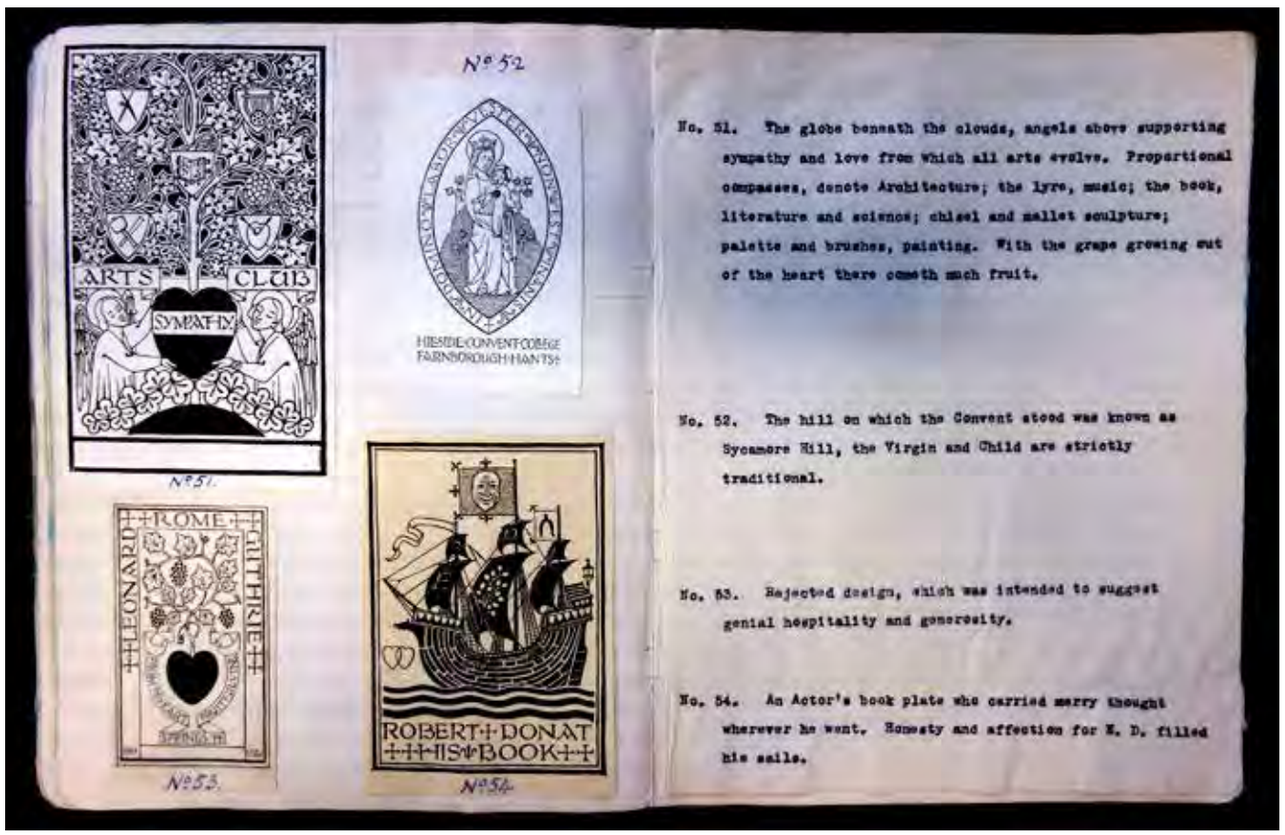
22
Hand coloured posters for the Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic), 1916-18 (RIBA Collections)

subject of an illustrated lecture entitled *Modern Symbolism* given at Carpenters' Hall on February 6, 1918 and printed in *The Builder* the following month.[25] As with so much of Voysey's writing he demonstrates an uncanny knack of simultaneously praising and antagonising his audience. We have already seen his frustration at the general public's unwillingness to engage with and decipher his graphic symbolism and he must have seen this as an opportunity to finally set the record straight. More religious tract than advice on design, Voysey's lecture cautions against those pursuing 'art for art's sake' believing that: *"all we enjoy through our senses is on a lower plane than that which stimulates our intelligence and our love."* He is adamant that the time is quickly coming when: *"qualities of thought and feeling will be looked for"* and extolls his audience to: *"wake up and express in our design all the beauty of thought and feeling with which every child of man is endowed."* The extract printed in *The Builder* included five illustrations of Voysey's badges and bookplates necessitating the editor to add a postscript, likely to have been supplied by Voysey), explaining how the symbolism of each design should be deciphered and understood.

23
Bookplate for Arthur À Beckett Terrell, 1917 (RIBA Collections)

This evangelical mission to re-orientate and re-educate the public continued unabated and over a decade later in April 1929, *The Builder* once again provided a platform for Voysey to call for the widespread adoption of symbolic design when an edited and expanded version of *'Modern Symbolism'* reappeared illustrated with five different examples of Voysey's bookplate designs.[26] On this occasion Voysey provided detailed explanations for each image and reference is made to *"the oak of sturdy growth" (figure 23)*, compasses *"symbolising logic"* and the crown signifying *"self-control"* and indicating that *"the mind must control the emotions."* However, the definitive, self-penned guide to Voysey's canon of symbolic design is a scrapbook compiled between 1930-32 containing seventy-five annotated examples of his graphic work. Voysey paid to have each of his explanatory commentaries typed by a professional indicating that the work may have been intended for commercial publication. Unsure of the final title, Voysey pondered a list of alternatives including: *Symbolism in Design (or a Little Moral Philosophy); Ideas for Bookplates and Badges; Some Hidden Meanings in Form and finally, Badges, Bookplates, Symbolism and Philosophy*.[27]

The lengthy introduction is once again based upon his Carpenters' Hall lecture of 1918, and the images selected are a comprehensive and representative selection of his 'greatest hits' from forty years'



24
Symbolism in Design: Voysey's carefully compiled and annotated scrapbook of bookplates, badges and advertisements, 1930-32 (RIBA Collections)

worth of graphic work *(figure 24)*. The majority are bookplates, but the volume also contains the 1893 cover design for *The Studio* and the Sanderson adverts discussed previously. Designs for commerce are represented by circular badges for The Deptford Chamber of Commerce, The Brockley Permanent Building Society and The Central Control Board (Liquor Traffic [28] Also documented is an unsuccessful 1911 competition design for an Australian stamp (featuring a Kangaroo) and a more recent piece, a *'Tudor Gothic'* head piece for an article on his hero, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin published in the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects.[29] As ever with Voysey, a seemingly simple design could well have a highly complex meaning in the mind of its creator, as in the case of a design for the reverse of a pack of playing cards *(figure 25)*. This warrants an explanation that runs to no less than thirty-six lines of dense text although it starts simply enough with a description of the Knave, King and Queen. By its conclusion Voysey has attacked society's *"materialistic contentment"* and criticised those who *"appropriate the opinions of others"* without making the effort to think for themselves, explaining that people are prone to be lazy and love the *"wrong things."* He ends pessimistically with a cry from the heart:

> *"Love money and matter most, and then the value of our book plates and symbols will depend on material dexterity and authorship, more than on the beauty of thought and feeling contained in them; and the names of the author will be an important addition. But in all time there have been some who believe that the love of God leads to the love of goodness, truth and beauty and ultimately to the love of man and the joy of symbolising these qualities in all designs."*

25
Design for the reverse of a pack of playing cards, c.1912 (RIBA Collections)

Voysey continued to create graphic designs, especially bookplates, until shortly before his death in 1941. This later work lacks the focus of his earlier designs and ranges from circular badges featuring plants, flowers and animals (supplied to the Embroiders' Guild) to hand-painted public house signs executed for long-standing patrons such as Lady Lovelace.[30] As Voysey's financial difficultie became dire, he turned to selling multiples of his work in an attempt to generate income. Once again, he exploited the 'sun print' method having drawings of his large format annual calendars and grids of smaller greetings card designs reproduced as black and white line art. The elderly Voysey would then sit alone in his small, St. James's bed-sit flat, cutting out and hand colouring the images as and when required *(figure 26)*. Some of these were sold but one suspects the majority were given away as gifts to friends and friends and clients. An entry in the *'Black Book'* records: *"Designed and coloured 936 cupids, 448 given away. Profit £11.4.0."* [31]

Voysey's final graphic design commission was never completed. It was to have been a bookplate for John Betjeman (1906-1984) who he first met around 1936; the pair quickly becoming good friends. They corresponded regularly and, in a letter, dated July 7, 1939 Voysey provides an insight into his philosophy regarding bookplate design by revealing:

> *"I cannot design any ornament that does not suggest some thought and feeling other than pure sensuous feeling. It should suggest the owner's character, affections or occupation. Any suggestion of the designer would be in my opinion quite out of place and in bad taste. As Ruskin said, "tell me what you love, and I will tell you what you are". If I design you a book plate, it must speak of you alone."* [32]

After a meeting to discuss the project, Voysey tells Betjeman that he will not accept payment for the design and that following their discussions he has decided that the most appropriate symbol to represent an author and journalist is the eagle which he sees as: *"the highest flyer and furthest seer of any living creature."* His devotion

26
Hand-coloured multiples of Cupid, 1932 (RIBA Collections)

to symbolic meaning and his belief in its ability to prompt 'higher thoughts' never wavered but sadly the war and his failing health intervened. We shall leave the final words to Voysey who, in one of his first letters to Betjeman, tragicomically encapsulates the physical and financial plight that dogged his later years

> *"It is rather an amusing race I am watching between life and Bank Balance. I do not yet know which is going to win. My hope is that the Bank will."*

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1
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2
Voysey, CFA. *The Value of Hidden Influences, as Disclosed in the Life of an Ordinary Man*, 1931, Ref: RIBA VoC/4/6.

3
Ibid.

4
See: RIBA SC 172/VOY [626-635]

5
Voysey, CFA. *'The Value of Hidden Influences, as Disclosed in the Life of an Ordinary Man*', 1931, Ref: RIBA VoC/4/6.

6
For three examples see: *The Orchard, no. 7*, p. 43.

7
Voysey, CFA. '1874 and After', *Architectural Review, vol.70*, 1931, pp.91-92.

8
The Hobby Horse was a huge influence on Aubrey Beardsley, Sidney Sime and the members of the Birmingham Group.

9
Black Book, RIBA VoC/1/1.

10
Ibid.

11
The German architect and designer Peter Behrens is widely considered 'the father of corporate identity' based on the work he produced for AEG from 1906 onwards.

12
Illustrated: *The Orchard, no. 4*, p. 38.

13
Voysey, CFA. *'Symbolism in Design'*, 1930-32, p. 11. RIBA SKB458/2.

14
Illustrated: *The Orchard, no. 4*, p. 38.

15
Illustrated: *The Orchard, no. 8*, p. 88.

16
Illustrated: *The Orchard, no. 4*, p. 41.

17
See: Peart, T. 'Voysey's Lettering Designs', *The Orchard, no. 4*, pp. 37-45.

18
Anonymous. 'Carpenters' Hall Lectures: Modern Symbolism', *The Builder*, March 8, 1918, pp. 156-7.

19
Anonymous. *The Builder,* Feb 27, 1909, p. 236.

20
The Builder, March 8, 1918, pp. 156-7.

21
The Studio, vol. 64, March 1915, pp. 50-51.

22
Voysey, CFA. '*Symbolism in Design'*, 1930-32, p. 11. RIBA SKB458/2.

23
"What makes your admiration?" is a reworking of a Sanderson advert (figure 16), "Love and the pilgrim" first appeared on the Kyrle Society guide to St. Paul's and was later used as a Sunday School certificate (figure 19), "T's love that makes the world go round" first appeared as an Essex & Co, wallpaper and was also used as an advert for the same company finally, "Use & Beauty" is the same design that decorated the first two volumes of *The Studio* in 1893.

24
The 'sun process' was a development of cyanotype printing using sunlight or UV light to transfer a black line image to paper.

25
The Builder, March 8, 1918, pp. 156-7.

26
Voysey, CFA. 'Modern Symbolism', The Builder, April 5, 1929, p. 634.

27
Voysey, CFA. *'Symbolism in Design'*, 1930-32, p. 11. RIBA SKB458/2.

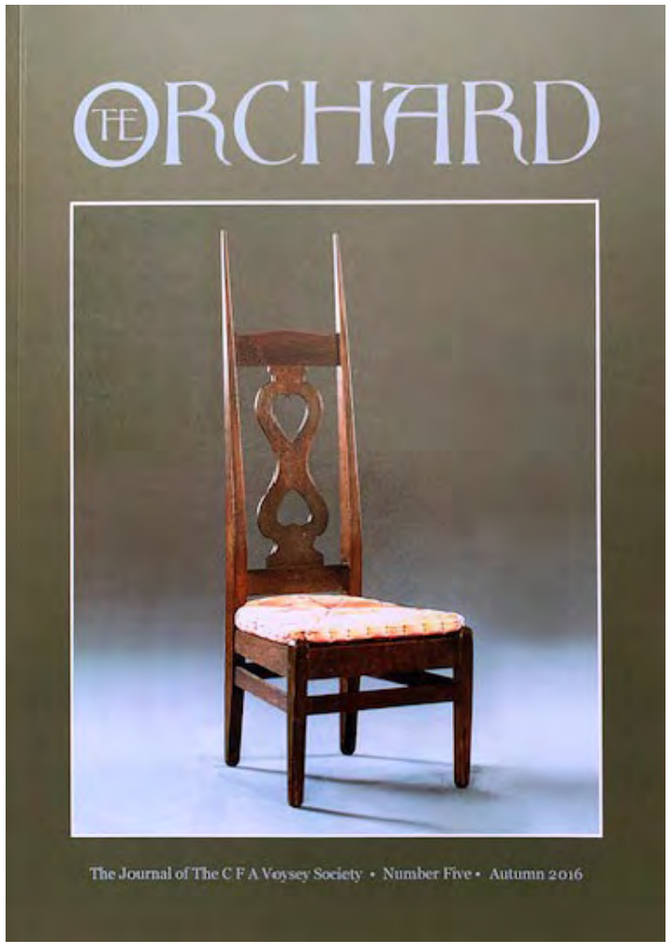
28
Illustrated: Livingstone, K. *The Bookplates and Badges of CFA Voysey.* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2011.

29
See: RIBA SC 172/VOY [576].

30
A sign was also designed for the Horse & Jockey Inn for Col. Raymond, 1927. RIBA SA69VoY[13].

31
Black Book, RIBA VoC/1/1.

32
See: RIBA BrJo/Box1/16.



The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey, part 1: 1883–1898

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.5, pp. 5-15 (2016).

Download

The furniture designs of C F A Voysey, Part 1: 1883-1898

Tony Peart

The best of Voysey's furniture is as well known as his architecture and is highly regarded in design circles, with many major museums of decorative art holding representative examples. Above all else, his pieces are praised and valued for their simplicity of design, exquisite proportions and exemplary craftsmanship. In today's secular society it is all too easy to impose our own values and perceptions – primarily aesthetic – on these, the products of a relatively recent past. In the case of C F A Voysey this would be a mistake. Voysey's own extensive writings on architecture and design make clear that he viewed his creations as having two, interdependent but equally important aspects: the moral and the aesthetic. Counselling against judgement based purely on aesthetic grounds Voysey wrote:

"Some would have us silence our reason and drink in the sensuous beauty as we often do our food, for the mere pleasure of being pleased; so feeding, not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. Rather should we approach the works of men in all time, intelligently seeking the higher motive of their action."[1]

The higher motive in Voysey's case was his unswerving and deeply held belief in: "a beneficent and omnipotent controlling power, that is perfectly good and perfectly loving; and that our existence here, is for the purpose of growing individual characters."[2]

In breaking from the Church of England in the 1870s and ultimately establishing his own Theistic Church – Voysey's father, the Rev. Charles (1828-1912), undertook a determined, protracted and very public, head-to-head battle with the religious authority and orthodoxy of his day. It could also be argued that he relished his central role in this long-running cause célèbre. C F A Voysey not only inherited his father's religious beliefs but also his combative nature, stating: "what my father was has taught me more than what my father knew."[3] He saw himself as an individual, an outsider – one could even argue as a prophet without honour – someone who would speak forthrightly when he felt the need to and, above all else, pursue his own path, never following the crowd. Writing of himself in the third person in 1931, Voysey said: "When Providence wants to affect the movement of men's mind collectively He sends a few pioneers to work individually." Individuality not egotism was a passion with this man, who in consequence disliked all forms of collectivism."[4] Speaking of Voysey's book *Individuality* (1915) John Betjeman astutely observed: "it expounds the religion of the architect and the consequent reverence with which he made his buildings."[5] Voysey extended that same reverence to the contents of those buildings.

1
C F A Voysey, *Reason as a Basis of Art*. London: Elkin Mathews, 1906, p13-14

2
Voysey, C. F.A. Individuality. London: Chapman and Hall, 1915, p7

3
Ibid, p57

4
C F A Voysey, *The Value of Hidden Influences as Disclosed in the Life of One Ordinary Man*. Unpublished typescript, 1931, RIBA VOC/4/6

5
J Betjeman, *Charles Francis Annesley Voysey: the Architect of Individualism. Architectural Review*, vol. 70, October 1931, p93

Figure 1 – A third, more ornate and later variation of the "Swan" chair, commissioned c.1905 by James Bellamy Higham, Unitarian Minister for Wolverhampton, and neighbouring minister to Voysey's brother, Ellison Annesley

The primary motivating factor for Voysey to start designing furniture was the precedent set by a slightly older generation of architects as he explained: "William Burgess [*sic*], E.W. Godwin, A.H. Mackmurdo, Bodley and others regarded nothing in or outside a home as too small to deserve their careful consideration. So we find Burges designing water-taps and hair brushes; Godwin and Mackmurdo furniture; Bodley, like Pugin, fabrics and wallpapers."[6] Writing late in life he also stated:

"It was fully realised that as there was nothing too small for the creator's care, there should be nothing thought unworthy of man's devotion and labour." He considered it his duty to make everything as beautiful and pleasing to the eye and mind as possible, And for that end to wage eternal war against all forms of ugliness. Simplicity was also loved because it demanded the best materials and first class workmanship; and needed perfect proportion."[7]

For any young, progressive architect/designer, yet to find an individual voice but embarking upon independent practice in the early 1880s – as Voysey did – there were two approaches to design competing for attention: the long established Gothic (as practised by Burges, Bodley, Pugin and Seddon); and the more recent stylistic developments which were then known as Queen Anne or, as we would call it now, the Aesthetic Movement (as practised by Godwin and Norman Shaw). Voysey was well aware of both idioms, although his adoption of the Gothic can largely be attributed to the huge influence of his first master, Seddon, in combination with his admiration for the writings of Ruskin and the works of Pugin. His deep-seated abhorrence of the central tenets of the Aesthetic Movement: "art for art's sake" and the influence of foreign styles – principally from Japan – should also be noted. In 1918 Voysey would write: "We find that traditional ideas and feelings may be quite insincerely repeated...for instance, we may fitly imitate in an object of our own, the finish we find in Japanese workmanship, but the imitation of its traditional thought and feeling is absurd, Chippendale exhibited this kind of absurdity when he produced his Chinese furniture."[8]

The earliest surviving Voysey design for furniture is for "an oak chair for reading room, writing room or hall"; the so-called "Swan" chair (figure 1) with a working drawing dating to c1883-85. This somewhat technically naive design (as evidenced by repairs to structurally weak points on a surviving example)[9] although visually striking, is barely fit for purpose, being extremely uncomfortable. The chair could well have been constructed for Voysey's own use around 1885 (the year of his marriage). It was certainly illustrated alongside other items from his own collection in a photograph appearing in *Dekorative Kunst* in 1898[10] and should not be confused with a second version[11] commissioned around that date by William and Haydee Ward-Higgs. There are echoes in the design of both Pugin – especially his designs for a range of simple, "knock-down" furniture which also featured similar "tusked" tenons, and the well-known Glastonbury chair,[12] a design that was reproduced by Pugin. For all its many shortcomings, this earliest design does exhibit the pared-down, almost naked quality of all that was to follow, a characteristic Voysey would himself refer to as his "severe simplicity.[13]"

7
C F A Voysey, *The Value of Hidden Influences as Disclosed in the Life of One Ordinary Man*. Unpublished typescript, 1931, RIBA VOC/4/6

8
C F A Voysey, *Tradition in Relation to Modern Art. In Problems of Reconstruction : Lectures and Addresses Delivered at the Summer Meeting at the Hampstead Garden Suburb*, August, 1917. London: T Fisher Unwin, 1918, pp225-232

9
In the collection of The Wilson - Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, 1981.312

10
A.L.P. C.F.A. Voysey. *Dekorative Kunst*, vol 11, no 6, March 1898, pp241-56

During the early 1880s, the architect A H Mackmurdo (1851-1942) offered great assistance and practical advice to Voysey as he sought to develop a parallel career as a commercial pattern designer, using the regular income generated to support himself through the financially uncertain early years of his independent architectural practice. In establishing The Century Guild of Artists c1884, Mackmurdo was to provide the single greatest influence on Voysey's (and, it could be argued, a generation of architect/designer's) approach to the design of furniture. Voysey himself was unequivocal:

"Mackmurdo's furniture, first exhibited in the Inventions Exhibition, showed how the machine should be recognized by the designer, and led many in his day to revolt from over-decoration and strive for the straight, simple and plain. And soon there were signs that the rising generation were rebelling against accepted methods and styles as such, and were asking: Can we not do without cornices, mouldings and other furbelows?"[14]

The Guild's stated aims to "render all branches of art the sphere no longer of the tradesman but of the artist" and to "emphasise the Unity of Art"[15] in the fields of architecture, furniture and decoration would also become the founding tenets of both The Art Workers Guild (1884) and The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (1887), both organisations with which Voysey would become inextricably linked. The importance of Mackmurdo and The Century Guild cannot be overstated; they were pathfinders, creating a new, progressive approach to the design of furniture, objects and pattern that offered a distinctive alternative to both the Gothic and the Aesthetic. Virtually all furniture that we now know as Arts and Crafts owes its genesis to them. Century Guild furniture typically exhibits a delicacy and gracefulness of design rarely found in the Gothic canon; it also lacks the fussiness of Aesthetic furniture, dispensing with the latter's all-pervasive use of ebonising, a finish that hides the grain of the wood. Although not as austere as Voysey's furniture, it shares the same delight in proportion, exquisite craftsmanship and utilising the "figure" of quality, machine-worked timber. Voysey took much from Mackmurdo's Century Guild furniture, but a seminal piece must be the small, atypically spartan, oak reading desk of 1886 (figure 2). Here is so much that came to characterise Voysey's later furniture: the plain, rectangular form; the overhanging cornices; the use of simple mouldings; extended vertical elements surmounted by caps; legs that taper gracefully and, of course; the use of beautifully figured, quarter-sawn oak.

Figure 2 – Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, small oak writing desk, c1886

As with his progress as both an architect and pattern designer, it would also take years of trial and error for Voysey to evolve into a consummate furniture designer. It is also clear that during the 1880s and early 1890s pattern and architectural design took precedence, as evidenced by the small number of furniture designs dating to these years.

In June 1889 a design for a simple towel horse[16] was made, presumably for Voysey's own use. More significantly, in the same year, an entry made in Voysey's *Black Book*, records the following: "Essex & Co. designs and working drawings for furniture for showrooms".

11
Illustrated in: K. Livingstone, MDonnelly, and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p165

12
A chair of c1504 preserved in the Bishop's Palace, Wells

13
C F A Voysey, *The Value of Hidden Influences as Disclosed in the Life of One Ordinary Man*. Unpublished typescript, 1931, RIBA VOC/4/6

14
C F A Voysey, 1874 & After, *Architectural Review*, vol 70, October 1931, p92

15
The Century Guild Hobby Horse. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co vol 1, April 1884

Figure 3 – Design for an oak table for M H Lakin Esquire, 1889. RIBA Collections

Luckily a photograph[17] survives. From this it seems clear that Voysey designed the fitted furniture (fire surround, panelled booths) and also a few pieces of movable furniture (the rectangular chair and central table). Walter Essex, the company's owner, would have been well aware of Voysey's growing reputation as a wallpaper designer and would later sign him to an exclusive wallpaper contract, as well as also commissioning a home[18] and further pieces of domestic furniture. The showroom furniture appears awkward and unresolved – in particular the box-like chair with clashing body and front legs. The pieces also feature many design elements that are clearly "borrowed" from Century Guild designs.

The first recorded furniture design for a Voysey house is a table (figure 3) of 1899 for M H Lakin; presumably for The Cottage at Bishop's Itchington, which was commissioned the previous year. Across the course of his career, the vast majority of Voysey's furniture designs were to be executed in oak and invariably contain instructions to the effect that the item is to be "left clean from stain or polish" or that it is to be "lightly oiled". This was not always the case in the early years; although not to be polished, this item is unusual in that it was "to be fumigated", that is artificially darkened by exposure to strong ammonia fumes. The table appears to have been made (an estimate of £9.10 is inscribed on the drawing) but it is yet another, awkward, heavy design. Although free from the influence of Mackmurdo, the over-engineered supports for the drop-leaves are virtually identical to those found on the iconic, ebonised sideboard[19] designed by E W Godwin and made by William Watt in the late 1860s.

In reference to influence, Voysey would later state: "What you can remember is your own, what you sketch you steal"[20]. However, his contradictory nature also permitted the following outspoken pronouncement made in 1918, at a time when he was employing many Tudor elements in his own architectural and furniture designs:

Figure 4 – Design ... for treatment of domestic window, 1890. RIBA Collections

"The looking back for precedent and reliance on tradition are the natural outcomes of weakness. The lazy and timid are greatly helped by a visit to the museum to see how someone else has mastered the problem or escaped the difficulties of the work in hand. It is idleness that leads us to let others think for us. Idleness and timidity make us take shelter behind tradition."[21]

Early in his career the use of contemporary or historical precedent was not such an issue, as a design for an interior dating to 1890 will demonstrate. The drawing, entitled "Suggestion for Treatment of a Domestic Window" (figure 4), contains much of interest. This "Tudoresque" design features what would become Voysey's favoured wall treatment – oak panelling – although here it is stained green and is heavily moulded and carved, even containing some areas of linenfold carving, an element the older Voysey would strongly disapprove of! The treatment also features early designs for metal cabinet furniture (presumably of brass or bronze) in the Gothic-styled strap hinges and drop handles of the cupboard doors and the delicate, floriated hinges and handles of the two smaller drop-down doors. This smaller hinge design would actually be made up shortly thereafter and used on two similar, canopied cabinets. The green staining of oak would also become a favoured finish of Voysey's during the early 1890s, and was also popular with many of his contemporaries and some of the more "progressive" commercial furniture manufacturers. The wide adoption of this finish cannot be attributed to Voysey and was probably due in no small measure to the favourable reviews garnered by a very simple, green-stained oak chest of drawers, designed by Ford Madox Brown and later exhibited by Morris & Co. at the third Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1890.

One of the earliest pieces of furniture to be widely reproduced in contemporary journals was a "Sideboard in American Walnut made for the Lady Lovelace".[22] Although it first appeared in 1894 as the single illustration accompanying Voysey's article *Domestic Furniture* in the *RIBA Journal*[23], it was probably made a few years earlier. Hardly a satisfactory design to most contemporary observers, it does however exhibit many elements that would go on to characterise Voysey's later work. The use of walnut seems to be unique (probably used at the request of the client) but here can be seen design features that would appear again and again: the generous, projecting mouldings both above and below the carcass; the use of flush panels to simplify the appearance of doors; the decorative architraves running above door openings – in this rare instance functional, as opposed to simply decorative, supporting as they do the two drop-down cupboard doors above –; and finally the rectangular legs which taper gracefully to an octagonal section as they approach the floor.

The Lovelace sideboard can also be used to illustrate the approach Voysey took to the development and refinement of his furniture. Elements considered successful would often be re-used from earlier designs or, if less successful, would be subject to subtle further refinement in later pieces. In this case the drop-down doors and floriated hinges of the earlier "Treatment of a Domestic Window" are used once more, whereas

16
Illustrated in: W Hitchmough, *C.F.A.Voysey*. London: Phaidon, 1995, p223

17
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly, and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London:Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p166

18
Dixcot, 1897 – completed and altered by Walter Cave

19
V&A, CIRC.38:1 to 5, 1953

20
C F A Voysey, *Individuality*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1915, p88

21
C F A Voysey, *Tradition in Relation to Modern Art*. London:T Fisher Unwin, 1918, pp225-232

22
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly, and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London:Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p167

23
C F A Voysey, *Domestic Furniture*. *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, vol.1, 1894, pp415-18

24
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly, and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London:Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p165

25
The Journal of Decorative Art. London, vol 13, no 11, November 1893, p271

Figure 7 – German manufactured version of the lady's work cabinet, bearing a metal label for A Vordermeyer, Kuppenheim

when a second, slightly later version of the sideboard was made in oak (figure 5), the awkward, swelling silhouette of the original was radically simplified. The pillared upper canopy would also reappear in a fire surround exhibited at the 1896 Arts and Crafts Exhibition; a virtually identical example being purchased in 1898 by William and Haydee Ward-Higgs for their Queensborough Terrace home (figure 6).

Voysey's continual refinement of his furniture designs was probably the result of limitations imposed by his working method. Anyone spending time looking through the extensive RIBA Voysey drawings archive will be struck by the lack of any development sketches using perspective, ie drawn "in the round". His preferred working method seems to have consisted of designing a piece whilst making its final construction drawing. This approach illustrates the clarity of his vision and has resulted in drawings of great precision, economy and beauty. However, although the drawings contain all the necessary information for a craftsman to manufacture the piece, this information is entirely two-dimensional, with Voysey using the orthographic system of projection; a combination of side and plan views together with various explanatory cross-sections. In effect Voysey only ever saw his furniture properly "in the round" after it was manufactured and, in many cases, it would appear he considered the design could be further improved.

A second widely reproduced and reviewed early design is the green-stained "Lady's Work Cabinet"[24] shown at the 1893 Arts and Crafts exhibition. This is an important piece, showing as it does Voysey rapidly finding his own voice as a furniture designer; it was also surprisingly well received by contemporary reviewers. *The Journal of Decorative Art* referred to the "quality of refined expression asserting itself in an unmistakeable manner" and the almost "Puritan sternness in the severity of the lines chastened by a perception of the beautiful, which all must admire."[25] Horace Townsend, writing in *The Studio* said:

Figure 5 – Modified, oak version of the sideboard for the Lady Lovelace, c1893 (left)

Figure 6 – Fireplace and chair at 23 Queensborough Terrace, 1899 (right)

"To a differing and more original fancy does Mr. Voysey's Work Cabinet owe its being. Nor to Chippendale nor to any bygone stylistic suggestion is this simple, well-proportioned piece of furniture due, and yet there is happily absent from it any disturbing note of eccentricity. It is designed to meet its needs; of useless ornament there is none, and yet it is sufficiently ornamental."[26]

The "cabinet on stand" was a popular form with architect designers at this time; but Voysey's approach was a radical departure from the norm and demonstrates a new, clear understanding of space and form that he would later express as: "The essence of good proportion is brotherly love, making one line, surface, or space helpful to the full expression of another, in harmonious contrast, not angry rivalry."[27] It also clearly fulfils the design ethos that Voysey explained as: "The thought and feeling in any object is the life and soul of it. It must be alive; it must be sincere; it must be frank and utterly truthful."[28] This piece provided a valuable foundation for much of his following cabinet work and interestingly, as his reputation on the continent grew, it would also be reproduced by a German manufacturer (figure 7), faithful in all respects apart from the applied metalwork.[29]

Voysey began to master the design of cabinet pieces much more quickly than he did other types of furniture. In 1894, in a paper read before members of The Royal Institute of British Architects[30] he honestly admitted that he was: "groping in the dark, struggling to find out the true laws which govern fitness and beauty." However he was sure what he was striving to achieve: simplicity; repose; harmony; dignity; and breadth. He encouraged his audience to "have a logical basis for our design in furniture; as in all else, laws must be discovered and obeyed. Then the best work will result from well-understood requirements, provided always our motives are noble and not degraded by exhibitions."

Chairs of differing design stand as some of the most iconic pieces in the Voysey cannon; however the majority date to the years straddling the turn of the 20th century. In the early to mid-1890s progress was slow, and prior to 1898 only five different chair designs are known: four through photographs and surviving examples[31] and one through a drawing held in the RIBA collection.[32] It is uncertain if the latter was ever executed but it is of considerable interest. Although undated: "Design for a bedroom chair for Messers D'Oyly & Co." can be assigned a likely date of c1893 by cross referencing the style of lettering employed to other, dated drawings. D'Oyly seems to have been a firm of furnishers or decorators as Voysey also supplied them with a design for a carpet at a similar date. At first sight, the projected elevations and details of the original drawing seem to have little in common with the later chairs however, once viewed in perspective (figure 8) a simple, tall, lath-back, rush-seated chair with a gently arched top-rail and curved apron is revealed. The major elements of what would become the "Voysey chair" are all here present and correct.

During the 1890s there was a superficial similarity between the furniture of Voysey and Walter Cave (1863–1939). Cave's well known cottage piano design for Bechstein, with extended, capped uprights, was first exhibited in 1893[33] whereas Voysey's similar design for Collard & Collard[34] did not appear until c1903. However, the matter is not as clear cut as it would at first seem, as Voysey did exhibit a drawing[35]

Figure 8 – Author's perspective sketch from the design for a bedroom chair for Messers D'Oyly & Co., c1893

26
H Townsend, *The Studio*. London, vol 2, no 7, October 1893, p18

27
C F A Voysey, *Ideas in Things in T. Raffles Davison (ed), The Arts Connected with Building*. London: Batsford, 1909, p114

28
C F A Voysey, *Tradition in Relation to Modern Art*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918, pp225-232

29
It is unclear whether this was a licensed or pirated design

30
C F A Voysey, Domestic Furniture. *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, vol 1, 1894, pp415-18

31
The "Swan" Chair; the Essex showroom chair; the green-stained hall chair and a canopied bedroom chair of 1896 illustrated in *The Studio*, vol 9, December 1896, p194

for a piano very similar to Cave's at the same 1893 exhibition. Always keen to assert his "individuality", Voysey was concerned enough to clarify the matter in his *Studio* interview[36] conducted shortly after the exhibition, pointing out that: "he (Voysey) worked out the same problem on not dissimilar lines, but the coincidence is purely fortuitous, neither artist having known the scheme of the other." However, much confusion over attribution remains to this day. One example is the case of Voysey's own, green-stained hall chair (figure 9), designed c1893 and later photographed in the hall at The Orchard which was tentatively attributed to Cave when it came to auction in 1987.[37] To some extent this is understandable, as Cave's designs are seldom as elegant as Voysey's and this is certainly not a comfortable design either visually or physically. The single stretcher, low seat, armrests and solid plank back all conspire to give it a massively heavy appearance. When applying Voysey's own criteria for judging furniture: "Is it proportioned, coloured, and disposed as the natural beauties in creation? Are its lines and masses graceful and pleasing? Do any of its parts quarrel? Does it express sobriety, restraint and purity?"[38] one could only answer yes to the criterion of "sobriety". It was a design that would not be repeated but, resourceful as ever, the dished, circular caps would soon appear again, (much more successfully) on Voysey's own double-bed[39] and the leg profiles would find their way into the iconic painted clock design of 1895.[40]

Voysey's passion for the Gothic, or to be more precise the Tudor, defined his earliest work, and its influence would reappear from time to time throughout his career as a furniture designer. This is clearly seen in the small, hanging cabinet (figure 10) designed c1893 (exhibited by the Epsom Class at the 1894 *Home Arts and Industries Exhibition* at the Albert Hall)[41] and also in the unusually ornate "Tudoresque" child's highchair, which was illustrated[42] in the March 1898 edition of *Dekorative Kunst*.[43] Voysey's popularity in Germany and Austria was such that the whole of this issue was devoted to all aspects of his work, resulting in a useful photographic record of his furniture designs to this date. The illustrated examples mostly comprise "family" pieces, photographed in one of the principal rooms at 6 Carlton Hill, St John's Wood. They include the previously discussed "Swan" chair, "Lady's Work Cabinet" and hall chair, together with a wash stand (decorated by Walter Cave's wife Jessica) and a small table cabinet with canted sides.[44] Also shown is an elegant writing cabinet on stand (figure 11), designed in December 1896 in a form that would provide the basis for the well-known Kelmscott "Chaucer" cabinet that would follow a few years later. Two significant commissions for Walter Essex also feature: a writing desk (figure 12), designed in 1896 and clearly based on the earlier "Lady's Work Cabinet", together with a very elegant sideboard (figure 13) designed in 1893. The sideboard's superstructure shows Voysey further exploring elements previously used in the panelled booths designed for Essex's wallpaper showrooms. Both pieces also demonstrate a move away from the use of green stain and show the light, fresh tone produced by rubbing linseed oil (to seal the surface from dirt) into unstained oak.

32
RIBA SB114VOY[208] – the sheet also contains a design for a pedestal cupboard

33
The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at the New Gallery, London, 1893

34
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London:Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p212

35
RIBA SB115VOY[318]

36
Anon. An Interview with Mr Charles F. Annesley Voysey, Architect and Designer. London: *The Studio*, vol 1, April 1893, pp231-7

37
Sotheby's. Applied Arts from 1880. 4 June 1987, lot 138

38
C. F A Voysey, *Domestic Furniture. Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, vol 1, 1894, pp415-18

39
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London:Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p258

40
Ibid, p171

41
A Vallance, Home Arts and Industries at the Albert Hall. London: *The Studio*, vol 3, August 1894, p151

42
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly and L Parry, *C.F.A.Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London:Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p165

43
A.L.P. C.F.A.Voysey. *Dekorative Kunst*, vol 11, no 6, March 1898, pp241–56

Figure 9 – Green-stained hall chair designed c1893 for 11 Melina Place and later used in the living hall of The Orchard, Chorleywood

Figure 10 – Carved hanging cabinet, designed to be executed by members of the Home Arts & Industries Association, c1893

Figure 11 – Oak writing cabinet on stand, designed December 1896

Figure 12 – Writing cabinet for Walter Richard Essex, designed October 1896

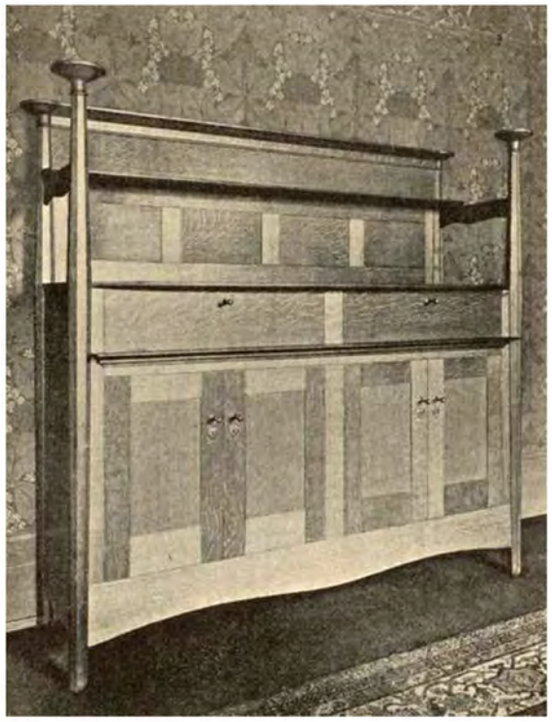


Figure 13 – Sideboard for Walter Richard Essex, designed May 1893

Figure 14 – Living and bedroom for a young lady, executed by F Schönthaler & Söhne, Wien, 1898 (above)

Figure 15 – Sideboard for Hurtmore, Surrey, 1897. LACMA (right)

An entry made in 1898 in Voysey's Black Book records: "Hofler Rama & Co. Furniture and decoration for Room at Wien Austria." Although no record can be found of Hofler Rama & Co a recently discovered photograph in the German journal *Kunstgewerbeblatt*[45] clearly shows a complete Voysey interior (figure 14), described as: a "living and bedroom for a young lady executed by F Schönthaler & Söhne, Wien", exhibited at the 1898 Winter exhibition at the Museum of Art and Industry, Vienna although no credit is given to Voysey. Franz Schönthaler (1821-1904) was a successful Viennese interior decorator and furniture manufacturer. The scheme includes a unique fitted wardrobe, a dressing table, two chairs and a corner fire surround all in "brightly coloured" maple. Also to be seen are a Voysey kettle on stand, elegant electric light fittings and a flock of Voysey style birds – similar to those on his painted clock – incised into the plaster coving above. Apart from the interiors in his own home, which at this time still contained an eclectic mix of shop bought and self-designed pieces; this was his first complete interior design scheme.

Although Voysey's architectural practice was rapidly developing and nearly 20 houses had been built, even as late as 1898 no clients had yet commissioned both a home and a fully furnished interior or, for that matter, even a single room. A small number of clients had commissioned one or two pieces of furniture for their homes, one example being the well-conceived, small sideboard (figure 15) of 1897 designed for A M M Steadman's house Hurtmore (later to be renamed New Place). The problem Voysey faced was raised by a perceptive reviewer in *The Studio*:

"But one thing is sure, that Mr. Voysey's furniture does not take kindly to its commercially produced relatives. To introduce one of these refined and individual objects – whether a dainty piece of colour like the painted clock, a simple and useful article like the writing-cabinet, the most refined and charming buffet, or a larger piece like the sideboard or the cottage piano – among modern cabinet work and upholstery is to introduce a discordant element.

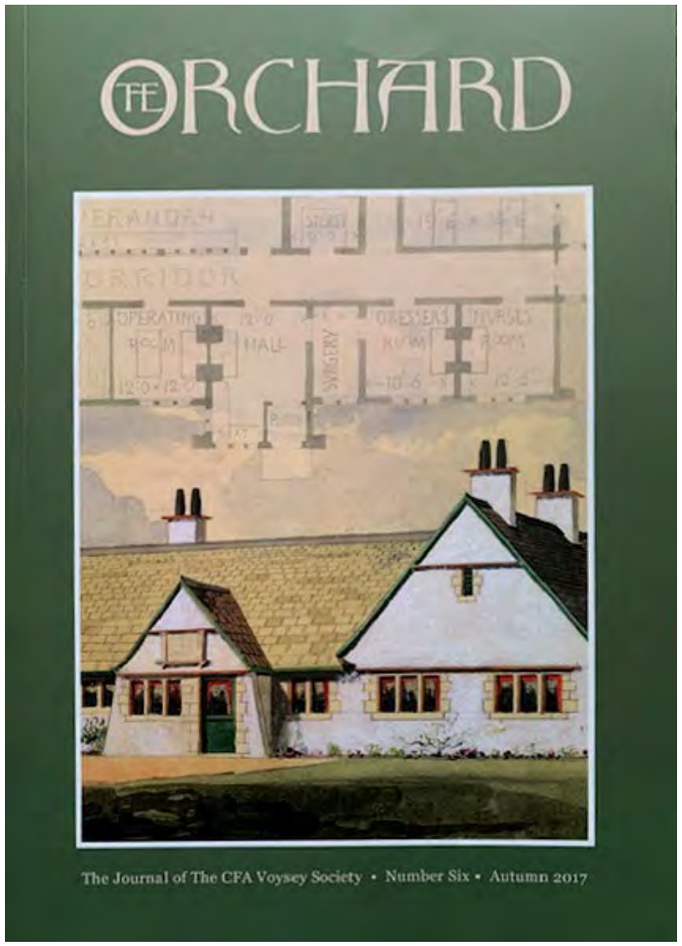
"Even the most sanguine believer in the advance of taste must recognise that the classic restraint which marks Mr. Voysey's furniture could not hope at present to find a fit environment in every house awaiting its reception. But with its plain surfaces of wood, often enough stained green – with oil colour rubbed well in – its simple mouldings, and its decoration (if any) confined to certain structural features – these show elements of a new style..."[46]

What Voysey needed were clients with not only the money, but also the vision, to commission a full interior scheme. In early 1898 Voysey would commence work for two such far-sighted people: William and Haydee Ward-Higgs.

44
Illustrated in: K Livingstone, M Donnelly and L Parry, *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p167

45
Anon. Die Winterausstellung im K. K. Museum fur Kunst und Industrie in Wien. Leipzig: Kunstgewerbeblatt, Volume 10, 1899, p93

46
E. B. S. Some Recent Designs by Mr. Voysey. London: *The Studio*, vol. 7, May 1896, p209



The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey, part 2: 1898–1906

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.6, pp. 3-15 (2017).

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Editorial

The furniture designs of C F A Voysey, Part 2: 1898-1906

Tony Peart

William Ward-Higgs (1866–1936) and Haydee Nathalie Becker (1870–1951) were married in 1894 and would soon lease a large stuccoed, terraced townhouse at 23 Queensborough Terrace, Bayswater, just a short walk from Kensington Gardens. William was a successful City solicitor and his wife Haydee the mother of two very young daughters. It is likely the Ward-Higgs were introduced to Voysey by family friend William Harold Tingey [1] (1868–1917) who had trained as a barrister. They were evidently a couple of advanced, "artistic" tastes who were also confident to publicly express their individuality as, in early 1898, they commissioned Voysey to not only decorate and furnish certain rooms of their townhouse but also the exterior, street elevation. This was duly painted a vivid red to first- oor level and a large Voysey designed, heart-shaped letter box was installed to the white, enamelled front door. The Ward-Higgs commission finally offered Voysey the opportunity to design a wide range of standard, moveable furniture types such as: chairs; tables; cabinets and dressers to furnish his remodelled interiors which featured fitted furniture (fireplaces, bookcases, cupboards etc.) and, of course, Voysey designed wall coverings and textiles.

What we now think of as the quintessential Voysey chair types (single heart, double heart and lath back), all owe their genesis to two chairs [2] designed for Queensborough Terrace in April 1898. The chairs—one an armchair, the other a side chair—share many features including: legs that are square in section at the top but which are gradually chamfered to an octagonal section as they descend to the floor (a design feature previously only applied to Voysey's cabinet furniture); massively extended back uprights tapering to a sharp point; a visually contrasting, gently curved top rail; straight bottom rail and in-line stretchers set close to the seat rails. Atypically, both designs also feature finely woven cane seats which, in use, seem to have been supplemented with thin, upholstered seat pads. The arm chair features a square, level seat and a back of five, grouped, wide, vertical laths. The side chair has a sloping, trapezoid seat and a single hourglass-shaped splat with two fret-cut hearts. Voysey's long-term attachment to high-back chairs was partly due to the important role they played in providing a strong, contrasting, vertical element within the wide, low ceilinged rooms he favoured. However, he was also acutely aware of their historical, symbolic role within the home. In a lecture delivered in 1909 at Carpenter's Hall [3] he said: "You can tell me if the master and mistress have a sufficien sense of importance to give themselves high-back armchairs to dine in... ...This idea of the importance of the host and hostess is not to be despised; it is closely related to ceremonial of all kinds, and ceremony was always associated with kingship, and kingship with self-control." At least one example of the arm chair and two of the side chair were

figure 1 –
The second iteration of the Ward-Higgs' chair, 1899

but they would soon be subject to further alteration and refinement, both as part of the on-going Ward-Higgs commission and also for other clients.

The second stage in these chairs' evolution can be clearly seen in the two examples (figure 1) exhibited in 1899 at the sixth exhibition of The Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society and illustrated in *The Studio* magazine. [4] Clearly intended to be used in combination as dining room carver and side chairs they can be seen used in this way in contemporary photographs of the dining room of Voysey's own house, The Orchard. [5] The side chair in particular has undergone considerable change, the extreme extension of the back uprights has now been moderated and the lower back rail has been elevated away from the seat creating a less bottom-heavy, cramped appearance. Likewise the bottom half of the chair has been visually lightened by employing a gently profiled front rail, the rear stretcher has been removed and the front stretcher considerably lowered. The arm chair underwent less obvious change but gained an elevated seat and shorter back uprights. By this date most "art" critics understood and generally lauded the stripped-down simplicity, emphasis on fine craftsmanship and reliance on refined proportion that characterised Voysey's furniture. However, members of the furniture trade proved to be harder to win over. R Davis Benn reviewing the exhibition for *The Cabinet Maker & Art Furnisher* said of Voysey's exhibits:

"*...from the cabinet maker's point of view it is generally marked by refined simplicity, and so entitled to our admiration. It is, for the most part, perfectly proportioned, and charms purely by reason of its possession of that distinction. Of the numerous attempts made by this artist at the production of a successful chair the same cannot be said. The small chair in Fig. 6 (double heart) is poor, while the arms of its companion (lath back) are designed to press awkwardly into the ribs of the occupant, and are, moreover, too low for any comfort to be obtained from the support they tantalisingly offer.*"

The third and final iteration of the double heart dining chair [6] was also designed for Queensborough Terrace and was probably manufactured as a batch of six around 1900. This chair had a more robust, drop-in rush seat which was now flat, rather than angled as it had been previously. Although a very well-known design today, this belies the fact that very few of Voysey's clients adopted this model, its only documented use being at Queensborough Terrace, The Orchard and finally at Broad Leys, Windermere. Here, at least six were used in the dining room (the only room fully furnished by Voysey), together with a lath back carver chair and a large, "en-suite" sideboard. This had been originally designed for A M Stedman in June 1899 [7] but was, in turn, a further refinement of an earlier sideboard designed in 1893 for Walter Richard Essex. [8] The new design shared a near identical lower section comprised of two drawers over two cupboards enclosed by four doors. Rising above was a superstructure of projecting, gently tapering, octagonal columns surmounted by turned, circular caps. The single rear shelf of the earlier design was retained but the fully panelled back was removed to be replaced by a single, pierced-heart splat - as employed in the chair design - linking the base to the shelf and visually integrating the sideboard with the chairs. At some point early in its history, the superstructure of the Broad Leys sideboard (figure 2) was removed and replaced [9] by an unsympathetic, orthodox and undoubtedly more practical, Welsh Dresser type back.

Some pre-existing designs were also used to furnish Queensborough Terrace including the much earlier "Swan" chair of c1883–85 - discussed in Part 1 of this article - and the well-known writing cabinet with elaborate, pierced central strap hinge, now on public display at the V&A. This piece, originally designed in February 1895, was probably made for the Ward-Higgs' around 1902. In the intervening seven years Voysey had developed into such a consummate designer of cabinet pieces that one suspects due to its awkward, top-heavy appearance it must have looked somewhat incongruous when compared to the more recently designed and much more successful pieces already at the house. An elegant music cabinet (a design developed from Voysey's own writing cabinet [10] of 1896) had been designed for the drawing room in 1898 (figure 3). With a little further refinement, this design reappeared in early 1899 as arguably the most iconic and exquisitely proportioned of all Voysey's cabinet designs the Kelmscott "Chaucer" cabinet.[11] This is probably the first piece to feature what would later become a standard element of Voysey's cabinet furniture, the brass hardware manufactured and retailed by Thomas Elsley of The Portland Metal Works. Prior to this date, Voysey was in the occasional habit of having custom hardware - invariably elaborate hinges - manufactured as one-offs for a particular project. With Elsley he was able to achieve a range of quality, cast, brass cabinet hardware that could be specified in his drawings, readily costed and easily obtained by his cabinet makers. Although not cheap, a considerable saving would also be achieved when compared to one-off custom manufacture. In late 1899 at the Sixth Arts and Crafts Exhibition the Kelmscott "Chaucer" cabinet was exhibited and received much praise. Aymer Vallance writing for The Studio [12] noted: "No better exemplification of the supreme value of an architect's

figure 2 –
Author's drawing of the Broad Leys sideboard as it first appeared (top) and after its later modification (bottom)

figure 3 –
The Drawing Room, 23 Queensborough Terrace photographed in 1899 showing the music cabinet and a double heart chair. The what-not, circular table, picture frame and cushions are also by Voysey

figure 4 –
Sample board of Voysey designed fittings and fixtures, Thomas Elsley & Co. Portland Metalworks c. 1903

training 'could be desired than the art of Mr. C. F. A. Voysey, who is, beyond question, an artist of individual gifts very remarkable... ...In his designs for furniture, Mr. Voysey evidently aims at maintaining, in the leading structural lines, extreme simplicity of form, relieved, in the secondary parts only, by quaint ornamental detail." At the same exhibition two of his strap hinges manufactured by Elsley were also exhibited, no doubt to help publicise the new range. By the early 1900s Voysey's designs for metalware had expanded beyond cabinet fittings and included a wide range of architectural hardware that would become a staple of his building projects (figure 4).

A second iconic piece supplied to Queensborough Terrace was a sideboard [13] with a dresser back, first designed in March 1899 for another of Voysey's faithful patrons, The Earl of Lovelace. The most successful of all his sideboard designs, this piece is a master-class in restraint, proportion and contrast of plane and mass. The piece stands gracefully on square section uprights which visually integrate with the rectangular cabinet mass much more convincingly than the octagonal or round sectioned versions used previously. The front uprights are now shorter than those at the rear, visually anchoring the piece to any wall against which it rests. The understated Elsley hardware offers the only obvious decoration but, in its very simplicity, the viewer is forced to look closely and consider those key elements that mattered to Voysey: the fine craftsmanship; the figure of the wood; the subtle use of simple mouldings and chamfering; the interplay of line and volume and the contrast of curve and straight.

If the Kelmscott "Chaucer" cabinet and the Ward-Higgs' sideboard are Voysey's most successful cabinet designs they are also his most traditional in form. The early influence of Mackmurdo and The Century Guild on Voysey's development as a designer of "radical" furniture was discussed in Part 1 of this article, however, in finding his mature voice Voysey also looked to the past. Speaking in 1894 [14] he talked of "old simple furniture; which furniture, I venture to say, was originally the direct outcome of human intelligence brought to bear on human needs, and not born of any spirit of revivalism" and later, in 1906 [15] he wrote of: "The plain, solid oak furniture of bygone times". The furniture to which he was referring was undoubtedly the country made pieces manufactured in England and Wales during the late 18th century, a period we would now describe as "George III". In 1931 [16] Voysey said of himself: "He was insular to the backbone, and could not admit that familiarity with foreign countries was necessary for true culture" something that is certainly true of his influences as a furniture designer.

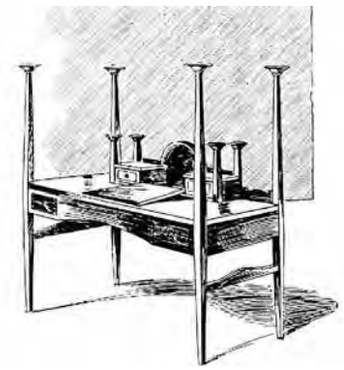
The antecedent of the Kelmscott "Chaucer" cabinet can be seen in a common Georgian type, the "chest on stand". There are strong similarities in proportion between the two pieces and in particular both share the use of generous, projecting mouldings to the top and base of the upper cabinet section. Turning to the ward Ward-Higgs' sideboard, here we are looking at essentially a beautifully proportioned "Welsh dresser", a form that achieved its zenith during the 18th century. The ogee chamfering seen along the lower rail should be read as a subtle nod from Voysey to "period" examples and the historical references in his furniture would become more overt as time passed. Even many of the design elements of the seemingly more radical double heart chair can be traced back to simple, oak, country-made chairs (figure 5) of the Georgian period.

figure 5 –
George III furniture. From left to right: chest on stand, Welsh dresser, Welsh side chair

Voysey designed over twenty pieces of furniture for the Ward-Higgs between 1898 and 1903 and a few of the later pieces were displayed at the seventh exhibition of The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society held at The New Gallery, Regent Street in 1903. This exhibition marked a radical shift in the Society's approach to exhibition design following its rather staid showing at the First International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art held in Turin the previous year. Moving away from a museum style approach with objects displayed in cases, this exhibition provided some members the opportunity to furnish small cubicles as room settings. Voysey's exhibit - as documented in contemporary photographs [17] - looks to have been uncomfortably cramped. In a space approximately nine feet square he managed to display about forty works ranging from small items such as wall hung designs, tiles and metalware (including the well known aluminium mantel clock) to larger pieces of textile - including the "River Rug" - three chairs and two pieces of cabinet furniture. The exhibit was well received by the reviewer of *The Studio* [18] who said of Voysey:

"When we remember the outcry that was raised by some prejudiced people against his "eccentricity" in 1896, and observe the same strong individuality quietly persisting in his recent work, some of which, but by no means the most notable, is shown in this exhibition, we can only be thankful that simplicity of form does not appear so extraordinary as it did six years ago. Mr, Voysey has made sweeping rejections of all the conventional "fi ish" that goes beyond the real needs of a sound and beautiful structure, and the keynote of all his architecture and furniture is what would be called a Puritan severity but for that air of ampleness and ease so rarely united with singleness of motive and economy of ornament..."

Figure 6 – Oak writing desk, 1899



The one slightly anachronous piece was the writing table designed a few years earlier and now owned and exhibited by W H Tingey. This is a visually awkward piece (figure 6) with the legs extending as tall, capped columns well above the table surface and is a rare example in Voysey's oeuvre of a design where style is favoured over function. It had been exhibited at Turin the previous year but here, on home soil,

figure 7 – Voysey's cubicle at the 1903 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition

came under the critical gaze of the reviewer of *The Cabinet Maker* [19] who pronounced: "*If Mr. Voysey... ...had set himself to produce an article that would furnish possibilities of the maximum knocks to one's elbows... ...he could hardly have succeeded better.*"

Voysey's cubicle also contained a high backed side chair (figure 7, right), a slightly modified version of a child's chair designed for the Ward-Higgs' in early 1900. The child's chair has a raised, solid seat and features a cut-out heart to the top rail. To Voysey the heart was symbolic of emotion and affecti n, but these sentiments are negated by its appearance: austere, humourless and emphatically "upright" it has much of the harshest Victorian "correction" chair about it. However, it should be stressed that this, like the majority of Voysey's chair designs, is not uncomfortable to sit on. Voysey chairs are invariably ergonomically sound and provide excellent lumbar support producing a rather formal, upright posture. In this respect they can be seen as a true reflection of their designer. They make excellent dining chairs but are not entirely conducive to informal relaxation. This is clearly demonstrated in contemporary photographs of Voysey furnished interiors where a comfortable-looking upholstered chair (invariably not by Voysey) will usually be found lurking somewhere in the background. Even Voysey owned an upholstered, Georgian, wing chair which can be seen in photographs of the study at The Orchard although it is not clear if this was provided for his own comfort or that of his wife. An attempt to fill this gap was made in early 1900 when Voysey designed a partly upholstered "easy" chair (figure 7, left) for William Ward-Higgs. This new design was specified to be made in Austrian Oak [20] and featured a fully upholstered and sprung seat along with well-padded back and arms. Fully upholstered furniture seems to have been something of an anathema to Voysey, no doubt because the structural wooden frame was hidden. Voysey, like Pugin before him, delighted in exploiting "revealed construction" i.e. making a design feature of construction techniques and structural elements. The hidden frames of most commercially upholstered furniture were usually synonymous with shoddy materials and poor workmanship. Voysey overcame these issues by making sure most of the key, wooden elements were clearly "revealed". Although not based on a traditional chair type, this design is remarkably similar to an upholstered chair (figure 8) exhibited by Walter Cave at the 1899 Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Voysey's easy chair was obviously designed with comfort in mind however the wooden elements create a strong jarring note and visually subvert this impression. It is hardly surprising that very few were adopted by contemporary clients and only a handful survive today.

figure 8 – Walter Cave's upholstered armchair of c.1898–99

Some elements of the easy chair can be clearly seen in what is arguably Voysey's most famous chair design, the low-backed, single heart armchair designed in March 1902. Even though it (and its many variants) (figure 9) are the most ubiquitous of all Voysey's chairs it was surprisingly late in arriving. Although no client is mentioned on the design drawing, various clues [21] strongly point to the probability that it was firs designed for Mrs. Florence Van Gruisen, a client new to Voysey. Florence, a 38 year old mother of three was married to a successful Liverpool fruit broker, Albert Henry Van Gruisen. The Van Gruisens lived in a large but unremarkable Victorian House at 37 Bidston Road, Birkenhead. Although no profession is given for Florence on census returns she was a woman with strong artistic sensibilities having studied at the Liverpool School of Art [22] during the 1890s in the well known "Art Sheds". Studying alongside Florence was her exact contemporary and good friend, Miss Charlotte Dalziel McKay. [23] Miss McKay (commonly known as Dalziel), a spinster, lived a short walk away at 30 Shrewesbury Road with her bank manager brother and elderly, widowed mother. The family had been comfortably provided for by her late father who had been a successful ironmonger. It seems that Florence and Dalziel decided to simultaneously commission Voysey to decorate and furnish rooms in their respective homes. There is no documentary evidence to show how these commissions came about but it seems almost certain

Figure 9 – The single heart chair in all its various forms

figure 10 – The first single heart armchair of 1902 above the second, "improved" version of c.1905

that Florence had already experienced Voysey's work at first hand. Her elder sister Esther Stella also an artist, married Alfred Sutro in 1894 and three years later Voysey would design a studio house for the couple, Hill Close at Studland Bay, Swanage.[24] Also, as Florence and Dalziel were students at a progressive institution the two were bound to have seen Voysey' s work featured in contemporary publications, in particular *The Studio* and they had both studied under Voysey's good friend Robert Anning Bell (1863–1933) who had taught at the Art Sheds from autumn 1894 until summer 1898. A coloured-plaster bas-relief [25] by Anning Bell would be prominently displayed on the wall behind the circular table, in the room Voysey would design for Florence and Henry Van Gruisen.

Voysey met his new clients on 5 February 1902 to discuss their respective requirements. For the Van Gruisens a radically remodelled and fully furnished dining room and for Miss McKay more minor alterations and furniture for a guest bedroom. By the end of March most of the design drawings were prepared including the single heart chair for Florence Van Gruisen. This drawing contains designs for two arm chairs that are almost identical apart from their respective backs. Sharing an identical top and lower rail, the single heart chair has a low back with the rails joined by a single, wide splat containing a cut out heart. The tall back variation replaces the splat with eight narrow, vertical laths. In both cases prominent dovetails are used to join the elements together, a radical departure for Voysey. Although common in cabinet construction (in particular drawers) the use of dovetails in chair manufacture is most unusual. Prior to this Voysey had used mortise and tenon joints to join his chair backs, the use of dovetails achieved completely flush/fla chair backs and also added an extra decorative detail. Contemporary photographs of Bidston Road show two of the tall back chairs and at least three (more probably four) of the single heart chairs in situ. As with most Voysey furniture there was still room for improvement and refi ement. These earliest examples feature arm rests that gently curve from the rear but then transition into an awkward square shape immediately above the front legs (figure 10)—this would soon be altered to a version that terminates in a graceful, sweeping curve. Likewise, the vertical underside element of the arm gently curves along its whole length on the original but when refined it would run parallel to the seat for most of its length. In this fi st iteration the pierced heart occupies a much greater area of the back splat than it would do later and finally, the carved groove that visually "lightens" the upper edge of the back top rail has yet to be adopted. Although the changes seem minor they produced a massive improvement to the look of the later chairs.

The remodelling of the Van Gruisens' dining room involved blocking of windows, stripping out fireplaces and the insertion of a spectacular demi-lune window containing a door to connect the room with an adjacent conservatory. The room itself was wainscoted in oak below a deep, white frieze and fully carpeted with a plain rug creating an ideal setting to showcase Voysey's furniture. The drawing containing plans and elevation of the room show four items of moveable furniture and where they were to be placed within the scheme. These were a circular table, a carved, circular mirror (designed the previous December for the

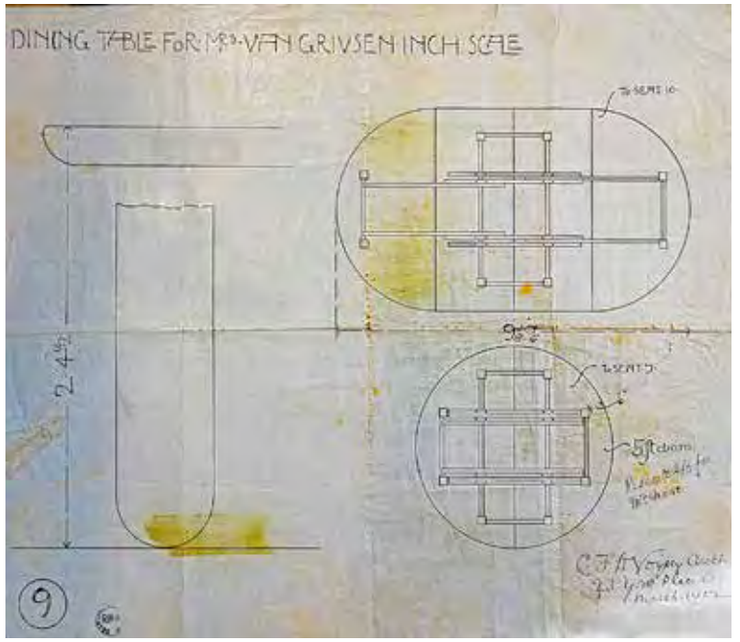


figure 11 – Drawing for the Van Gruisens' extending dining table courtesy of RIBA Drawings Collection

figure 12 – Voysey's pedestal table of c.1902–05

Ward Higgs), a tall sideboard/dresser (a variant of the one also owned by the Ward Higgs) and finally a specially designed, circular dumb-waiter on turned, ball feet. The table as originally specified was identical to one designed in 1901 for Voysey's own use at The Orchard however, it appears this was not big enough for the Van Gruisens' needs and a new, eight-legged, extending dining table was designed (figure 11). To visually tie the dresser into the surrounding scheme of fitted woodwork, the short legs of previous versions were omitted and the lower cabinet was given a deep plinth, identical to the skirting board against which it was placed. An interesting departure for Voysey was the three-tiered dumb-waiter [26] which stood in the corner of the room to the right of the sideboard. This comprised three graduated circular trays fixed to a central, octagonal column which rises from a heavily chamfered, cruciform base set on large, ball feet. This is the first use by Voysey of ball feet, [27] something which would become a common feature in future years although these, unlike the later examples, were probably made from turned wood not cast bronze. The base in particular must have pleased Voysey as he repeated it shortly afterwards for a small, oak, pedestal table (figure 12) that remained with him for the rest of his life.

The 1902 scheme for Dalziel McKay appears to have been much more modest. Although no drawings or photographs survive for the interior alterations there are four designs for furniture in the RIBA Drawings Collection. These are: a simple oak bench; a small bedside cabinet with acorn shaped finials and two extraordinarily radical chairs. The first of these is a fully upholstered, high-backed tub chair (figure 13) with legs and castors concealed by a fabric "skirt". Its unusual form references the traditional Orkney chair and also appears to relate to the fully enclosed "bedroom" chair Voysey exhibited at the 1896 Arts and Crafts Exhibition. This was clearly an exercise in providing the user with both comfort and a freedom from draughts. It obviously also appealed to Florence Van Gruisen as in 1905, when Voysey was

figure 13 – Tub chair for Miss McKay 1902

figure 14 – Arm chair for Miss McKay 1902 (left) and a later, slightly modified version probably made by Peter Waals c.1920 (right), Private Collection courtesy of Paul Reeves London

once again commissioned, this time to remodel the master bedroom at Bidston Road, an identical model was supplied. The second chair (figure 14) remains Voysey's most radical and inventive design for this form of furniture. Although many elements of earlier chairs can be found in the detailing the basic form of this design departs completely from traditional chair construction. Here the rear legs and back uprights defy convention by not being fashioned from the same piece of wood, instead the back is a self contained unit slotting into a complex, lower frame section. The front legs rise to gracefully curved arms which are set much wider than on any other Voysey chair and may well have been specifically designed to accommodate the relatively voluminous skirts fashionable in Edwardian England. The original design shows the vertical back section made from two pieces of leather stitched together but a second drawing, also for Miss McKay, show it with its familiar four, vertical, dovetailed laths. The incredibly thin structural elements of this design left little room for all important mortise and tenon joints and thus compromised the chair's longevity. For many years it was thought that none survived but finally two did appear at auction in 2012. [28] It seems this pair were made in the early 1920s, probably by the craftsman and designer Peter Waals (1870–1937) and differ slightly in detailing and proportion from the drawn design. However, their survival was ensured by Waals, ever the consummate craftsman, employing far more structurally sound wedged, "through" tenons in their construction.

The following year of 1903 saw Voysey designing his most inventive and dynamic table.[29] Comprising four curving legs springing from the floor to a central spherical section with a further four supports emerging from this sphere and mirroring the lower section as they arch up to a circular top. The unusual form may well have been influenced by a table in a neo-gothic style, designed by Leonard Wyburd and featured in a Liberty's catalogue of 1895.[30] Sometimes called the "crab" table it is not known for whom this was initially designed but its first recorded use was in a remarkably complete commission Voysey commenced in September 1905 for Charles Thomas Burke and his wife Nancy. This was to design and furnish a house, Holly Mount in Amersham Road, Beaconsfield - the first time Voysey was able to create a "*gesamtkunstwerk*" or total work of art. It was long thought that this must have been a second, or weekend home for Burke (a company secretary and engineer's agent) thereby explaining the comprehensive use of Voysey designed furniture and accessories throughout. However, census records indicate that this was not the case, this was a permanent home and this casts Burke in a new light as one of Voysey's most passionate and committed clients, a fact borne out by the longevity of their professional relationship which continued well into the 1920s. Apart from the table, all of the furniture used at Holly Mount had been designed previously but worthy of mention are a cast aluminium "Tingey" clock in the dining room and in the parlour a Collard & Collard oak piano (now manufactured commercially from an earlier 1902 design), an oil lamp (identical to one long owned by Voysey) and a large "Donnemara" Donegal carpet with decorative border and plain field

Coincidentally, at the same time he was working on Holly Mount, Voysey also received a very similar commission to design and completely furnish a small weekend retreat in Frinton-on-Sea, Essex for Sydney Claridge Turner, the secretary of The Essex and Suffolk Equitable Building Society. The Homestead contained what is probably, as far as Voysey was concerned, his most satisfying interior scheme. This is evidenced by both his writing on what constitutes the "ideal" interior and also the large number of interior photographs commissioned by Voysey on completion and then widely reproduced in contemporary publications. Turner was a bachelor and appears to have been living a rather hectic and stressful life. He shared his main place of residence with various siblings (he married late in life) but, more importantly, he was also instigating radical changes within the insurance industry - including obtaining an Act of Parliament that would finally allow his and other companies to operate within the City of London. In this context The Homestead can be seen as a design brief that focused on creating an interior that was a haven of quiet calm. The almost proto-modern, strikingly "minimalist" interiors created for Turner were perfectly described and explained by Voysey when he said:

"*Try the effect of a well-proportioned room, with white walls, plain carpets and simple oak furniture, and nothing in it but the necessary articles of use, and one pure ornament in the form of a simple vase of flowers; not a cosmopolitan crowd of all sorts, but one or two sprays of one kind, and you will then find reflections begin to dance in your brain; each object will be received on the retina and understood, classified and dismissed from the mind, leaving you free as a bird to wander in the sunshine or storm of your own thoughts.*" [31]

The Homestead was mostly furnished with pre-designed pieces and in contemporary photographs of the parlour and dining room [32] we see at least two of the semi-upholstered easy chairs first designed for the

figure 15 – Writing table for S C Turner 1906

Ward Higgs' in 1900, four of the radical "McKay" armchairs are placed in the dining room along with the eight-legged, circular, extending dining table as designed for the Van Gruisens. A single heart armchair is tucked in the corner of the large, L-shaped parlour while in the foreground the compact, four-legged circular table Voysey designed for The Orchard can be seen. The room is dominated by a large, oak billiard table, first designed for the Revd Canon Leighton Grane in early 1900, but by this date commercially manufactured by Thurston and Company. The parlour also contained two original and very striking pieces of furniture: a wooden settee (or chesterfield as Voysey described it) supplied in early 1907 and a rather atypical writing desk designed in February 1906. The chesterfiel is Voysey at his most rectilinear and rational with a simple oak frame containing numerous dovetailed laths used for both seat and back. A generous bracketed "tray" is attached for convenience to both arms and although no upholstery is specified in the design drawings, in use a large, loosely stuffed cushion was placed on the seat and small cushions served as back supports. The writing table (figure 15) is in complete contrast to the severity of the chesterfield and shows Voysey at his most organic and sensual. Despite his recently voiced opposition to continental Art Nouveau [33], this design unmistakably shows the influence of that movement and in particular the work of Henry van de Velde (1863–1957) the Belgian architect and designer who had been a long-time supporter of Voysey within the pages of continental art magazines. The desk could have signified a new turn of direction, rich with promise for the 48 year old designer but instead it stands alone, marking the end of an era not the beginning of a new one. Even so, Voysey must have regarded it highly as he had a studio photograph taken of it which, in January 1912, would be reproduced on the front cover of *The Illustrated Carpenter and Builder*.

As work on The Homestead was drawing to a close it must have been becoming apparent to Voysey that the numbers of clients seeking new houses were beginning to diminish alarmingly. Fortuitously, as work in one area slowed, Voysey was about to embark upon the two most ambitions interior and furnishing commissions of his career. One was for an old client, Emslie John Horniman (1863–1932) for whom Voysey had designed the house Lowicks near Frensham, Surrey in 1894. Horniman was a business man, anthropologist, philanthropist and, by early 1906, a newly elected Liberal MP who urgently needed a residence within his London constituency. The other client was someone for whom Voysey was already working, Sydney Claridge Turner. Obviously pleased with the practical, ordered interior created for The Homestead, in August 1906 Turner asked Voysey to design, furnish and decorate The Essex and Suffolk's extensive suite of office in a newly built offic block Capel House, New Broad Street in the City of London. These schemes along with his later furniture designs will be examined in the third and final article of this series

1
In 1918 the Ward-Higgs' daughter, Nathalie married Tingey's son, William Harold.

2
Illustrated in: ***The Orchard***, Number 5, 2016, front cover and p. 10.

3
Voysey, C. F. A. ***Ideas in Things*** in T. Raffles Davison (ed.), ***The Arts Connected with Building***. London: Batsford, 1909, p. 131.

4
The Studio, vol. 18, October 1899, p. 43.

5
Illustrated in: Hitchmough, W. ***C.F.A. Voysey***. London: Phaidon, 1995, p. 129.

6
The chairs were probably made at the workshop of The Lambeth Guild of Handicraft, a short-lived venture operated by the architect and designer C.H.B. Quennell (1872–1935). See: McKellar, E. ***C.H.B. Quennell (1872–1935): Architecture, History and the Quest for the Modern***. ***Architectural History***, vol. 50, 2007, pp. 211-246.

7
RIBA SB115VOY[337].

8
Illustrated in: ***The Orchard***, Number 5, 2016, p. 13.

9
Sotheby's, ***Applied Arts from 1880***, 23 October 1987, lot 374, pp. 100-101. The Broad Leys furnishings remained with the house when it was sold by the Currer Briggs in 1918. The new purchasers transferred the furniture to Brackenrigg (also in Windermere) in the early 1920s. It was probably at this time the upper superstructure was replaced and the new back added, most likely by Simpson's of Kendal the furniture workshop founded by Voysey's friend A.W. Simpson (1857–1922).

10
Illustrated in: ***The Orchard***, Number 5, 2016, p. 13.

11
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. ***C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer***. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 183.

12
Vallance, A. ***British decorative art in 1899 and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition***, Studio, vol. 18, 1899, pp. 38-49.

13
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. ***C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer***. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 182.

14
Voysey, C. F. A. ***Domestic Furniture***. Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects, vol. 1, 1894, pp.415-18.

15
Voysey, C. F. A. ***Reason as a Basis of Art***. London: Elkin Mathews, 1906, p. 22.

16
Voysey, C. F. A. ***The Value of Hidden Influences as Disclosed in the Life of One Ordinary Man***. Unpublished typescript, 1931, RIBA VOC/4/6

17
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. ***C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer***. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 232.

18
Anon. ***The Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the New Gallery,*** The Studio (vol. 28, 1903), pp. 35.

19
Anon. ***The Arts and Crafts***, Cabinet Maker and Complete House Furnisher, vol. 23, 1903, p. 263.

20
English oak with its wilder "figure" is rarely found in Voysey furniture. He tended to favour the more consistent and evenly grained Austrian oak which was invariably quarter-sawn to display the attractive medullary rays which enliven the surface of most Voysey pieces.

21
All those drawings for the Van Gruisen commission which were copied to linen are carefully numbered in the bottom left-hand corner with a Voysey designed numeral within a circle. The drawing for the chair designs SB115VOY[215], dated March 1902 (the date of the commission) is identically numbered and fits within the chronology of the other drawings. Likewise, contemporary photographs of the dining room show only these two chairs being used.

22
See: Bennett, M. ***The Art Sheds 1894–1905***. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1981.

23
See: Carter, A. C. R. ***The Year's Art 1899***. London: J S Virtue, 1899.

24
Information kindly provided by David Metcalfe.

25
See: ***The Studio***, vol. 9, December 1893, p. 82. The dining room is illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. ***C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer***. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, pp. 191, 193 & 195.

26
Ibid, p. 195.

27
C. R. Ashbee exhibited a writing cabinet (now in The Wilson, Cheltenham) with similar ball feet at the 1899 Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition and also at the Vienna Secession in 1900.

28
David Duggleby, Scarborough, 19 November 2012, lot 391.

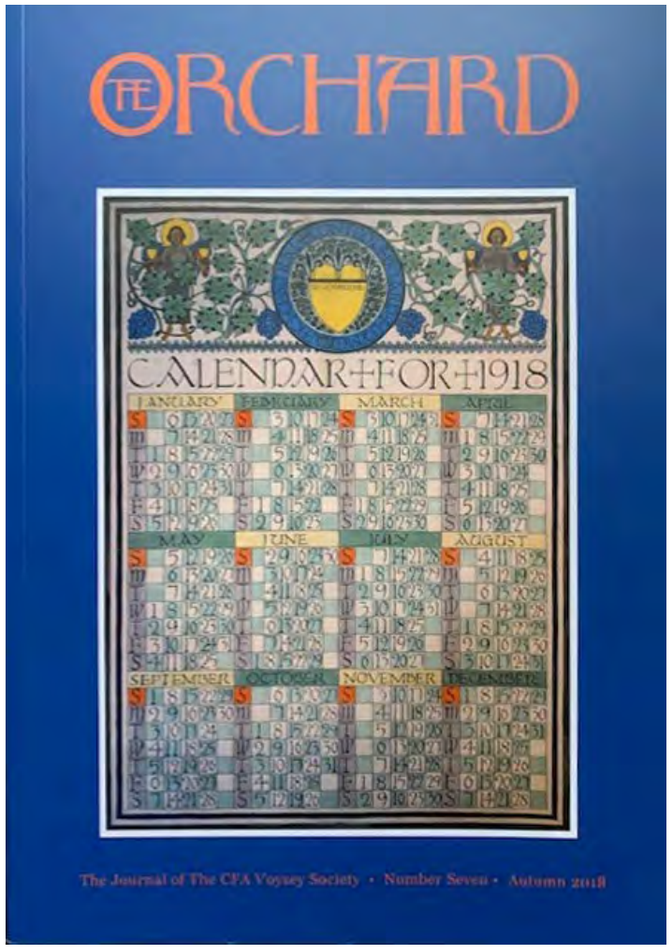
29
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. ***C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer***. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 202.

30
See: Bennett, D. ***Liberty's Furniture 1875–1915***, Antique Collectors Club, 2012, p. 131.

31
Anon. ***C.F. Annesley Voysey : the man and his work Part III***, The Architect & building news, 11 February 1927, p. 274.

32
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. ***C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer.*** London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, pp. 204-205.

33
In his contribution to ***L'Art nouveau : what it is and what is thought of it : a symposium***, Magazine of Art, vol.2, 1904, pp. 211-2 Voysey stated: "***Surely l'Art Nouveau*** is not worthy to be called a style. Is it not merely the work of a lot of imitators with nothing but mad eccentricity as a guide..."



The Furniture Designs of C.F.A. Voysey, part 3: 1906–1934

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.7, pp. 3-22 (2018).

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Furniture designs of CFA Voysey, part 3: 1906-1934

Tony Peart

Garden Corner is an imposing six-storey, red brick townhouse on Chelsea Embankment, situated at the western corner of Chelsea Physic Garden. It was designed in 1879 in a broadly "Queen Anne" style by Edward I'Anson (1812–1888) but in 1906, with the house not yet thirty years old, Voysey was given "carte blanche" to completely strip it back to an empty shell and radically redesign and fully furnish the interior. The work was from an old client, Emslie John Horniman (1863–1932) who had become a friend, providing commissions to Voysey across a period of forty years.[1] Horniman had, since 1898, sat as a Progressive Party member on the London County Council, and had been newly elected Liberal MP for Chelsea at the 1906 general election, necessitating a permanent constituency base. The commission also coincided with the death of the client's father, Frederick Horniman, with his son inheriting the family's hugely profitable tea blending business. It is apparent that money was no object and this, combined with Horniman's progressive sensibilities, provided Voysey the artistic freedom to produce arguably his most ambitious and satisfying domestic interior. *(figure 1)*

1
Hand-coloured black and white photograph of the oak drawing-room, Garden Corner, as reproduced in The Studio Yearbook *1913*

With the approval of Horniman, the decorative scheme was widely publicised in contemporary design and architecture journals, with *The Studio* devoting six pages to photographs of the interior.[2] It was described as follows:

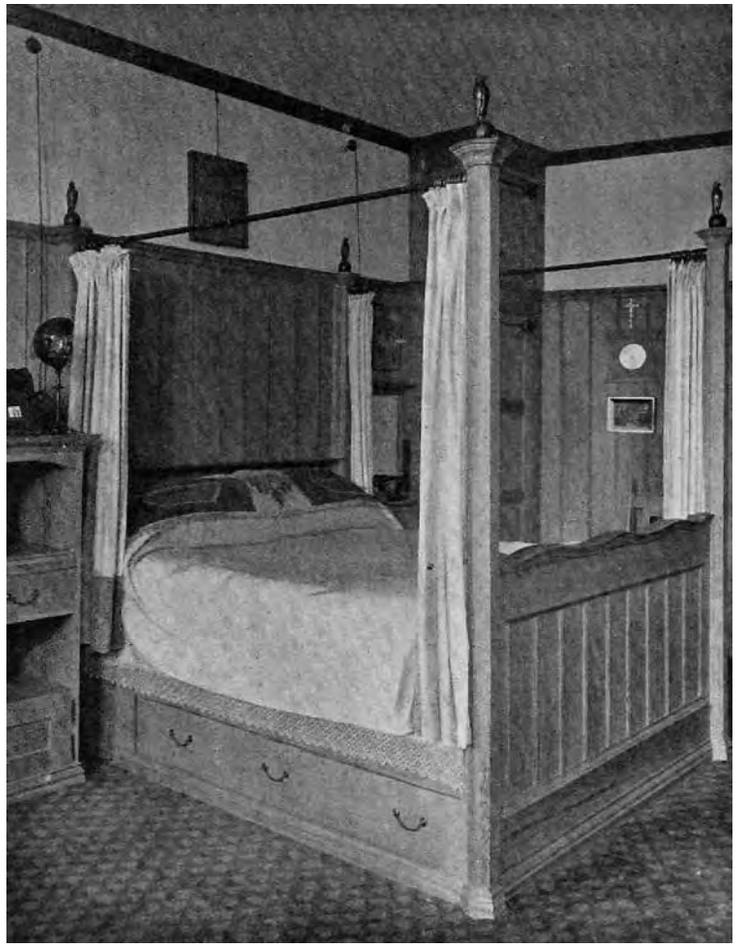
The house is semi-detached, and was built about twenty years ago. It was arranged with one principal staircase to the first floor only, the subsidiary stairs from top to bottom of the seven floors being in a narrow dark slit by the side of the grand stairs. The walls were lined with oak veneer, stained a nut brown; the rooms were so high that no reflected light was secured from the ceilings, and the windows had two scales, the upper halves being in panes of smallish size, the lower glazed with huge sheets of plate-glass. Darkness and gloom prevailed when Mr. Horniman came into possession of the house.

In the process of transformation, the grand staircase was taken out, the veneer torn off the walls, and most of the doors and windows were removed. The basement has been rearranged and lined throughout with van Straaten's white Dutch tiles and light captured wherever possible.[3] *An electric lift by Messrs. Waygood and Co. serves all floors, and is fitted with a specially designed plain oak cage to match the new joinery, which on the ground and first floors is entirely in oak, left quite clean from the plane, without stain, varnish, or polish.*

The library (which was the billiard room) has a new stone window, overlooking the Chelsea "Physick" Garden, fitted with gun metal casements, and its ceiling has been lowered to increase the restful proportions of the room. The massive oak beams are blackleaded, and the plaster is all distempered white down to the oak bookcases … … Each floor is provided with bathroom and housemaid's closet, and all the painted wood is white enamel, and deep white friezes contribute to the light by their reflection. The drawing-room is L-shaped, one arm being treated with oak 6 ft. 6 ins. high, with plaster barrel ceiling above, and the other section is lined with Westmoreland green slate unpolished …

Voysey employed a rich vocabulary of demi-lune arches and circular windows within the interior, extending and developing themes he had established in the dining room designed in 1902 for Florence van Gruisen.[4] The chairs too recall this earlier scheme, with the "single heart" version in its various iterations (with and without arms, lath back and upholstered) used extensively throughout. These were supplemented with an austere oak chesterfield, identical to the one recently supplied to SC Turner at Frinton-on-Sea, and at least one of the "crab" tables supplied in 1903 to CT Burke. The few pieces of bespoke furniture are of interest and show Voysey to be still at the height of his creative powers. The folding circular (or gate leg) table was obviously designed to complement the "crab" table, as it is identical in height and diameter. It has a similar graceful and dynamic presence when open (somewhat reminiscent of EW Godwin's multi-legged centre tables of the 1880s), but has the advantage of being able to be stored flat against a wall when not in use *(figure 2)*. Strangely, for such a large property, the Hornimans seem to have been particularly focused on maximising all available space. *The Studio* article continues:

2
Folding table and "crab" table as used at Garden Corner (courtesy RIBA Collections)



3
The Hornimans' four poster bed, Garden Corner 1907

Mrs. Horniman's bed-room on the second floor is fitted and lined with oak. The bedstead, jewel safe, writing-table, wardrobe, and all the usual bedroom equipment are fixed and fitted in to utilise every inch of space, and at the side of the bed the cabinets are fitted with sliding shelves, to bring the morning tea-tray over the bed. Mr. Horniman's dressing-room is fitted in the same manner with oak furniture.

The scheme did involve a remarkable amount of fitted oak furniture, all decorated with Voysey-designed strap hinges and handles supplied by Thomas Elsley's Portland Metal Works. Much remains in situ, especially in the principal bedroom mentioned above, but sadly the four-poster bed *(figure 3)* has gone. This was a massive, fitted, rectilinear piece with an octagonal column towering upwards at all four corners, each capped with a cast bronze figure of a kestrel originally modelled by Voysey in wax. These have the feel of ancient Egyptian sculptures and were intended to be "read" symbolically.

Writing about his use of symbols, Voysey says:

Symbolism is the oldest of the arts, and must for ever be man's expression of his dependence on man. We are so variously constituted, being on different planes of spiritual and intellectual development, that we are forced to exchange ideas, and so our dependence on one another becomes the foundation of our love, therefore we seek many means by which to transmit ideas, and charm each other into harmonious thought.[5]

Birds, to Voysey, were perfect symbols of aspiration and spiritual activity. Like people they walk on two legs but they are not wedded to the ground, having the ability to soar towards the heavens and see far and wide. Voysey would later describe an even more specific justification for their use: "*You shall perch four eagles on my bedposts to drive away bad spirits, as the Byzantines believed ...*" [6]

The octagonal, heavily moulded, capitals on which the birds stand (also mirrored at the base of each column) introduce a distinctly Gothic flavour which, in retrospect, can be seen as an early indicator of Voysey turning away from the stripped-down simplicity and proportional refinement of his "peak" years of 1896–1905

Cast bronze birds, in this case eagles, also featured on a large umbrella stand *(figure 4)* designed for the entrance lobby of Garden Corner, and a further distinctly Gothic piece was prominently displayed close by. This was the built-in master longcase clock that carried a heavily moulded, stepped, ogee pediment - in effect "pointed Gothic" - a decorative device also introduced to the glazing bars of the fitted bookcases in the upstairs library.[7]

4
Umbrella stand for 28 umbrellas designed for Garden Corner 1907 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

Pointed Gothic is also very much in evidence in the choice of ceiling lights for the large, L-shaped drawing room, which were also designed by Voysey.[8] In Garden Corner, Voysey created the most ambitious domestic interior of his career, an achievement even more remarkable when one considers the work he was concurrently engaged upon, a project that was to be his most ambitious commercial interior scheme.

As mentioned in Part 2 of this article, Sydney Claridge Turner, the secretary and general manager of the Essex and Suffolk Equitable Insurance Company, had recently successfully lobbied Parliament for reforms to the insurance industry, along with the right for regional insurance companies to operate within the City of London.[9] This allowed the Essex and Suffolk – whose headquarters were in Colchester – to take a large, prestigious offic space in the City. Voysey had recently designed and fully furnished Turner's weekend home, The Homestead at Frinton-on-Sea. The client, fully preoccupied with running his large and rapidly expanding business, was obviously delighted with his new home and was happy to delegate to Voysey the responsibility of designing and fully furnishing the Society's new City offic at Capel House, 60 New Broad Street. This was within a new, purpose-built offic block designed by Paul Hoffmann and in August 1906, when Voysey started work on the commission, the ground floor and basement levels – those taken by the Essex and Suffolk – had not yet been fitted out. This gave Voysey the freedom to negotiate some structural changes to the interior spaces, allowing him to produce a strikingly "modern", well-lit and rationally organised open-plan design at a time when progressive offic design was still in its infancy.

Although the use of the rooms – board room, manager's office general offic (an area open to the public), clerks' offic – display a clear hierarchy, they were furnished throughout to a consistently high standard, with bespoke free-standing and fitted oak furniture and off the-peg lighting, cabinet furniture and metalwork including fireplaces, fire irons, inkwells and pen trays. The striking overall effect – one of relative austerity contrasted with a selective use of luxury materials – can be judged from an article published in *The Modern Building Record* (1911):

This building was nothing but a carcase when handed over to the architect, without floors, doors, ceilings or windows. Every single detail of these, as well as those of the chimney-pieces and furniture, was designed by him. Above the oak dado, five feet high, which is a feature of all the rooms and passages, the walls are treated with hand-floated plaster, distempered white. The columns and chimney-pieces are of black unpolished marble, and on several of the latter are carved or emblazoned in colour the arms of various Essex and Suffolk towns, and the seal of the Company. The windows are glazed with 1¼ inch wide wrought iron glazing bars and Chance's Norman slabs, and in each is a panel of stained glass representing one of the towns in which the Society does business.

The counters are of gilded oak, covered with plate glass, bound round the edges with copper. The clocks' dials and hands are made to Mr. Voysey's design. Unpolished black marble forms the floor, and all the oak woodwork is left quite clean and free from stain, polish or varnish: the practical result of this combination of material is that it obviates any annual expenditure except that necessitated by fresh white distemper on the ceilings and walls, the nature of the glazing doing away with any need of blinds or curtains. [10]

As mentioned above, clocks featured prominently in most of the interior spaces, the largest being displayed in the main offic above the fireplace mantel. These were made by MF Dent & Co, and, like most of the clocks designed for the Essex and Suffolk, the form is closely based upon historical precedent, in this case "Tavern", or "Act of Parliament", clocks of the early to mid-18th century. Bespoke high-back chairs are the most striking feature of the scheme, all variants of the "single heart" chair first designed for Mrs Van Gruisen in 1902.

The board room and manager's offic feature the most impressive and extreme of these, armchairs with vertically extended backs containing a wide single splat upholstered in tooled leather displaying the Voysey -designed company monogram.[11] These came in two versions: one with a leather upholstered seat and typical "Voysey" tapering, octagonal legs, the other, identical in size, featuring a woven cane seat and square section legs terminating with brass castors. These were supplemented with a smaller high-back side chair *(figure 5)*, which also came in two versions: one with a single monogrammed leather covered splat and leather seat, the other with five vertical oak laths and a drop-in rush seat.[12] The Voysey-designed free-standing furniture was made by FC Neilsen and Arthur Simpson, while other furniture (not designed by Voysey), such as the swivel offic chairs, came from specialist offic suppliers Partridge & Cooper. All the oak fittings were undertaken by S. Elliott & Sons Ltd and the Voysey-designed heraldic stained glass, featuring the coat of arms of the various towns in which the company did business, was supplied by James Powell.[13]

As with the interior of Garden Corner, Voysey exploited a range of demi-lune arches and windows to provide both a rhythm and a visual contrast to the dominant vertical emphasis of the interior spaces. However, here there is a much more dominant use of "pointed Gothic" in the stepped "Tudor" pediment to many of the black marble fire surrounds, also reinforced by the use (in the accounts department) of a recently designed cast iron Gothic fire surround *(figure 6)* manufactured by the Standard Range & Foundry Co of Watford, with a similar, pointed pediment.

5
The typewriting office, Capel House (courtesy RIBA Collections)

The completed scheme was lavishly photographed (at Voysey's expense) and featured, over the next few years, in several contemporary publications, but unfortunately resulted in no new commissions for offic design. However, Voysey continued to decorate and furnish some of the Essex & Suffolk's regional office between 1907 and 1910.[14] These were much less lavishly appointed than Capel House and contained a mixture of commercially available offic furniture together with Voysey-designed lighting, desk accessories, tables, cabinets and a large number of rush-seated "single heart" arm and side chairs, mostly made by Arthur Simpson of Kendal. Simpson had made occasional pieces of furniture for Voysey since the mid-1890s and they had become very good friends with Voysey designing a house for him, Littleholme in Kendal, in 1909. They corresponded regularly and the Voysey–Simpson letters are worthy of separate study, documenting as they do their innermost thoughts, religious beliefs, fi ancial positions (for Voysey, often perilous), philosophical outlook and general health (Voysey frequently refers to various physical ailments and bouts of depression). The letters also reveal that by 1910 Simpson was beginning to eclipse FC Nielsen as Voysey's preferred cabinetmaker. Referring to Voysey's client CT Burke in a letter dated 17th October he states, "*I forget if you have done anything for him. Now that Nielsen is no longer to be depended upon it is more likely that you will.*" Frustratingly, there is no reference to the exact nature of Nielsen's "unreliability", but the working relationship did survive.[15] The letters show Voysey to have been open to suggestions of technical improvements to his furniture from the master craftsman Simpson, and, revealingly, document Voysey's growing self-perception

6
Cast-iron "Tudor" fireplace manufactured by The Standard Range & Foundry Co of Watford c.1906-7

as a "prophet without honour", as a few extracts (all written by Voysey) demonstrate:

June 8th 1909: *You are right to say keep it simple – but if it is simple it must be pure and beautiful and of good report. The most lavishly ornamented is generally the cheapest from a £.s.d. point of view because the ornament hides bad work and bad material and machine finish and the stock patterns which are got cheap are much cheaper than anything you or I can design. But that sort of cheapness we all know is terribly costly to the soul.*

July 19th 1909: *The chairs I have had made have stood remarkably well but I quite agree with you that it is sailing too close to the wind. This would be better and because more obedient to the nature of the material I think more beautiful. When drawing with a pencil it is very difficult to think and feel as if you were drawing with a chisel on the fibres of the oak, hence the blunder.*

September 27th 1909: *Your chairs at Capel House are excellent. I am quite convinced now that blocking is the right thing. And am very glad you did it.*

February 16th 1910: *It is very good of you to wish to do me more furniture but I do not want anything & I am already very much in your debt. I wish I could order something for clients but there is no furnishing in hand at present all my work is architectural now.*

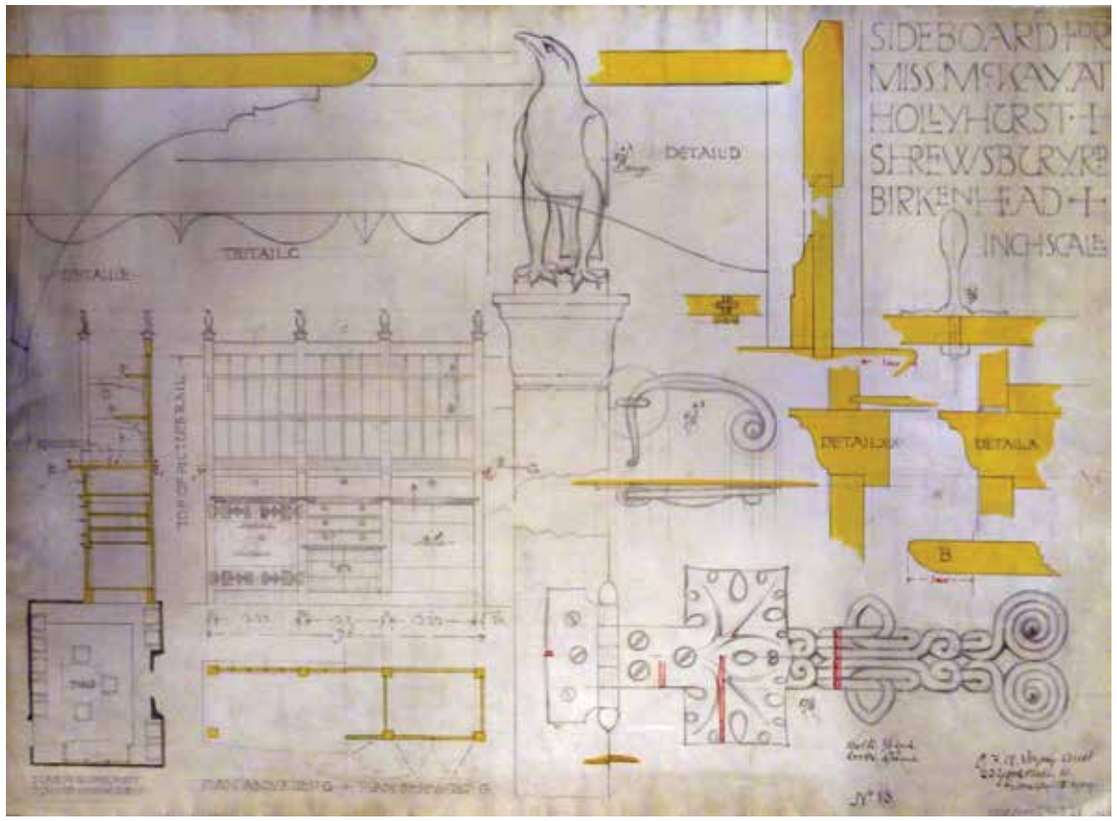
June 29th 1910: *I send you the only two "Reason as a basis of Art" that are left ... they are wanted by nobody. I am getting more kicks than halfpence for daring to fly in the face of popular beliefs. My architectural brethren are depriving me of assistants. I have the utmost difficulty in getting the help of a really competent draughtsman. I am to be boycotted I suppose, but it will not hinder me in the course that seems for the ultimate good of my profession. When I am dead and gone so will be the present educational system. If we are only scavengers making way for healthier growth – The Lord be praised.*[16]

The "present educational system" that so offended Voysey was a widespread return within schools of architecture to teaching Classicism, resulting in Neoclassicism rapidly becoming the dominant contemporary style. Voysey published numerous articles which criticised the younger generation's rejection of both religion and Gothic principles of design, principles which can be summarised as a truth to materials, climate and location, honest construction and, when applied to architecture, a focus on rational room layout based solely on need and use, resulting in asymmetrical exteriors. When writing autobiographical notes Voysey summed himself up as follows:

He never studied the classic orders, for Gothic Architects in those days regarded Tudor Architecture as the purest and best English building, never found anywhere else. And pure because the honest outcome of national character, requirements and conditions, both climatic, geographical and geological. He was insular to the backbone, and could not admit that familiarity with foreign countries was necessary for true culture. The avoidance of fashionable practices was congenial to his rabid individualism. Obviously this type of mind was regarded by many as a form of egotistical self isolation. And a form of eccentricity only understandable to those of similar temperament and mental outlook.[17]

Throughout his career Voysey had devoutly followed Gothic principles of design as laid down by Pugin and Ruskin. However, in earlier years he had felt no need to obviously demonstrate this by decorating his buildings or furniture with overtly Gothic motifs. As the first decade of the 20th century wore on and he increasingly identified himself as the "last disciple of Pugin", that position changed and Gothic decoration would frequently come to the fore in much of his architecture and furniture. This is readily apparent in the furniture designed from 1909 onwards although, as is common with Voysey, many pieces were also supplied either repeating, or featuring variants based upon, earlier designs.

The rapid decline in Voysey's architectural and furniture commissions from this date is well documented, but, although not as productive as he would have wished, he did continue to design furniture worthy of note, albeit for a dwindling number of patrons mostly comprised of faithful former clients. One such was Miss Dalziel McKay of Birkenhead, for whom Voysey had designed furniture and a guest bedroom in 1902. Following the death of her widowed mother, Miss McKay returned to Voysey in 1909 to commission a suite of dining room furniture including twelve "single heart" armchairs and an extending dining table. The centrepiece was to be Voysey's most elaborate and unusual sideboard design.[18] The piece is similar in form to his earlier sideboard and dresser designs, but the overall appearance is vastly different, so much so that at first sight one would be hard pressed to attribute it to Voysey. On closer inspection, the six cast bronze eagles capping each extended upright – differ nt in design to those used on the bed at Garden Corner – betray Voysey as the designer. His characteristic use of the cabinet hardware formerly manufactured by Thomas Elsley is absent, replaced by custom-made, highly elaborate, Celtic entrelac strap hinges *(figure 7)* and hardware supplied by William Bainbridge Reynolds.[19] As Voysey never betrayed any interest in Celtic art, one would assume these were designed at the request of his artistic client who had studied at the Liverpool School of Art. Questionable construction techniques are also evident as all cupboard doors are constructed from full-width panels with only a top and bottom rail to provide stability – the side stiles having been abandoned – and an overtly "Tudor" styling is introduced with the use of heavily chamfered ogee curves running along the upper edge of the back rail, creating a "castellated" appearance to the design.



7
Original drawing of the sideboard for Miss McKay 1909 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

Family connections also provided the occasional commission, as with the impressive "curio cabinet" *(figure 8)* designed and supplied to his sister-in-law in 1910. A successful design comprising a recessed, glazed upper section over two sets of drawers, this, as with all Voysey's best furniture, exhibits a combination of excellent craftsmanship and harmonious proportions. Typical of much of his later cabinet designs, elaborately profiled and visually "heavy" mouldings are applied to the top and base, showing the continued influence of early Georgian furniture. The elegant, integrated octagonal corner columns are a feature that can be traced back to designs of the early 1890s, but they now terminate in "false" caps that are carved out of the moulded top and base. Voysey's continued use of bronze ball feet is also typical of his later pieces, these being supplied by William Bainbridge Reynolds, as were the recently designed "Tudor" style hinges. In the same year Voysey also supplied two pieces of furniture to FC Gwyn of Hampstead, both exemplifying his habit of utilising previous designs. One is a music cabinet *(figure 9)*, a slight variation of the Kelmscott "Chaucer" cabinet of 1899, and the other, a china cabinet, is a new design but is styled to complement the music cabinet.[20] Unusually, these were made of mahogany, a material that must have been demanded by the client given Voysey's abhorrence of non-native timbers.

8
Curio cabinet for Mrs HA Voysey 1910 (private collection, courtesy Paul Reeves London)

9
Mahogany music cabinet for JW Gwyn 1910 (courtesy Hill House Antiques & Decorative Arts Ltd, www.hillhouse-antiques.co.uk)

10
Atkinson's ground floor showroom (courtesy RIBA Collections)

In May 1911, commissioned by the New Bond Street perfumers J & E Atkinson & Co, Voysey commenced work on what would be his final commercial interior. This was part of a larger scheme to radically remodel the exterior of the premises, with the street-level elevation being heavily "Gothicised" by Voysey. The recessed front door was crested with a sculpted royal coat of arms and given portcullis-like iron gates, whereas both side doors were topped with windows infilled with curvilinear Gothic tracery. Photographs of the fortress-like exterior show it to have had the appearance of a bank, not a high-class perfume retailer, and it is no surprise to learn that the premises were completely rebuilt in 1925.[21]

The showroom that Voysey designed and furnished *(figure 10)* appears to have been much more fit for purpose, and in its use of a barrel vault, semi-circular windows, Gothic ceiling lights and glazed counter tops is very reminiscent of the interiors of both Garden Corner and Capel House. The free-standing and fitted furniture is subservient to the products it was designed to display, with Voysey creating a run of glazed-top counters, plain to the front but stacked with drawers to the shop assistants' side, even including a toe recess at ground level for the comfort of the serving staff. Tiered display stands, both floor-standing and counter-top, a range of central showcases, and fitted, canted-side display cabinets provided ample scope for the effective display of the companies' various products. Seating was provided by employing several "single heart", rush-seated side chairs, with the manufacture of the furniture being divided between Arthur Simpson and FC Nielsen .

In 1912 Voysey produced his final piano design, executed by the Aeolian Company of Bond Street, an American firm who specialised in "pianolas" or player (that is, automatic) pianos. This is a "boxy", inelegant piece of furniture that even manages to incorporate elements of architectural carpentry within its massive under-structure. It was later photographed *(figure 11)* alongside a music stool designed for EJ Horniman, indicating that it too was likely manufactured as a one-off for the same client. This is confirmed by an article in *The Furnishing Trades Organiser* illustrating items of furniture owned by Horniman, including a remarkably austere cheval glass and stool *(figure 12)* that must have been designed at around the same time.[22] The same year also saw more designs for old clients: furniture for CT Coggin - for whom he had designed The White Cottage, Wandsworth in 1903 - and for Dalziel McKay, a dressing table with en suite washstand.

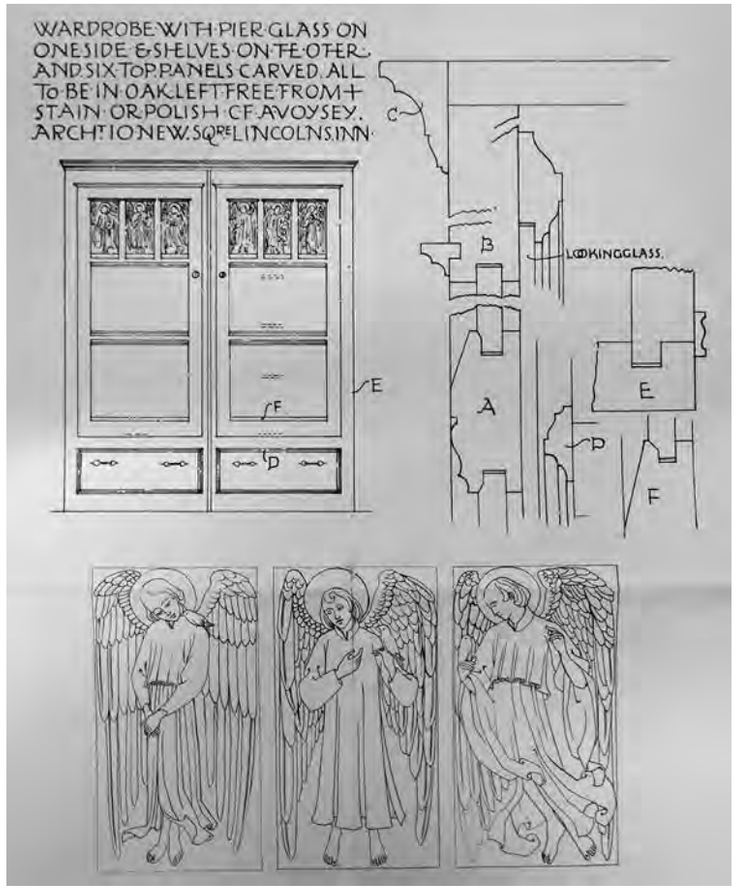
11
Pianola or player piano for EJ Horniman (courtesy RIBA Collections)

In early 1912 the front page of *The Illustrated Carpenter and Builder* was devoted to photographs of Voysey furniture.[23] This included many earlier pieces but also one of his recent, overtly "medieval" designs, featuring carved angels. This is a relatively plain, three-drawer carving table with an open structure and bronze ball feet,[24] its most striking feature being the four carved angels – appropriately "singing grace" – perched atop the extended corner posts. The cabinet work was supplied by FC Nielsen, with the specialist architectural sculptors William Aumonier & Son providing the angels. It is not recorded for whom the table was made, but an identical one was reproduced over a decade later. The following year *The British Architect* illustrated construction drawings for an oak wardrobe once more, a deceptively simple design *(figure 13)* and once again decorated with angels.[25] In

this case a sequence of six, carved in low relief, arranged in-line across the wardrobe's two doors. Voysey provided his own, typically provocative, caption demonstrating his belief that his furniture had the power to spiritually "improve" its owner:

In these days of materialistic realism, it is well to remember that figures have been used in the past, as symbols to express thoughts, not entirely animal or selfish. Anything spiritual, anything Gothic, anything aspiring and uncorporeal is taboo. Indeed, it gives offence to some to mention the word spiritual. Their habit of thought is so materialistic that it is shocked by any pure spiritual idea. But here is the idea that angels (messengers of the Most High) teach the birds their song, and plumage; so the lady when she goes to dress might remember the fashions of Heaven as well as Paris.

12
Cheval mirror and stool for EJ Horniman



13
Drawing for a wardrobe with six carved angels and pier glass 1913

Unsurprisingly, very little furniture was designed during the war, but the desire to "Gothicise" continued into his declining years. The chairs of this period show no new creativity, being simply earlier designs overdrawn with added chamfers and ogee pointed back rails. Two, both from 1919, will serve as examples. The first, for CA Hunt, is a variation of the Essex and Suffolk boardroom chair. However, the back has been further extended and pointed Gothic decoration added to the top rail, lending it the unfortunate appearance of a pantomime throne *(figure 14)*. The chair was made by FC Nielsen and, uniquely for Voysey, is upholstered with laced leather straps, a technique frequently used by Arthur Simpson. The second chair was for another old client, Albert H Van Gruisen (husband of Florence), who had retired from his Liverpool fruit business to Hambleton Hurst in Surrey and had commissioned Voysey to design new gardens and a major extension to the house in the same year. Using the drawing of the elegant "single heart" chair as a starting point – first designed for his wife, seventeen years earlier – Voysey created a bizarre "Tudor" commode with similar Gothic points

14
Easy chair for CA Hunt 1919 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

added to the top rail as the Hunt armchair and the gracefully curving arms of the original replaced with narrow, straight lengths of wood.

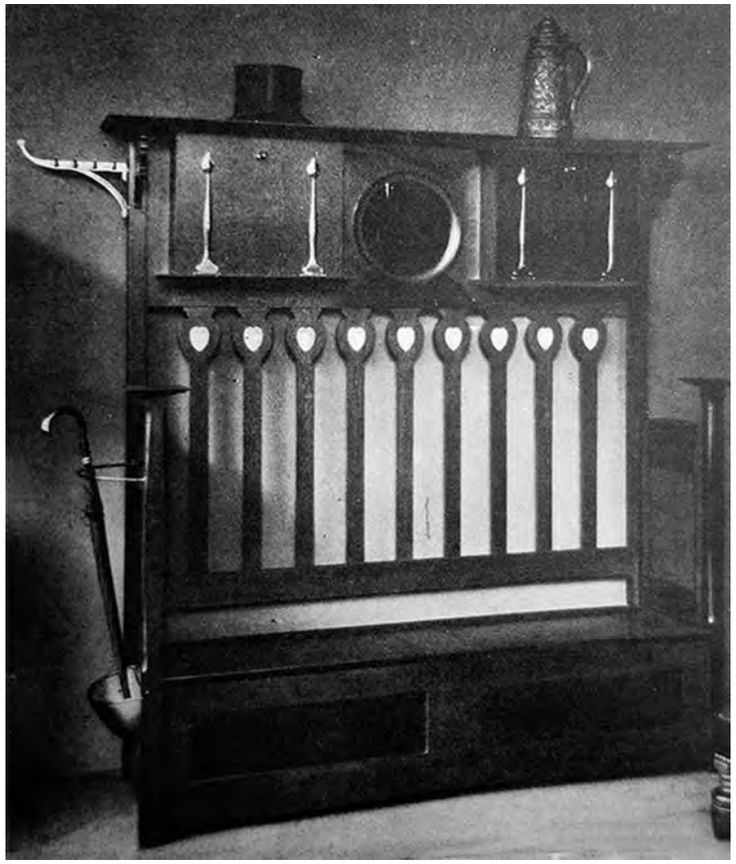
Sporadic and mostly minor furniture commissions continued into the mid-1920s, including clocks and toilet table *(figure 15)* for CT Burke (1921), chairs and clock case for CE Welstead (1921), "various articles of furniture" for CT Burke (1923), "many pieces of furniture, sent to Vodin" for T Eastwood (1923), "several pieces of furniture" for CE Welstead (1923), and fin lly furniture for PA Barendt (1927).[26] Voysey's final furniture designs – a dining room table, dressing table and bedside fitment – were made in 1934 for his favourite niece Ella, recently married to the actor Robert Donat. Then aged seventy-seven, Voysey had lived on into the age of Modernism. In an increasingly secular world of cutting-edge materials and radically abstract design, where furniture could be made from tubular steel, glass or bent ply, an oak "Tudor" dressing table *(figure 16)* must have appeared wilfully anachronistic. Not so to Voysey, who remained faithful to the deeply held beliefs inherited from his father and the writings of Pugin and Ruskin until the close of his career. Writing as late as 1936 he said, "I am trying to show that modern art reveals the effect of the poisonous dictum 'an artist must express himself.' An artist must be sincere; but surely he should try to express the fundamental qualities of the highest universal moral and spiritual thoughts and feelings of human and Divine Nature – not his own miserable prejudices."[27] To Voysey religion and design had always been one and the same.

15
Toilet table for CT Burke 1921 (courtesy Hill House Antiques & Decorative Arts Ltd, www.hillhouse-antiques.co.uk)

16
Dressing table for Mr and Mrs Robert Donat 1934

A note on commercial furniture and contemporary copies

The furniture discussed in these articles was never mass produced or commercially retailed and, once a bespoke design had been created, was only available to subsequent clients by ordering through Voysey. However, for a short period between c.1899 and c.1902 he did supply designs to a small number of commercial manufacturers. Even so, judging by the scarcity of surviving examples, the numbers produced were very small. The most well-documented relationship, although brief, is with the manufacturer and wholesaler of "Artistic Furniture" JS Henry of Old Street, Shoreditch. An oak hall settle *(figure 17)* illustrated in The Furnisher was warmly praised by the writer and fully attributed to Voysey.[28] The relative simplicity of this oak piece is unusual for JS Henry, who specialised in elaborate "novelties" featuring much elaborate inlay work, invariably manufactured in mahogany. Interestingly, none of the highly prominent cabinet fittings were supplied by Thomas Elsley and one must question to what extent Voysey's design was "improved"



17
Hall settle manufactured by JS Henry c.1900

or "added to" by the company during manufacture. Comparison with a similar settle designed for AMM Stedman only a year later is telling.[29] Almost identical in form – both featuring grotesque silhouettes and under-seat storage – the later version is more typically austere, dispensing with all metal fittings and the circular mirror and replacing the pewter inlaid splats with a solid panelled back. There is only one other design that can be confidently attributed to Voysey and Henry, an inlaid games table with characteristic octagonal legs, examples surviving in both oak and mahogany.[30]

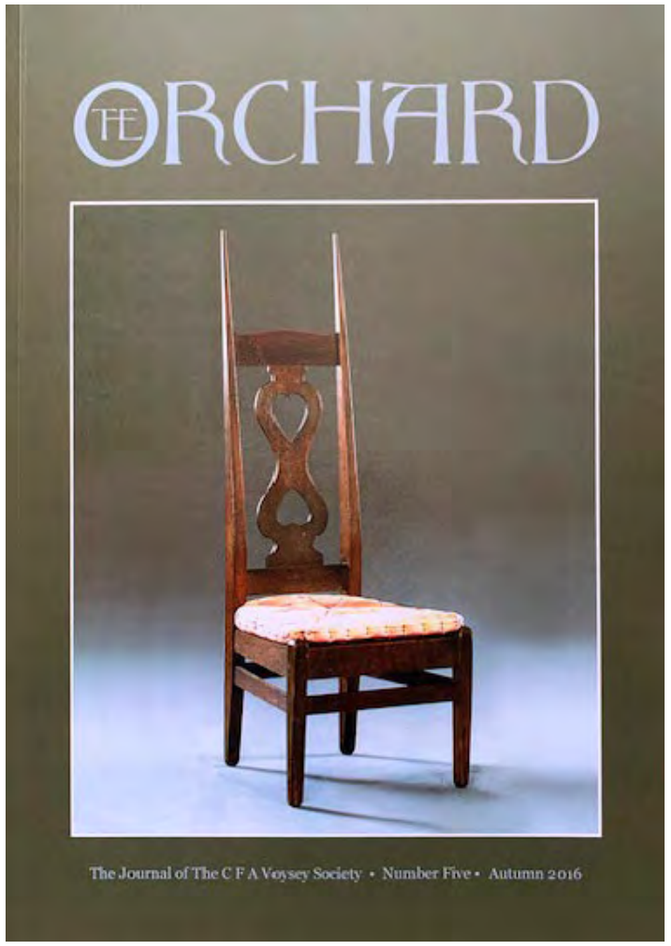
Examples of commercial Voysey designs that appear to have been manufactured without alteration include the well-known "Tempus Fugit" clock in oak, retailed by Heal's c.1902, the upright piano manufactured in rosewood, oak or mahogany by Collard & Collard c.1902, and a billiard table *(figure 18)* first designed c.1900 for Revd Canon Grane and then commercially produced by the specialist firm of Thurston & Co, who were manufacturing it well into the 1920s.[31]

For many years it has been repeatedly stated that Voysey provided furniture designs for Liberty & Co, invariably in relation to several different "Voyseyesque" chairs that have periodically appeared on the market. However, there is no evidence in either the Liberty records or in Voysey's own extensive archive that there was a relationship with the Liberty furniture studio.[32] What is certain is that Liberty

18
Billiard table manufactured by Thurston & Co

advertised an arm and side chair very loosely based on the "single heart" chair in their *Inexpensive Furniture* catalogue of 1907 which, apart from a similar basic form, differs markedly from the "original".[33] Ever conscious of fashionable taste, Liberty's design department had a habit of actively taking inspiration from the work of contemporary designers and appropriating elements into their own work. Of the other "Voyseyesque" chairs – none of which can be attributed to Liberty – one, a cut-down version of the "double heart" chair, is remarkably close to Voysey's original, although the design is totally compromised by the clumsy height reduction. Other chairs *(figure 19)* exhibit differences to a greater or lesser extent, but they share one thing in common: in all cases the "originals" upon which they are based were reproduced in popular contemporary journals, in particular *The Studio*, giving amateur woodworkers and unscrupulous manufacturers across Europe and the USA more than enough information to create their own version of the Voysey chair. ***Caveat emptor***.

19
"Voyseyesque" chairs. From left: cut-down version of the "double heart" chair; armchair probably made by an American amateur from a photograph in The Studio; crudely executed chairs, probably of continental origin



Voysey's Tile Designs for J.C. Edwards

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.5, pp. 78-81 (2016).

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Voysey's tile design for J C Edwards, Ruabon

Tony Peart

The recent purchase of four previously unrecorded Voysey tiles has prompted this short piece exploring Voysey's relationship with the Welsh ceramic manufacturer, J C Edwards.

Voysey supplied tile designs to a small number of companies: the Pilkington Tile and Pottery Co. of Clifton Junction, Manchester; Maw & Co of Jackfield, Shropshire; J C Edwards of Ruabon, Denbighshire and in the mid-1930s Dunsmore Tiles of Campden Hill, London (who frequently produced their designs on Minton blanks).

Of all the manufacturers he designed for, the best documented is his work for the Pilkington Tile and Pottery Company. Commencing c.1896,[1] Voysey created a wide range of designs for moulded, transfer printed and tube-lined tiles and was still speculatively sending the company designs well into the 1920s.

Unfortunately in the case of J C Edwards, apart from the tiles themselves (which can be attributed to Voysey on stylistic grounds), there is currently no documentary evidence linking him to the firm.

The discovery of large quantities of high quality Etruria Marl clay in the Ruabon area of North Wales in the mid-19th century heralded the beginning of a ceramic industry that would ultimately grow to employ approximately 2,000 people. The scale of the industry was such that the village of Ruabon gained the nickname "Terracottapolis".

James Coster Edwards (1828–1896) established his company in 1870,[2] making a range of earthenware goods and bricks. The company quickly expanded and he built the Tref-y-Nant Works, where he also began to manufacture sanitary pipes and firebricks. By 1896 the firm had grown to be the largest in the area, employing a thousand workers and producing some two million items per month. By the 1890s the firm was producing a wide range of glazed tiles alongside its terra-cotta wares.

Today, the most commonly encountered of all Voysey's tile designs is "The Demon" (figure 1), a six-inch, moulded teapot stand, clearly marked with the J C Edwards backstamp and produced in a wide range of colourways. That such a utilitarian piece has survived in relatively high numbers would seem to indicate that they must have been manufactured on a large scale. Originally designed in 1889 in a vibrant palette of reds, yellows and oranges, "The Demon" was originally intended to be used as wallpaper (figure2). Even from a modern perspective, a wall covering featuring a grotesque devil crawling through the fires of hell seems a bizarre proposition and, unsurprisingly, it seems to have never found a buyer. However, a diabolical figure surrounded by warming flames does seem a much more appropriate motif with which to decorate the surface of a teapot stand! The fact that this design was illustrated in 1893 in *The Studio*[3] has raised some questions as to whether this

1
Voysey designs were first exhibited by Pilkington's at the fifth exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1896

2
Many sources cite the start of the firm to 1903, but this is incorrect and also falls after the death of Edwards! By 1883 the company was large enough to issue a substantial catalogue containing hundreds of moulded terracotta designs, describing itself as manufacturers of "Brick, Tiles and Terra Cotta". The National Art Library. Pressmark: 96.S Box 1

3
Anon. An Interview with Mr Charles F Annesley Voysey, Architect and Designer. London: *The Studio*, vol. 1

Figure 1 – "The Demon" teapot stand, J C Edwards (left)

Figure 2 – "The Demon" (detail), design for a wallpaper, 1889 (below)

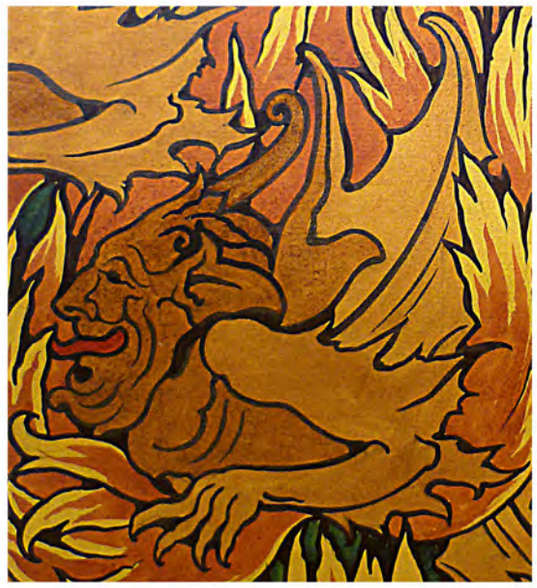


Figure 3 – "Bird" lustre tile, J C Edwards (above left)

Figure 4 – "Bird" tiles demonstrating the repeat pattern (above)

Figure 5 – "Halcyon" printed fabric (detail) c1893 LACMA (left)

was an officially commissioned design or simply an image the factory appropriated and re-drew in a slightly simplified form.

The discovery of a further three unrecorded designs, along with other circumstantial evidence, would now seem to indicate that the relationship between Voysey and J C Edwards was indeed a professional one. The first design, a red lustre tile (figure 3) with a J C Edwards backstamp, features a bird amongst scrolling garden foliage and was supplied as a pair (the other being a mirror image) allowing a flowing, Gothic repeat pattern to be created (figure 4), This rhythmic design is very similar to a wallpaper and carpet design of c1890.[4] The central bird motif is a reworking of one that features in a c1888 design[5] that was sold to G P & J Baker Ltd. and produced as a printed cloth (figure 5) c1893.

The second and third designs, moulded in low-relief (figure 6) also form a pair and seem to have been designed specifically for tiles. They are a more naturalistic (and, one would therefore surmise) earlier version of a more stylised pair (figure 7) that would be supplied to Pilkington's in the late 1890s.

Crucially, the fact that none of these designs was illustrated in any contemporary publication leads to the supposition that they must have been supplied to the company by Voysey himself. The relatively early dates of the wallpaper and textile designs upon which they are based, coupled with the use of red lustre decoration, gives us tantalising clues as to the approximate date Voysey was supplying these designs to Edwards.

William De Morgan first introduced his lustre tiles in the late 1870s. These highly influential tiles proved popular with wealthy clients but were very expensive. By the late 1880s many other manufacturers had introduced their own, cheaper versions, primarily the firms of Maw & Co and Craven Dunnill, (both of Jackfield, Shropshire) and of course, J C Edwards. An Edwards catalogue described their lustre tiles as; "Rivalling the finest Mediaeval Italian and Spanish examples, combining with the gorgeous effects of burnished metals the iridescent colours of the rainbow." However the fashion for lustre tiles was rapidly fading by the early 1900s.

The careers of Lewis F Day (1845–1910) and Voysey frequently overlapped: both were members of The Art Worker's Guild; they often provided textile and wallpaper designs to the same companies and also seem to have had parallel careers in the field of tile design. Day started providing designs (often for execution in lustre) to J C Edwards in the late 1880s[6] and continued until he signed a contract of exclusivity with the Pilkington Tile and Pottery Co in 1896.[7] It also seems probable that Voysey, too, created his designs for Edwards before his involvement with the Manchester firm. This when taken into consideration with the other circumstantial evidence outlined above, seems to place them in the early to mid 1890s; certainly no later than 1896.

4
S Durant, *The Decorative Designs of C.F.A. Voysey*. Lutterworth Press, 1990, p43

5
Collection of Los Angeles County Museum: AC1995.250.47

6
J M Hansen, Lewis Forman Day, Antique Collectors' Club, 2007, p177

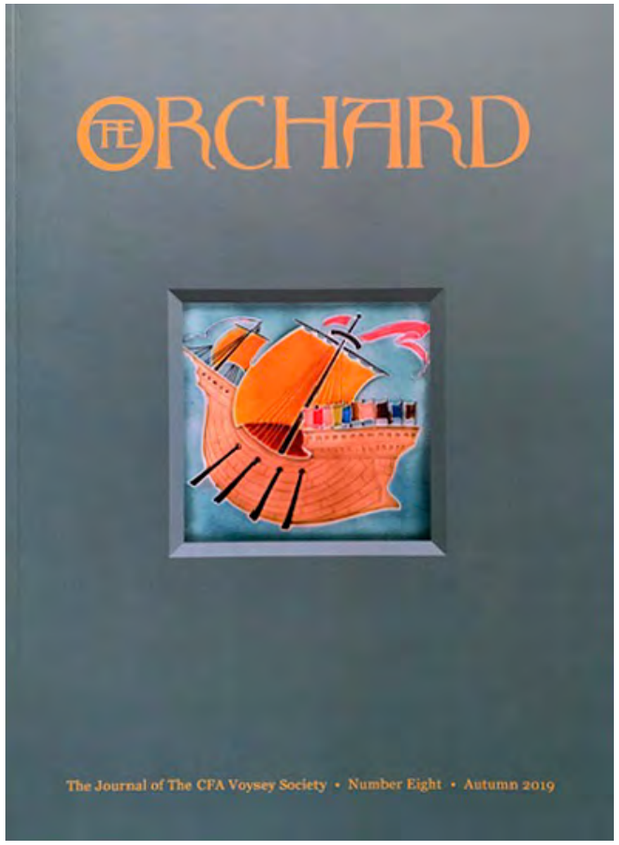
7
Ibid, pp185–199

8
Fired Earth 1000 Years of Tiles in Europe. Richard Dennis, 1991, p129

The author is only aware of these four Voysey designed tiles for J C Edwards: the "Bird"; the pair of moulded "Flower and Leaf" designs and "The Demon" which, apart from appearing as a teapot stand, has also been recorded as a red lustre decorated tile.[8] There may be more awaiting discovery.

Figure 6 – "Flower and Leaf" moulded tiles, J C Edwards

Figure 7 – "Flower and Leaf" moulded tiles, Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co



Voysey's Tile Designs: a Catalogue Raisonné

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.8, pp. 83-99 (2019).

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Voysey's Tile Designs

Tony Peart

Britain was the leading producer of tiles from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, satisfying a huge worldwide demand. The Victorian and Edwardian boom in housebuilding saw tiles used to decorate everything from floors walls, and bathrooms to kitchens, fireplaces and furniture. In the public sphere, tiles rapidly became mandatory in all contexts where public health and hygiene were of paramount concern such as: hospitals; swimming pools; laundries; dairies; restaurants; public houses etc. Where serviceability or decoration were key, tiled interiors were to be found in public buildings; from town halls and churches to theatres and hotels.

Tiles first became subject to popular fashion with those designed by the architects of the Gothic Revival and in particularly AWN Pugin (1812–1852). Later, the motifs of the Aesthetic Movement proved popular with progressive manufacturers and the public alike as, in turn, did those of the Arts and Crafts movement. As one of the leading architects and designers of his generation, it is unsurprising that Voysey became involved with tile design.

Although Voysey's tiles constitute only a small proportion of his total design output, they demonstrate the essence of his design vocabulary and many of these tiles have become well-known and highly collectable. However, as this area of his professional life is relatively little documented, much confusion has arisen among curators and collectors alike over which tiles are (or are not) by Voysey. With that in mind, the primary aim of this article is to chronologically catalogue and illustrate all the known tile designs for the six companies with which he worked commencing with Maw & Co. in the late 1880s through to his final designs for Dunsmore Tiles in the 1930s.

The author's catalogue of tiles referred to in the article can be found following the text

1
Maw & Co. "Persian" tile panel as illustrated in The Journal of Decorative Art

Maw & Co.

Voysey's first recorded tile designs were created c.1889 for the specialist tile manufacturers Maw & Co. of Jackfield, Shropshire. The company was initially founded in 1850 in Worcester but by the late 1880s, relocated to Iron Bridge Gorge, it had massively expanded to become one of the largest manufacturers in the world. The company was progressive, commissioning "fashionable" designers such as Lewis F Day (1845–1910) and Walter Crane (1845–1915) and exhibited their tile designs at the very first Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition at the New Gallery, Regent Street in 1888. Both Crane and Day were known to Voysey through their common membership of The Art Workers' Guild and The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and it may have been through their recommendation that he was commissioned to produce designs

2
"Bird and Tree", probably designed by J G Mowbray Jeffrey for The New Marsden Tile Co.

3
Tiles designed c.1900 by J G Mowbray Jeffrey for The Marsden Tile Co.

for Maw, which were exhibited at the second New Gallery Arts and Crafts Exhibition in late 1889. It should be noted that at this early stage of his career Voysey was little known; he had yet to find his individual "voice" as a designer of pattern and, in respect of his architectural career, had only designed and built one house, The Cottage, Bishop's Itchington the previous year.

Maw exhibited three major tile panels at this exhibition, previously only known through written descriptions in the exhibition catalogue and contemporary reviews. However, during research for this article, line illustrations of each have been discovered in the January 1890 issue of *The Journal of Decorative Art*.[1] One panel featured a design of agricultural labourers by Walter Crane, surrounded by free-flowing, floriate decoration created by Lewis F Day. In contrast, the second was a neoclassical piece, designed throughout by Day, featuring three panels of individual putto placed against a background of formalised, foliate decoration. However, it is the third panel *(figure 1)*, described as "Persian" in the catalogue and contemporary reviews, that concerns us here. Undoubtedly the "lion's share" of this design - most likely the central panel - was designed by Day however the exhibition catalogue also records that tiles marked "B" were designed by C Grove Johnson, those marked "C" were designed and painted by CH Temple and finally those marked "D" were designed by CFA Voysey. It is frustrating not to be able to identify those tiles within the scheme designed by Voysey but they are most likely to be found within the outer border or possibly, those at the corners of the inner panel.

This appears to be Voysey's only, fleeting involvement with Maw as this was the only occasion they exhibited tiles to his design and there is no reference to the company in either Voysey's address book or his "Black Book", a chronological (if incomplete) record of his work. However, a set of four, tube-lined tiles commonly referred to as "Bird and Tree" *(figure 2)*, have long been attributed to Maw and Voysey purely on stylistic grounds. On closer examination, a few tiles from this series have been found to carry a "NMT" backstamp (most are unmarked), this is for The New Marsden Tile Co. Ltd., the c.1908 re-establishment of the earlier Marsden Tile Co. of Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. There is no record of Voysey having any involvement with this company however, they did produce many other highly 'Voseyesque' tile designs in the early 1900s *(figure 3)*. These are all the work of their young, in-house designer JG Mowbray Jeffrey, the person most likely to be responsible for the "Bird and Tree" panel.[2] Although many notable collections own examples of these tiles, evidence strongly indicates that they were not designed by Voysey nor were they manufactured by Maw.[3]

J C Edwards

The discovery of large quantities of high-quality Etruria Marl clay in the Ruabon area of North Wales in the mid-nineteenth century heralded the beginning of a ceramic industry that would ultimately

grow to employ approximately 2,000 people. The scale of the industry was such that the village of Ruabon gained the nickname "Terracottapolis". James Coster Edwards (1828–1896) established his company there in 1870, manufacturing a range of earthenware goods and bricks. The company quickly expanded and he built the Tref-y-Nant Works where he also began to manufacture sanitary pipes and firebr cks. By 1896 the firm had grown to be the largest in the area, employing a thousand workers and producing some two million items per month and by the 1890s was producing a wide range of glazed tiles alongside its terracotta wares.

Lewis F Day began to provide designs to J C Edwards in the late 1880s and continued to do so until he signed a contract of exclusivity with the Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Co. in 1896.[4] It is likely that Voysey's involvement with the company (as with Maw & Co.) came about through this personal connection with Day and it is no coincidence that Voysey, too, transferred his allegiance to Pilkington's at the same time as Day. This fact, when taken into consideration with the dates of the original designs upon which the tiles for Edwards are based, indicates that Voysey's involvement with the company took place within the years 1890–95.

Although no documentary evidence survives of Voysey's professional relationship with J C Edwards, several tiles exist that can be confidently attributed to Voysey on stylistic grounds.

The most commonly encountered of these is "The Demon" *(catalogue 1)* a six-inch, moulded teapot stand produced in a wide range of colourways. First designed in 1889 in a vibrant palette of reds, yellows and oranges, Voysey intended "The Demon" pattern to be used as wallpaper *(figure 4)* but unsurprisingly it did not find a manufacturer brave enough to put it into production. However, a diabolical figure surrounded by warming flames does seem a much more appropriate motif with which to decorate the surface of a teapot stand and due to the numerous examples that survive, a large number must have been made.

Voysey also designed a pair of relief-moulded, semi-stylised "Tulip and Leaf" *(catalogue 2-3)* tiles intended to be displayed in a vertical arrangement within a dado or fireplace. This design would later be revised (in a more conventionalised manner) and be put into production by Pilkington's.

J C Edwards were also responsible for the only known Voysey tiles executed in lustre. The pioneer ceramicist William De Morgan first introduced his lustre tiles in the late 1870s. These highly influential tiles proved popular with wealthy clients but were very expensive. By the late 1880s many other manufacturers had introduced their own, cheaper versions, primarily the firms of Maw & Co. and Craven Dunnill, (both of Jackfield, Shropshire) followed by J C Edwards. An Edwards catalogue described their lustre tiles as "*Rivalling the finest Mediaeval Italian and Spanish examples, combining with*

4
"The Demon" design for a wallpaper, 1889 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

5
Pilkington's "Voysey Wall" from the 1900 Exposition Universelle, Paris

the gorgeous effects of burnished metals the iridescent colours of the rainbow".

Lustre tiles were most commonly used to decorate fireplaces, the metallic glazes producing pleasing effects when lit by firelight. It seems appropriate therefore that the "Demon" design was also reinterpreted as a lustre tile *(catalogue 4)* by J C Edwards. The company also produced a mirrored pair of lustre tiles featuring a bird amongst scrolling garden foliage *(catalogue 5 a & b)*. This rhythmic design was an adaptation of a textile design that was sold to G P & J Baker Ltd. and produced as a printed cloth around 1893.[5]

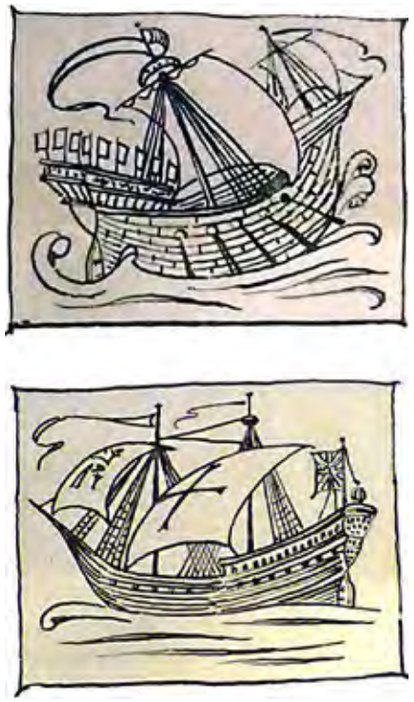
Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co. Ltd.

In 1889 the Clifton and Kersley Coal Company, owned by the Pilkington family, sank two new shafts at Clifton Junction, a site located a little to the north of Manchester. Unfortunately, large quantities of water flood d the workings and the attempt to extract coal had to be abandoned. A positive outcome of what could potentially have been a financi l disaster was the discovery of a bed of high quality, red marl clay. This was initially considered for the manufacture of glazed bricks but after testing it proved unfit for this purpose. Fortuitously, the secretary of the company knew William Burton (1863–1941), a skilled chemist then working for Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, Etruria who, after examining the clay, suggested that it would be well-suited to the manufacture of ceramic tiles. Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Company was founded in 1891 with Burton persuaded to join the fledgli g venture as general manager in 1892 and full-scale tile production commencing the following year. Burton, a leading authority of ceramic history and glaze chemistry played a pivotal role in the success and rapid growth of the company surrounding himself with a team of highly talented, in-house, artists and designers. The company also actively commissioned famous "names" such as the great, Czech, Art Nouveau designer Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) and closer to home, fashionable designers such as Walter Crane, Lewis F Day and CFA Voysey who, by the mid-1890s, had a reputation that was rapidly eclipsing that of both Crane and Day. It proved to be a fruitful relationship, with Voysey designing more tiles for the Manchester company than for any other he was associated with.

Voysey's earliest design for Pilkington's was a pair of moulded, dust-pressed tiles titled "Tulip Tree" *(catalogue 6-7)*, designed to be

laid in the brickwork manner (i.e. each row offset by half a tile), a panel of which were exhibited by the company at the fifth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition in 1896 and illustrated in The Studio.[6] Further designs followed with the company able to create a "Voysey wall" *(figure 5)* as part of their ambitious display at the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1900.

The top section of the "wall" was composed of the "Viking Ships" frieze *(catalogue 8-9)* – something of a misnomer as the vessels depicted are actually based on medieval galleons. Two different designs of ship were arranged amongst plain tiles whilst above them were a run of single tiles depicting distant mountains. The whole scheme being surmounted by tiles containing a single, highly stylised bird. The overall effect is reminiscent of Voysey's famous painted clock (of a similar date) and unusually in the case of Voysey's designs for Pilkington's, preliminary sketches of the galleons survive *(figure 6)*. Below these were displayed "The Labours" tiles *(catalogue 10-18)* printed in blue underglaze, the set comprising a total of eight individual roundel designs on the theme of work with an associated central tile depicting a tree with cartouche inscribed "Laborate et Amate" (love work). These designs were a development of decorative elements taken from a prize certificate *(figure 7)* designed for The Home Arts and Industries Association a few years earlier. "The Labours" were Voysey's only printed tiles, a technique the factory was eager to promote as they were a little cheaper to manufacture than moulded majolica tiles and allowed the company to target a wider market, particularly the lower-middle classes.



6
Original ink designs for "Viking Ships" (courtesy RIBA Collections)

Placed at the centre of the display was "Lemon Tree" *(catalogue 19)* an elaborate, mural design comprising twenty individual tiles each separately impressed set into a field of undecorated tiles. This was flanked to the left and right by the earlier "Tulip Tree" design and placed immediately below, Voysey's most playful design for the company, the pair of tiles that comprise "Fish and Leaf" *(catalogue 20-21)*, a subject well suited for use in swimming pools and public baths.[7] The remaining space was infil ed with panels of the company's "onyx" tiles. These showcased William Burton's genius for creating rich, single colour glazes which showed subtle variations on every tile. They were described in a promotional colour brochure *(figure 8)* as exhibiting "charmingly broken colour" and certainly appealed to Voysey as he used them extensively in many of the tiled fireplaces he designed for his houses.[8] A final design was showcased elsewhere on the company stand, this was the six by three-inch "Tulip" tile *(catalogue 22)* based on an earlier textile design for Turnbull & Stockdale showing tulips and birds in flight. This was available like all Voysey's impressed tiles for Pilkington's, in a confusingly wide variety of colour combinations.

The Glasgow Exhibition of 1901 saw two new Voysey designs introduced on the Pilkington's stand, these were two pairs of tiles on a similar theme: "Bird and Lemon Tree" *(catalogue 23-24)* and the more formalised mirrored pair that comprised "Vine and Bird"

7
Home Arts and Industries yearly awards certificate (detail) c.1898

(catalogue 25 a & b). Both were much closer in style and theme to the designs he was producing contemporaneously for both textile and wallpaper manufacturers.[9] A tile featuring a stylised tree *(catalogue 26)* was registered in September 1902 and can be confidently attributed to Voysey as it is an adaptation of an earlier textile design entitled "Scutari" *(figure 9)* manufactured by G P & J Baker.[10] Judging by the large number that still survive, this must also have been Voysey's best-selling design for the company.

The 1903 "Arts and Crafts" exhibition showcased a few new tile designs by Voysey. For this event select designers were allocated small booths in which to create room settings with Voysey choosing to include one of his characteristic wooden fire surrounds *(figure 10)* inset with narrow six-inch by two-inch tiles. The design was favourably reviewed by *The Art Workers' Quarterly*:[11]

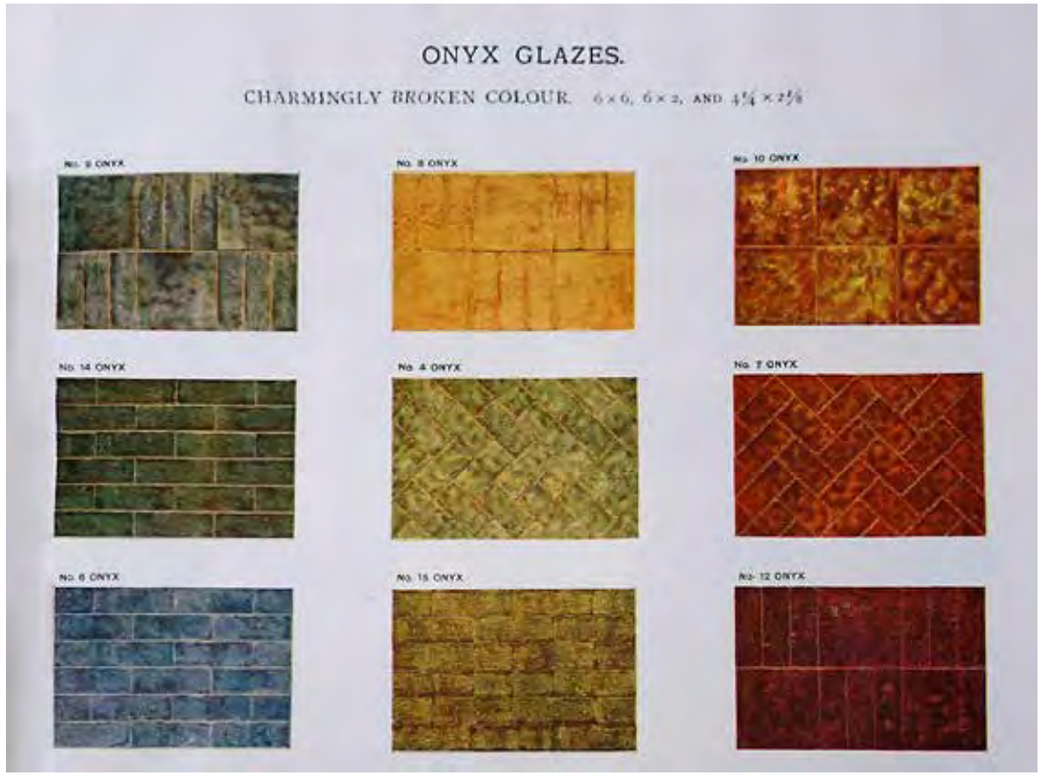
> *The chimney piece… …is one of C. F. A. Voysey's most successful productions. It is severe, with an air of breadth and ease, – a perfect specimen of simplicity. The woodwork is painted white, and the tiles – by Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Company, – are in alternating stripes of plain yellow and white, the latter decorated with a vine ornament in green and black.*

On the fireplace mantel were displayed three, hand-painted Pilkington's tiles featuring individual flower studies although it seems probable that these designs were never put into general production. Elsewhere in the exhibition a tile panel was displayed which could have been "Tulip and Leaf" *(catalogue 27-28)*, as this pair of tiles carries registration numbers which date them to September 1902.[12] These were a more stylised re-working of the design originally manufactured by J C Edwards a decade or so previously.

In 1908, the Austrian art journal *Kunst und Kunsthandwerken* in a long article devoted to Voysey, featured two new tile designs related to Pilkington's.[13] The fi st was a large (probably nine-inch by six-inch) impressed tile featuring hearts and swans *(catalogue 29)* that was certainly manufactured by the firm [14] The second, a hand-painted tile showing a farmer ploughing *(catalogue 30)*, although credited to Pilkington's in the article, is now known to be a tile personally decorated by Voysey on a glazed Pilkington's "blank" joining two other Pilkington's tiles known to have been hand-painted by Voysey.[15] The first of these was also photographed for the *Kunst und Kunsthandwerken* article but in the event was not illustrated and shows a thatched cottage surrounded by trees *(catalogue 31)*, whereas the second depicts a fruit tree *(catalogue 32)*.[16]

Unexecuted tile designs for Pilkingtons

There are a few drawings of tiles speculatively designed with Pilkingtons in mind that exist in various public and private collections, but no examples of corresponding tiles have been recorded to date. These include: two, three by six-inch tiles depicting birds, foliage and a heart, submitted to the firm in



October 1901; a design featuring a pair of mirrored birds arranged around a crown and heart and finally; an elaborate design entitled "The Ornamental Tree", depicting a lemon tree, on a pale ground.[17] Within the Chambers Archive there is also a photograph showing a full set of Voysey designed numerals *(figure 11)*, perhaps intended for use as transfer printed, ceramic house numbers.[18]

8
Pilkington's catalogue c.1900 featuring "Onyx" glazes (courtesy The Chambers Archive, Lancaster Arts, Lancaster University)

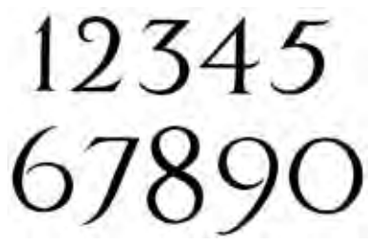
Pilkington's tiles in the style of Voysey

Other Pilkington's tiles have, from time-to-time, been attributed to Voysey purely on stylistic grounds. This is problematic as the in-house artists and particularly the firm's chief designer John Chambers (1869–1945), could produce work that can easily be mistaken for Voysey's. The same is true for F C Howells, whose fully documented tiles for the Victoria Baths Manchester are extremely "Voyseyesque".[19] This is not to say that none of the tiles within this category are by Voysey, simply that caution is required!

9
"Scutari" textile manufactured by G P & J Baker

Of the seven tiles illustrated in Annexe A it is the author's opinion that only the fir t four are potentially by Voysey, whereas the three "Art Nouveau" flower tiles *(annexe 5-7)* are much more likely to have been designed by Chambers or Howells. "Fleur de Lys" *(annexe 1)* a design first registered in September 1903 exhibits similarities with Voysey's "Tree" tile and is a motif much used elsewhere in his wallpaper and textile designs. A pair of tiles used in a frieze at Lister Drive Swimming Baths in Liverpool *(annexe 2-3)* are clearly a variation of the "Fish and Leaf" design which were also used in this lavishly tiled interior. Mirrored pairs of the characteristically dynamic "leaf" design *(annexe 4)*, complete the scheme, being

10
Fireplace and tiles at the 1903 Arts and Crafts Exhibition



11
Voysey designed numerals (courtesy The Chambers Archive, Lancaster Arts, Lancaster University)

featured in the entrance hall of the building although these were first registered on 28 September 1901, a date tiles known to be designed by Howells were also registered!

Medmenham Pottery

Robert Hudson, a wealthy soap manufacturer, bought Medmenham Abbey, Buckinghamshire, the remains of a Thames-side Cistercian foundation, in 1895 and engaged the architect W H Romaine-Walker to restore and enlarge it. Romaine-Walker also built a large home, Danesfield House for his client who was an admirer of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. By 1897 Hudson had established a pottery on nearby Marlow Common with the aim of fostering a local, ceramic industry. The sculptor Conrad Dressler, who had previously been employed at the Della Robbia Pottery in Birkenhead, was appointed its director.

The tiles developed at Medmenham exhibited a unique, granular quality to their glazed surface, differentiating them from all other British manufacturers. This individuality, combined with their handmade look, soon made them popular with architects and they were used in many prestigious decorative schemes. Despite being successful, Dressler became disillusioned with the project and by 1905 had left the pottery going on to develop revolutionary tunnel kilns for the mass manufacture of ceramic tiles.

Voysey had known Dressler, a fellow member of the Art Workers' Guild, since at least 1891 and the following year, Dressler had commissioned Voysey to design a row of four studios in Glebe Place, Chelsea.[20] This project did not come to fruition because shortly afterwards Dressler left London for Birkenhead, to help establish the Della Robbia Pottery with Harold Rathbone. Voysey,

12
Bespoke Medmenham tiles depicting the Conant family arms at The Pastures

who was hyper-sennsitive to all sensory experiences, would have appreciated the tactile and visual contrast that vertical bannds of the narrow, single-coloured Medmenham "fillet" tiles gave when used alongside larger, smooth surfaced tiles such as Pilkington's "Onyx" range. Certainly, by the early 1900s, Voysey had enthusiastically adopted their use in the bespoke, tiled, fire suurrounds he favoured for his houses. Alongside the use of these 'stock' items, Voysey also occasionally commisioned Dressler to excecute unque pieces. At The Pastures, North Luffenham (built 1901–1902), tiled fireplaces in two of the principal rooms *(figure 12)* contained heraldic designs by Voysey featuring the owner's family crest and initials.[21] Sadly, these are now lost although some of the simpler fireplaces, exploiting various combinations of undecorated Medmenham and Pilkington's tiles do remain in situ.

Two further, moulded and decorated tiles designed by Voysey for Medmenham are known to exist. These may well have been produced on a limited commercial basis although rather surprisingly, both were versions of tiles concurrently in production at Pilkington's. The first, another variation on the "galleon" motif *(catalogue 33)* would later serve as the basis for a bookplate *(figure 13)* designed for Robert Donat in 1929. The second is a moulded version of the "Carpenter" tile *(catalogue 34)* from "The Labours" series of transfer-printed tiles manufactured by Pilkington's however, it is unknown if others from this series were also produced.

13
Bookplate for Robert Donat (courtesy RIBA Collections)

Martin van Straaten & Co.

An active member of the Jewish community in London and of joint Dutch-British nationality, Martin van Straaten (1866–1915), enjoyed many business interests. Some knew him as a high-end antiques dealer and art collector, to others he was a dealer in oil whereas, in the architectural community, he was best known as a specialist importer of Dutch, tin-glazed, "Delft" tiles available from his showrooms on Little Britain near St. Paul's Cathedral. Van Straaten was not a manufacturer but acted as an agent for various Dutch tile factories. He died with the sinking of the Lusitania on 16 January 1915 and in his obituary, *Country Life* commented: his

> "*distinction in life was to have revived in England the use of Dutch tiles*."

Voysey frequently specified van Straaten's six by two-inch, single-coloured, undecorated tiles in many of his fire surrounds including those of his own home, The Orchard, Chorleywood built in 1899. When it came to undecorated, white-glazed tiles for use in either service areas, or where light and durability were at a premium, Voysey almost exclusively used van Straaten tiles, an example being Garden Corner, Chelsea Embankment (1906), *The Studio* noting:

> "*The basement has been rearranged and lined throughout with van Straaten's white Dutch tiles, and light captured wherever possible.*" [22]

14
Marsden tile in the "manner" of Voysey

15
Alfred Meakin Ltd, "Lily" tile

To add coloured "accents" to these large fields of white, Voysey supplied van Straaten with a few decorative designs which were hand-painted onto the white, delft tiles. Three designs have been recorded to date: one depicting a bird *(catalogue 35)*; the other two featuring single roses *(catalogue 36-37)* with examples of their use being found at The Homestead, Frinton-on-Sea (1905) and at Wilverley, Holtye Common, Sussex (1906-07).[23]

It is well documented that Voysey was at his most prolific both as an architect and as a designer of pattern during the years straddling 1900 and this position is also reflected in his designs for tiles. However, as the new century progressed, all areas of his design activity (including tiles) declined as his work fell victim to changing tastes and fell out of fashion, so much so that by 1910 he had stopped designing tiles and would not do so again for over 20 years.

Dunsmore Tiles

(Mary) "Polly" Brace and Kathleen Pilsbury met while students at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London and afterwards established Dunsmore Tiles at 2 Hillsleigh Road, Campden Hill W8 c.1925–26. Always a small enterprise, the pair were prolific decorators of "blanks" bought in from other manufacturers such as Minton & Co. and pioneered a decorating technique involving a combination of stencilling and hand-painting. From evidence in Voysey's expense book it would appear he provided the company with designs between 1933–34, although it is not known which party made the initial approach. By the 1950s Pilsbury had left and the studio was being run by Polly Brace and Gwyneth Fisher aided by two paintresses. Ultimately, the venture was unable to compete with mass-produced tiles from large scale manufacturers and closed in 1964.

The most well-known of Voysey's Dunsmore tiles is the "Alice in Wonderland" series *(catalogue 38-49)* featuring twelve adaptations of characters created by Sir John Tenniel for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. All bar one of these figures (the "White Rabbit" in waistcoat being an addition) were taken from Voysey's "Alice in Wonderland" textile design supplied to Morton Sundour Fabrics in 1930.[24] Each character was supplemented with small sprigs of Voysey's characteristic flowers or foliage to help balance the composition and, because they were stencilled, each can be found as a mirror image. The war halted all decorative ceramic production and it seems likely that manufacture of this range reached its height in the early 1950s, a few years after Voysey's death.

Other designs for Dunsmore are held in the RIBA Drawings Collection of which at least one, a 4-inch "Galleon" design *(catalogue 50)*, was put into production.[25] Although currently unrecorded, it is likely that others from this series were also manufactured.

Tiles misattributed to Voysey

As previously mentioned, the Marsden Tile Co. of Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent – a firm with which he had no connection – produced many tiles, including the well-known "Bird and Tree" quartet, that have frequently been attributed, purely on stylistic grounds to Voysey. Their designer is most likely to have been one J G Mowbray Jeffrey who must serve as a reminder that by the early 1900s, Voysey was a major influence on a generation of younger, decorative designers associated with the "New Art" movement. However, as a general rule, the work of the followers shows far less restraint than the hand of the "master" a good example being yet another Marsden "Bird and Tree" tile in the manner of Voysey *(figure 14)*.

Alfred Meakin Ltd., another Stoke manufacturer also produced many plausible "Voyseyesque" tiles. The most commonly encountered is "Lily" *(figure 15)*, a design first registered in December 1904 but clearly an "adaptation" of the lower tile in Voysey's "Fish and Leaf" pair for Pilkington's.

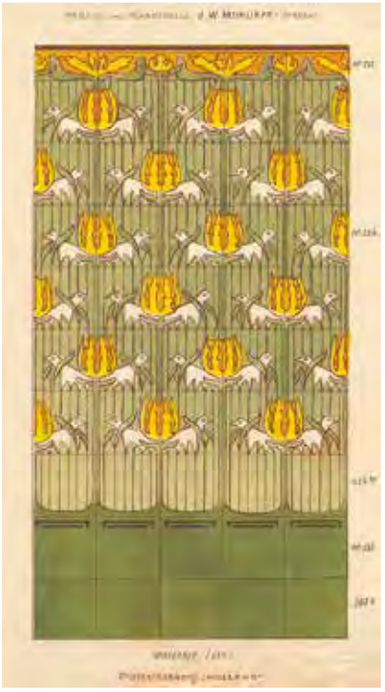
Tiles also exist closely resembling Voysey's "Tulip and Bird" [26] woven furnishing fabric of c.1896 (for Alexander Morton & Co.) and these, quite understandably, have been attributed to Voysey.[27] However, recent research has proven they were manufactured by J W Munlieff of Utrecht to a "design" *(figure 16)* supplied by the well-known Dutch designer, Jac. van den Bosch (1868–1948) and are therefore an example of unabashed plagiarism!

Summary

Although tiles only account for a small proportion of Voysey's output as a decorative designer, the specific challenges of working within this medium allowed him to simplify and refine his design vocabulary to its key elements. The stripped-down aesthetic he employed also allowed him to bring visual symbolism to the fore. In that respect, it places this aspect of his oeuvre much closer to his graphic and bookplate designs than to his wallpaper and textile designs. It should also be noted that, apart from the occasional use of those sparsely decorated tiles supplied by Martin van Straaten, Voysey did not use tiles of his own design within his houses. This is also reflected in his wallpaper and textile designs which rarely appear in those interiors for which he was directly responsible.

Above all else, Voysey favoured simplicity and tranquillity, relying on such subtleties as quality of material, surface texture, tone and hue; rather than surface pattern. This achieved the restful, harmonious qualities he desired. Voysey's greatest achievement, in respect of tiles, was undoubtedly his connoisseurship, selection and inventive use of those undecorated, single-coloured "stock" tiles of varying glaze, proportion and size supplied by a handful of manufacturers. These were creatively arranged in the endlessly inventive, bespoke fire surrounds found in most of his houses. It could even be argued that Voysey the designer "with" tiles deserves to be better known than Voysey the designer "of" tiles.

16
Tiles manufactured by J W Munlieff of Utrecht to a "design" of Jac. van den Bosch



Voysey's tile catalogue starts opposite

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Richard Smith, curator of Lancaster Arts, for his patience and help in accessing the Chambers Archive at Lancaster University and to Pilkington's tile experts Angela and Barry Corbett for guiding me through this extensive collection. Chris Blanchett is a man who knows most everything about British tiles, their designers and manufacturers and has published extensively on the subject. He has patiently answered my questions and our e-mail correspondence has happily revealed some previously unrecorded Voysey tiles "lurking" in his remarkable collection. Finally, Marjolein van Zuylen brought to my attention those tiles in the Voysey manner designed by Jac. van den Bosch.

1
The Journal of Decorative Art, vol. 10, January 1890, pp. 13-15.

2
The Artist, vol. 30, March 1901, pp. 160-162.

3
Examples of these tiles are in the collection of: The Victoria & Albert Museum; The Jackfield Tile Museum; and the Crab Tree Farm collection – see Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 286.

4
Hansen, J. M. Lewis Foreman Day, *Unity in Design and Industry*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2007, pp. 185-201.

5
Illustrated in *From East to West; Textiles from G P & J Baker.* London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, p. 57.

6
The Studio, vol. 9, December 1896, p. 192.

7
A fine example being the Lister Drive Public Baths, Liverpool opened in 1904 and lavishly decorated throughout with Pilkington's tiles. The building and interiors survive but are now run as a tropical fish business.

8
As can be found at The Pastures, North Luffenham.

9
"Vine & Bird" was also supplied to the textile manufacturer Alexander Morton & Co. The design, dated October 1899, is in the collection of the V&A (E.180-1974).

10
From East to West; Textiles from G P & J Baker. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, pp. 77-78.

11
The Art Workers' Quarterly, vol. 2, April 1903, p. 79.

12
The reverse of this tile features the registration number 397656 and the letter 'P' for Pilkington's.

13
Kunst und Kunsthandwerken, monatszeitschrift XI, heft 2, 1908, pp. 93-106.

14
Original design illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 291.

15
The British Government Exhibit at the New Zealand International Exhibition (1906-07). London 1908, p. 314.

16
MAK, Vienna (KI 9479-1-1)

17
Illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, pp. 280, 288, 291.

18
John Chambers Archive, Lancaster University.

19
Illustrated in Corbett, A. & C., *Pilkington's Tiles 1891-2010*. Manchester, 2013, p. 73.

20
"Black Book", RIBA VoC/1/1.

21
The Studio. vol. 31, March 1904, p. 127

22
The Studio. vol. 42, October 1907, p. 24

23
A photograph of two of the tiles and a drawing of the bird are in the RIBA (BrJo/box 2/13 and SKB[458]3)

24
Illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer.* London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 103.

25
Ibid., pp. 288, 292.

26
Ibid., p. 128.

27
Ibid., p. 286.

J C Edwards

1 *Unless otherwise stated all tiles are 6" X 6"*

2

3

4

5a

5b

Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co. Ltd.

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19 *Panel comprising forty 6" tiles*

20

21

22 *3" X 6"*

23

24

25a

25b

26

27

28

29 *6" X 9" (approximately)*

30

31

Medmenham Pottery

32

33

34

Martin van Straaten & Co.

35

36

37

Dunsmore Tiles

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50 *4"X4"*

Annexe: ***Pilkington Tiles in the Style of Voysey***

1

2 *8"X8"*

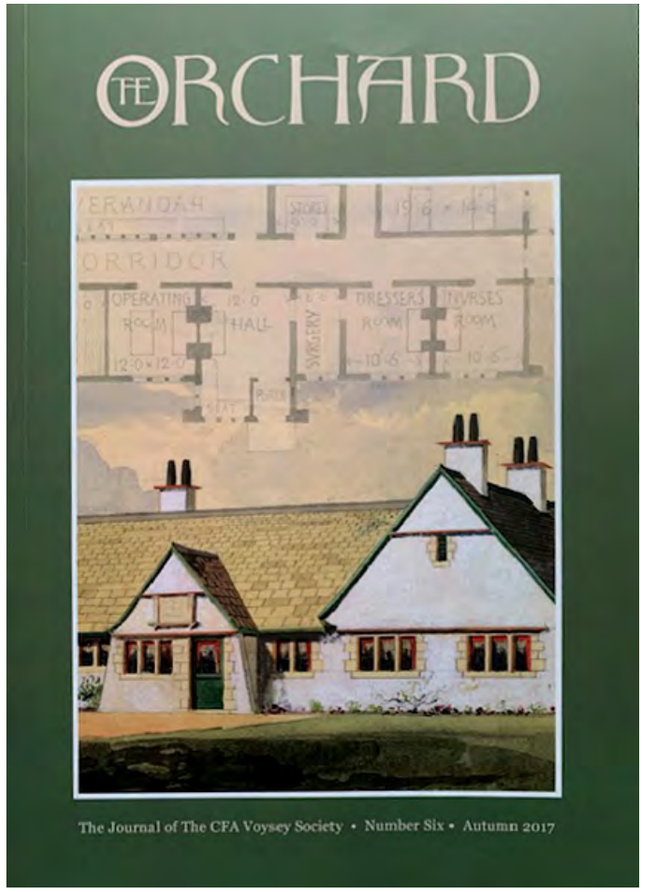
3 *8"X8"*

4

5

6

7



The Mystery of the Dalston Hall Hanging

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.6, pp. 59-63 (2017).

Download

The Mystery of the Dalston Hall Hanging

Tony Peart

figure 1 –
Trevor Pearson's 1968 photograph of the hanging in situ in the great hall

As cold cases go this one was freezing, a single, scrawled letter dated January 1968 with an enclosed blurry snapshot showing two figures underneath a tree by a river. One, a dame wearing a bonnet looks to the left while a big guy carrying a sack and wooden staff approaches unnoticed from behind. As the caffeine kicked in, questions started queuing in my brain. Who were they? What was going on here? Where were they now? One thing was certain, as forty nine summers had been and gone since the click of the shutter this was going to be no walk in the park...

A detective story yes, but not of the murder/mystery variety as the letter and photograph in question relate to that rarest of all Voysey artefacts, a unique, hand-worked textile design.[1] First a little context, the letter dated 15th January 1968 was addressed to Barbara Morris (1918–2009) the V&A textile expert then working for the museum's Circulation Department. It was written by Trevor Pearson, warden of the Cooperative Youth Centre at Dalston Hall, Cumberland and described the current condition and location (above an open inglenook fireplace in the great hall) of a Voysey "embroidered tapestry" which Pearson estimated to be fifteen feet high. The photograph (figure 1) depicted a dark, embroidered, appliqué panel that stylistically appeared to be by Voysey and as I live only five miles from Dalston Hall I was duly dispatched [2] to see what I could discover.

The wording of the letter was ambiguous, had Barbara Morris instigated the correspondence and how had it come to her attention as it was hidden away in a remote, privately run youth centre (serving various local authorities)? In the meantime, a visit to the Carlisle library furnished some basic facts about Dalston Hall. A fortified

figure 2 –
Dalston Hall c.1900 as remodelled by Carlisle architect C J Ferguson for Edmund Wright Stead

1
This is the only Voysey appliqué design I am aware of. Four different Voysey designed embroideries, all executed by Annie, wife of the sculptor and metalworker William Reynolds-Stephens, were exhibited at the 1896, 1899, 1910 and 1916 Arts and Crafts Exhibitions.

2
The letter had come to the attention of David Metcalfe, the Society's research coordinator who kindly passed it to me.

border house with a peel tower (figure 2), it was built c.1500 by John Dalston and remained in the family until the mid 18th century. It was bought in 1897 by Edmund Wright Stead owner of Stead McAlpin, the largest textile printer in Carlisle and significantly, a company Voysey designed for. Could this be a piece commissioned for the Hall by the Stead family with the Co-op "inheriting" it when they purchased the hall for £11,000 in 1944? The Cooperative Society sold Dalston Hall in 1971 and it was converted into a luxury hotel which is how it still functions today. A phone call to the present manager confirmed the hanging was not at the hall nor did anyone have any knowledge of it. We were getting a little closer to Voysey but not to the piece itself.

A search of the online V&A collections finally confirmed Voysey as the designer. Here were two watercolour designs [3] almost identical to the hanging, one against a white background (figure 3) the other against dark blue. Described as: "C.F.A. Voysey - embroidered appliqué panel showing two peasant figures beneath a tree 1903" both are signed on the reverse and dated February 1903. The accession number indicated

figure 3 –
The original, watercolour design for the embroidered appliqué panel © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

3
E.197-1974 and E.198-1974. The iconography could well personally relate to the Morton family, symbolically representing James (carrying a bolt of cloth on his back) returning home to Beatrice from one of his many, lengthy selling trips both at home and abroad.

that they came to the museum in 1974 as part of a large donation of designs (including many others by Voysey) from Morton Sundour Ltd. The firm of Alexander Morton & Co (which eventually became Morton Sundour) was, like Stead McAlpin, also based in Carlisle and was the major manufacturer of Voysey's woven textile designs. A return visit to Carlisle library furnished the information that Dalston Hall had indeed been bought in 1936 by Sir James Morton (1867–1943) and his wife Lady Beatrice who, on his death in 1944, sold it to the Cooperative Society. It was James Morton who understood the commercial importance of embracing contemporary design trends and actively sought to commission work from leading designers such as Voysey. The commercial success of the designs that Voysey created for Morton's was such that by 1897 they had entered into a fi e-year contract, renewed thereafter on a yearly basis, where for the sum of £120 per annum Voysey would provide a minimum of ten original designs and his exclusive services in the field of all woven textiles other than carpets. Between 1900 and 1902 over forty new Voysey designs were introduced into the firm's tapestry ranges making him the most important freelance designer working for the company at that time. It seems highly likely the appliqué design was a private commission to decorate the Morton's recently acquired Carlisle residence Homeacres, a large, early Victorian property set in its own grounds.[4] Following the fashion of the time for the lady of the house to be actively involved in the production of embroidered decorations and furnishings, it seems highly likely the hanging was worked by James Morton's wife Beatrice and probably arrived at Dalston Hall in 1936 when the family moved there from Homeacres.

Frustratingly, a search of photographs held at the Carlisle local studies centre taken of the interior of the hall (during the time it operated as a youth centre) revealed no trace of its presence although interestingly, an image of the great hall taken only three years before the letter and photograph in question were sent, clearly show it had not yet been

figure 4 –
The great hall photographed c.1965. The appliqué would later hang high on the wall above the inglenook fireplace. The central vase on the mantel shelf is the same one that appears in Figure 1

4
Coincidentally, Homeacres now houses the senior management team of The University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts – my place of employment.

moved to its final position over the inglenook fire in the great hall (figure 4).
Another internet search revealed that the Cooperative Society holds an extensive national archive at Holyoake House, Manchester. Encouragingly, this includes material relating to various properties (including Dalston Hall) owned and run by Co-operative Youth Centres Ltd. Items that caught my attention included annual reports and a complete inventory of the contents of the hall recorded on the eve of its sale in 1971. An appointment was duly booked but sadly no reference to the hanging could be found. It is not mentioned in any of the annual reports, however, the document listing the hall's contents (down to the number and location of toilet rolls) made one thing certain, by 1971 the hanging was no longer at the hall.

Thinking the appliqué panel might have been on long-term loan to the Co-op from the Morton family I asked the Society's research coordinator if he could contact the Morton's descendents, now living in London, to see if it remained in the family. We waited patiently for an answer.

In the meantime, the visit to the Co-op archive had revealed that the writer of the original letter Trevor Pearson had left the Co-op's employ to become the bursar of St John's College, Durham. Yet again, the intervening years meant that the college no longer has information relating to Mr Pearson or his immediate family, another dead end.

A final trawl of the Co-op archives revealed that committee minutes for the Youth Centres and a selection of photographs were also held in Manchester and so, on my next visit to the City, I booked an appointment. Disappointingly the photographs were mostly taken outside the hall and those few of the interior contained no clues – not a promising start. However, a long, detailed scrutiny of the committee minutes paid off with the following two, brief and tantalizing revelations:

"Management committee meeting, 2nd February 1967 Manchester.
Dalston Hall Centre.
Resolved: (viii) That enquiries be made regarding the disposal of a piece of embroidery acquired when the Hall was purchased and which, according to the previous owner, is likely to be of exceptional value as a work of art."

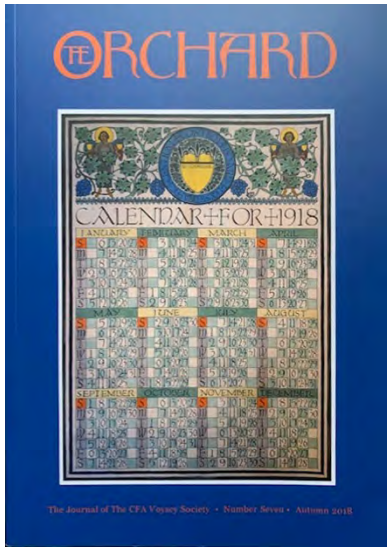
closely followed by:

"Management committee meeting, 18 March 1967 in Peterborough.
Matters arising: (iii) Dalston Hall Centre – Disposal of Tapestry. It was reported that the Warden was in touch with the Victoria & Albert Museum and also that the former owner of the tapestry was not well disposed to any suggestion of sale. Resolved: That we take the necessary steps to sell the tapestry."

Finally, much of the back-story was revealed. The Co-op had been made aware of the significance of the hanging (and its potential value) by a member of the Morton family. This is most likely to have been Jocelyn Morton (second son of James and Beatrice) the former chairman of Morton Sundour Ltd. who, at the time, was still living in Carlisle and actively engaged in researching and writing his epic family history *Three Generations in a Family Textile Firm*.[5] The approach to the V&A could well have been with a view to them being a potential purchaser although there is no record of it entering their collection. Exasperatingly the later Co-op committee reports fail to mention its subsequent fate – perhaps Jocelyn Morton had bought it back due to its strong sentimental value? Sadly and rather predictably, when we did hear from the current generation of the Morton family they had no knowledge of it. All we can conclusively say is that in 1968 a Voysey designed appliqué hanging briefly emerged from obscurity only to rapidly return there. On a positive note we now know it was considered to be of value, fully attributed to its designer and therefore most likely to have been sold not simply destroyed as had been the initial fear.

The search continues...

5
Morton, J. Three Generations in a Family Textile Firm, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.



Was there a fourth painted clock?

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)

Vol.7, pp. 31-38 (2018).

Download

Was there a fourth painted clock?

Tony Peart

Voysey scholars have long been aware of a colour reproduction of a watercolour painting *(figure 1)* titled "reception room in Miss Conant's house" (depicting an interior scene at The Pastures, North Luffenham) published by the German architectural magazine *Moderne Bauformen*. The room depicted is furnished with various Voysey-designed pieces of furniture and, significantly, features one of his iconic painted clocks, prominently displayed on the mantel shelf above the fireplace. This has led to much speculation and the tantalizing possibility that at least four painted clocks were produced. As hand-painted Voysey clocks are incredibly rare, with only three known, a fourth to add to their number is an exciting prospect.[1] The discovery of a group of photographs of The Pastures, taken on two different occasions, within the manuscripts collection of the late John Brandon-Jones, together with other circumstantial evidence, provides the opportunity to finally answer the long-standing question: was there a fourth painted clock? [2]

1
"Empfangszimmer Aus Miss Conant's House" by Henry Ganz, from Moderne Bauformen, *September 1905*

The client was Miss Gertrude Catherine Conant (1846-1930), then living with her 80-year-old father, Edward Nathaniel Conant of Lyndon Hall, Oakham, Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant. The Pastures was commissioned upon the death of the client's father, the family seat transferring to a male relative. Voysey commenced work on the project in late November 1901 and the house appears to have been finished by early 1904. In March the same year a lengthy description of The Pastures formed part of a well-illustrated article on Voysey's recent architectural work in *The Studio*, but no photographs of this specific project were included.[3] The interior of the house was described as follows:

In the interior all the fireplace tiles are of special design, different in every room; the tiles themselves executed by Mr. C. Dressler at Marlow. The parlour walls are lined to the height of six feet with pink silk, the woodwork being enamelled in white. The floors are carpeted with self-coloured Austrian pile carpets.

The reader would be forgiven for naturally assuming the house was fully furnished at this time, but was it? The collection of photographs in the Brandon-Jones archive contain various external views of the house *(figure 2)* taken shortly after completion, some of which were reproduced in *Moderne Bauformen* alongside the watercolour interior depicting the clock. However, it should be noted that this article was not published in 1911, as has been previously and erroneously stated, but was actually featured in the September 1905 issue.[4] These photographs of the house and surrounding landscape are not dated but do offer clues as to when they were taken. Close scrutiny reveals a handful of trees to be in early leaf whereas the majority are bare. This, together with the absence of fallen leaves, the fact that the garden has yet to be planted and daffodils appear to be flow ring, would indicate they were taken in early to mid-spring, shortly after the house was completed – that is, approximately April 1904, a few weeks too late for them to be included in *The Studio* article.

2
The Pastures, North Luffenham photographed c. April 1904 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

The 1905 *Moderne Bauformen* piece is extensively illustrated, including photographs of the exterior of Voysey's home, The Orchard, together with the well-known interior view of the hall featuring his own painted clock, the ground plan and three of the exterior photographs of The Pastures as previously mentioned, elevations and plans for a proposed library in Limerick, elevations and plans of a proposed tower house in Bognor Regis for William and Haydee Ward Higgs, and six recent textile designs. As was customary for *Modern Bauformen*, many lavish colour plates were included, with two being devoted to Voysey: the interior view of The Pastures, together with an exterior perspective of the Sanderson & Sons factory in Chiswick.[5] The article was written by Henry F.W. Ganz, who was also the artist responsible for the watercolour interior of The Pastures.

Henry Francis William Ganz (1863-1947) was born in London to a German father, Wilhelm, a professor of music and trained as an artist under Alphonse Legros at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. He subsequently worked as a painter, engraver and occasional writer in London where, between the late 1880s and early 1920s, he exhibited at the Royal Academy, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, the London Salon, and the New English Art Club. Ganz may have been a member of the Reverend Charles Voysey's Theistic Church, and through this had come to know his son.[6] The pair were certainly on good terms around this time, for, as well as Ganz writing and illustrating the article on Voysey for *Modern Bauformen*, Voysey also designed two typographic book covers for Ganz (in 1905 and 1908) and both participated in a joint exhibition at The Rowley Gallery in January 1908.[7]

Among the images of The Pastures in the Brandon-Jones archive is one that is of significant interest *(figure 3)*, a photograph of the parlour seen from an almost identical viewpoint as Ganz's watercolour but devoid of any furniture or decoration, which, as with the exterior views, must have been taken shortly after the building's completion. Ganz is unlikely to have ever visited The Pastures, in fact much of his descriptive text (including the passage on The Pastures) is simply a translation into German of *The Studio* article written by Aymer Vallance the previous year. To create this watercolour, he would probably have been supplied with either drawings or, as was more common by this time, reference photographs. Is this the reference photograph that Ganz used to create his watercolour and, if so, what are its implications?

3 *The Parlour photographed c. April 1904 (courtesy RIBA Collections)*

4 *Collage of alternating sections of Ganz's painting and the photograph of the parlour*

The fact that this is the reference photograph seems to be borne out by simply overlaying the two images in Photoshop *(figure 4)* and finding that they correspond in all major respects. This then begs one further question: if the room was empty, where did the furnishings depicted by Ganz come from? To answer this one does not have to look very far. As previously stated, the well-known photograph of the hall of Voysey's home, The Orchard *(figure 5)*, was also included in the same article and it is instructive to carefully study the two side-by-side and note the many strong similarities. The most obvious of these, reading from left to right in both images, are chair, table and clock. The chair in the painting features turned caps to its front legs and, although at a different angle, is similarly closely cropped at the extreme left of the image.

The chair Ganz depicts appears to be of his own devising, featuring the visible elements of the hall chair shown in the photograph with the addition of "Voyseyesque" lath back of his own invention, and it will come as no surprise that no chair of this design is known to exist. To its right is a Voysey-designed circular centre table, virtually identical to that shown at The Orchard and in a similar relative position.

Finally, we have the painted clock placed, as it was at The Orchard, high on the mantel shelf above the fire. If we continue to focus on the hearth itself, a set of fi e irons, fire screen and kettle on a stand suspiciously

5
The entrance hall at The Orchard c. 1900 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

similar to a photograph *(figure 6)* of identical items exhibited at the 1903 Arts and Crafts exhibition and published in *The Studio* the same year. [8]

The inevitable conclusion must be that considerable "artistic licence" was employed by Henry Ganz, in producing this painting. No doubt at the request of the architect, he took a photograph of an empty room and "virtually" populated it with typical examples of his furniture, supplemented with a few choice ornaments, creating the simple, understated interior desired by Voysey:

You will arrange my rooms with their furniture so that each piece has the place most suited for its use, with light helping to make it more useful, so that we feel that no single bit of furniture is quarrelling with or harassing another, and everything shall have its useful purpose. Thus proportion and grace and the intention to serve a useful purpose will provide the very best elements of beauty, and ornaments will be little required.[9]

6
Metalwork, the majority manufactured by Thomas Elsley & Co 1903 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

It would be unsatisfactory to leave the argument there as there is still the possibility that, even though Ganz's painting may well be a fantasy created from various photographic sources (including an empty parlour), that still does not mean that when Miss Conant eventually furnished the house, it did not look like the interior depicted in the painting. To counter this argument, one can offer the fact that nodrawings exist for any moveable furniture commissioned by the client nor is any mention made of such items in any of Voysey's papers or record books. However, as pictures speak louder than words, we shall consider one further piece of photographic evidence. As mentioned in the opening paragraph, a second set of photographs (including many of the furnished interiors) are also in the Brandon-Jones archive. These must date to October 1909, evidenced by a reference in Voysey's expense book, the more established appearance of the garden, and the fact that the surrounding trees are beginning to shed their leaves.[10] This set contains an image of the now fully furnished parlour *(figure 7)*, instantly recognised by the unique, tiled fireplace, although it is now surrounded by a plethora of reproduction furniture, chintz-covered upholstery and decorative "knick-knacks" covering most available surfaces. It is apparent that in the case of furnishings, Miss Conant had the bourgeois, conservative taste so stereotypical of the Edwardian landed gentry and so despised by her architect! Voysey was fir ly of the opinion that "lavish ornament is like a drug, the dose required increasing as it loses its effect", and it is quite obvious that his client was an "addict"! [11]

7
The Parlour photographed c. October 1909 (courtesy RIBA Collections)

On a more positive note, the clarity of these photographs also reveals one final, important piece of evidence: judging by the objects displayed upon it, the mantel shelf on which the clock supposedly stood was, in reality, far too narrow to ever house it.[12]

With great regret, it is the author's considered opinion that Miss Conant's painted clock never existed.

1
The three known clocks are: (1) a version of c.1896 with an enamelled dial (Private Collection); (2) Voysey's own clock, c.1898 (V&A); (3) a version owned by the Countess Lovelace, c.1909 (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts). For more information see: Hamerton, I. "Voysey's Architectural Clocks", in *The Orchard,* vol.3 (2014), pp.25-36.

2
BrJo/box 06/01A.

3
The Studio, vol.31, issue 132 (1904), pp.127-133.

4
Modern Bauformen: Monatshefte für Architektur, Jahrg IV, Heft 9 (September 1905), pp.95-106.

5
Illustrated in: Hitchmough, W. *C F A Voysey*. (Phaidon, 1995), pp.178-80.

6
See the expenses book, RIBA VoC/2/1: May 18th 1908, "Ganz re. TTC" (The Theistic Church).

7
The Studio, vol.43, issue 180 (1908), p.141.

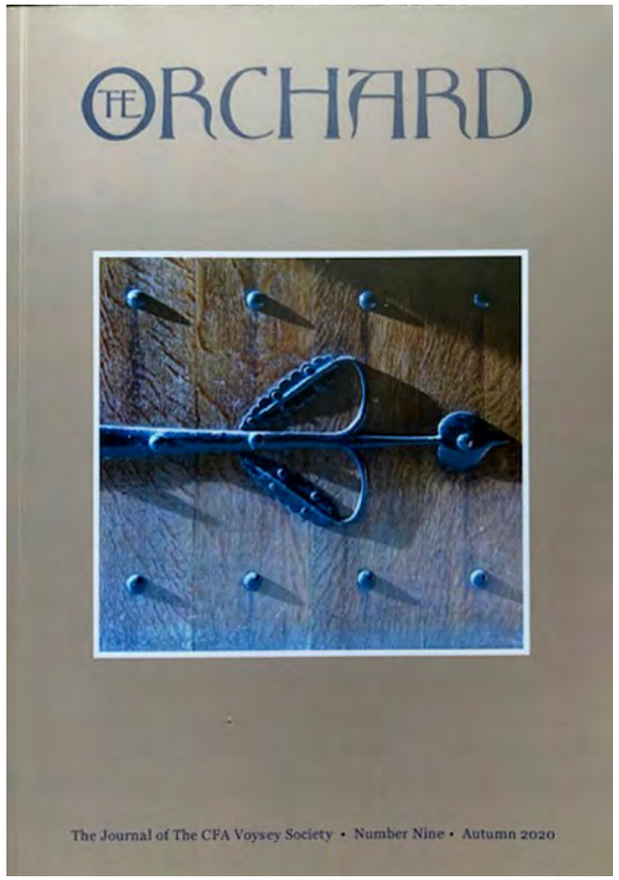
8
The Studio, vol.38, issue 119 (1903), p.28.

9
Voysey, CFA "Ideas in Things", in T. Raffles Davidson (ed.), *The Arts Connected with Building* (Batsford, 1909), p.130.

10
See the expenses book, RIBA VoC/2/1: Oct 21st, 1909, "Extra copies of photos of The Pasture House"

11
Voysey, CFA "Ideas in Things", in T. Raffles Davidson (ed.), *The Arts Connected with Building* (Batsford, 1909), p.114.

12
Although similar to that at The Pastures, the mantel shelf at The Orchard was in fact deeper as it also incorporated the picture rail, throwing it further into the room. However, even this didn't create sufficient width to accommodate the clock, as close inspection of the photograph of the hall at The Orchard reveals a small area of moulding added to the section on which the clock stood, providing the necessary additional width. This modification was not made at The Pastures.



Voysey's Work at Westminster School

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)

Vol.9, pp. 79-83 (2020).

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Voysey's Work at Westminster School

Tony Peart

The Black Book, Voysey's personal record of his architectural projects, contains the following three entries for Westminster School: 1894 – 'Bookcases for Ashburnham House'; 1895 – 'Lamp for library'; 1899 – 'New bookcases etc. and decorations at Ashburnham House'. Curious to discover more and conscious that this work has never been documented I speculatively sent an e-mail to the school enquiring if any of these items remained in situ? I received a very quick and helpful response from Elizabeth Wells, the school Archivist and Records Manager. Attached to her e-mail were two period photographs of the interior of Ashburnham House with Elizabeth wondering if any of the various bookcases and light fittings pictured could possibly be by Voysey? However, before we consider these photographs a short history of Ashburnham House will provide a little context for Voysey's work there.

Ashburnham House (*figure 1)* is a mostly seventeenth-century, Grade I listed building sitting in the shadow of Westminster Abbey on Little Dean's Yard. It served as the London home of the Earls of Ashburnham and for many years was believed to be the work of Inigo Jones (1573-1652) although it is now widely attributed to the architect John Webb (1611-1672).[1] In 1739 it was sold to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and became the home of the sub-dean. After much legal wrangling it came into the possession of Westminster School in 1881 serving as the school's second day-house.

1
View of the exterior of Ashburnham House, 1880, by the photographer Henry Dixon (courtesy The British Library)

Shortly after acquiring this new building it was decided to convert some of the first floor into a library and museum with the masters contributing to an establishment fund. This proved to be insufficien and the matter was further complicated by the retirement of the school's long-serving headmaster Charles Broderick Scott in 1883. Scott requested that any testimonial given in recognition of his service be used for the school rather than be given as a personal gift. A lively debate ensued with many 'Old Westminsters' even questioning the need for a school library and suggesting the money be spent on more useful things such as swimming baths! However, by early 1884 a room on the first floor had been fitted out with bookcases and the Scott Library was established.[2] Four years later in 1888, the Reverend George Herbert Nall (1861-1940) was appointed Librarian, a position he would hold until 1922. Under his pro-active stewardship a catalogue was compiled, and new books were regularly added to the library's holdings. Nall's policy of active acquisition soon necessitated the need for more shelf space and this led to the commissioning of Voysey to design a new run of bookcases in 1894.

Of the two photos Elizabeth provided, one was quickly discounted as containing nothing designed by Voysey; a photograph of the drawing room (then used as the school reading room) taken c.1900. Fortuitously, the second image of what is called the 'Greene Room' *(figure 2)* manages to capture in some detail what are recognisably two of the three Voysey designs. This is extremely fortunate as Ashburnham House has been subject to gradual change over the years and none of this work now survives – the photograph is all that remains. It depicts a clutter of furniture: tables; miss-matched chairs; display cases and globes all sitting awkwardly in an elaborately decorated mid-seventeenth century interior. Prominently featured centre left is the Voysey designed lamp and to the right, within the alcove, are the Voysey bookcases. The photograph must have been taken around 1900 and shows the room in use as both library and school museum and looking very differ nt to a photograph taken c.1882 when it was used as a dining room. This earlier image *(figure 3)* shows the space that Voysey would have surveyed prior to commencing his work on designing the bookcases in 1894. Close inspection of the photograph reveals that the woodwork is executed in stained or fumed oak and in their austerity and simplicity the bookcases appear to make no concession to the richly decorated environment into which they are inserted. In this respect they are reminiscent of Voysey's commissioned extensions to existing houses which tend to belligerently ignore the buildings

2
The Greene Room photographed c.1900

3
The Greene Room photographed c.1882 when still in use as a dining room (RA Collections)

to which they are attached. However, on closer inspection it seems that the very top section of the bookcases loosely mirrors the proportions and height of the adjacent entablature, which is carried on a pair of Corinthian columns, prominently jutting out into the room on either side of the alcove. The bookcases are surmounted with Voysey's characteristic hand lettered alphabet (placed above each press) with the central 'F' press decorated either side with a small, sculpted figure of a scholar standing atop a tall, slender, tapering pilaster *(figures 4 & 5)*. The presence of these figures confirms that these are the first set of bookcases that Voysey designed as they are signed by their sculptor William Reynolds-Stevens (1862-1943) and dated 1894. [3] This, then, would appear to be a collaborative project between Voysey and Reynolds-Stevens but how the commission came about is unclear. All that is certain is that Reynolds-Stevens and Voysey were well-known to one another through their membership of the Art Workers' Guild and the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society. As for funding, there is a strong possibility that the scheme was either personally financed by the school librarian, the Rev. G H Nall – he was appointed housemaster

4 above
Detail of figure 2, showing Voysey's fitted bookcases

5 left
A surviving example of the William Reynolds-Stevens figure at the school

Images 2, 4, 5 & 6 are reproduced by kind permission of the Governing Body, Westminster School

of Ashburnham House in the year of the commission – or was funded from library subscriptions that Nall controlled. Certainly, no mention is made of the work in the minutes of the Governing Body or in the school magazine and Nall's is the only name recorded in Voysey's expenses book in respect of his work at Westminster School.

As previously mentioned, the second Voysey designed piece recorded in the photograph is the extraordinary hanging lamp which, like the bookcases also makes no concessions to its surroundings. This probably unique piece (for which no design drawing survives) was clearly designed to house an oil lamp. The dome immediately above the lamp would reflect a gentle, diffu ed light down onto the scholars working below with the large, spherical counterweight above making it height adjustable. Ashburnham house gained electricity in 1898 and it seems that wherever possible the existing oil lighting was swiftly and unsympathetically converted to electricity. The results of this have not been kind to 'the look' of Voysey's lamp and a re-creation has been provided *(figure 6)* to show how it would have originally appeared. The profiled birds and tulip motif surmounting the edge of the upper shade are typically 'Voysey' with variations used later to decorate electric hanging lights manufactured by Thomas Elsley. However, this is a relatively early foray into metalwork design for Voysey and many of the decorative details – especially the use of gracefully curving profiles – show the strong influence of the metalwork designed by Arthur Stansfeld Dixon for The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft. Voysey would have seen examples of their work reproduced in contemporary magazines and at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society exhibitions. It is likely the manufacture of the lamp was undertaken by Voysey's preferred metalworker at this date, William Bainbridge Reynolds (1855-1935).

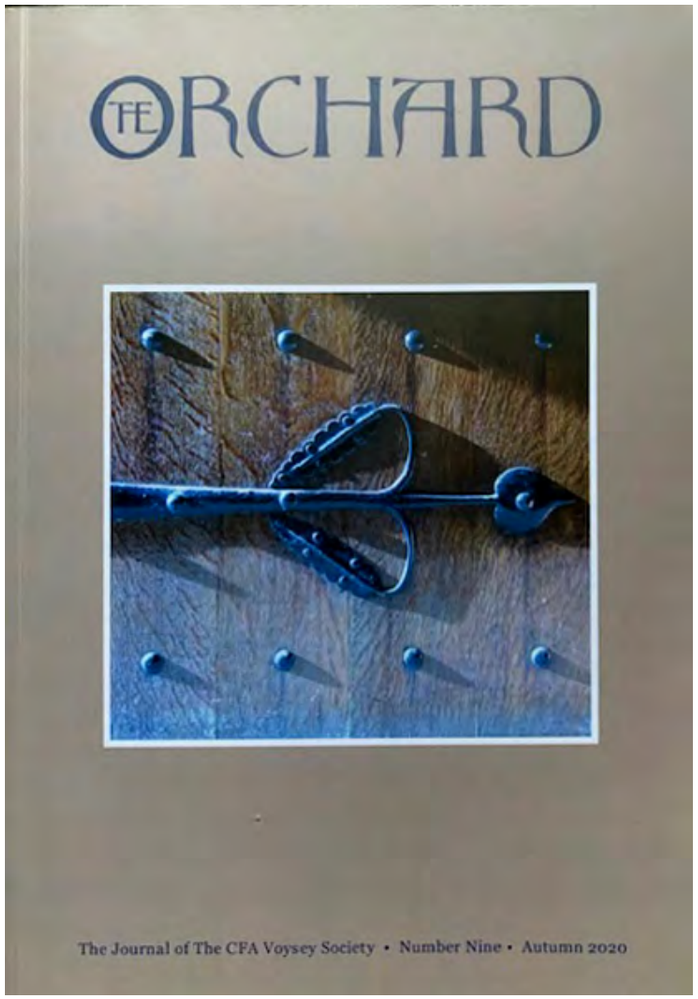
Regrettably, the final commission of 1899: 'New bookcases etc. and decorations at Ashburnham House' must remain a mystery. This is the only commission that is recorded in Voysey's '*White Book*', his book of expenses covering the years 1897-1936. Here brief entries made during July 1899 reveal that the woodwork must have been undertaken by Frederick Müntzer, whose Mayfair and Chelsea based decorating firm executed much interior architectural woodwork for Voysey. As for the 'decorations' supplied to the school, frustratingly we have no clues as to either the form they took or how extensive they were.

6
Photoshop reconstruction of the hanging lamp as it would originally have appeared when first installed in 1895

1
Although some architectural historians believe William Samwell (1626-1676) was the architect.

2
See: Shaw, B R, *The Scott Library*. http://archiveblog.westminster.org.uk/?p=204

3
Information provided by Elizabeth Wells. One of these signed and dated figures remains in the collection of the school.



Voysey's Metalwork: A Postscript

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.9, pp. 73-78 (2020).

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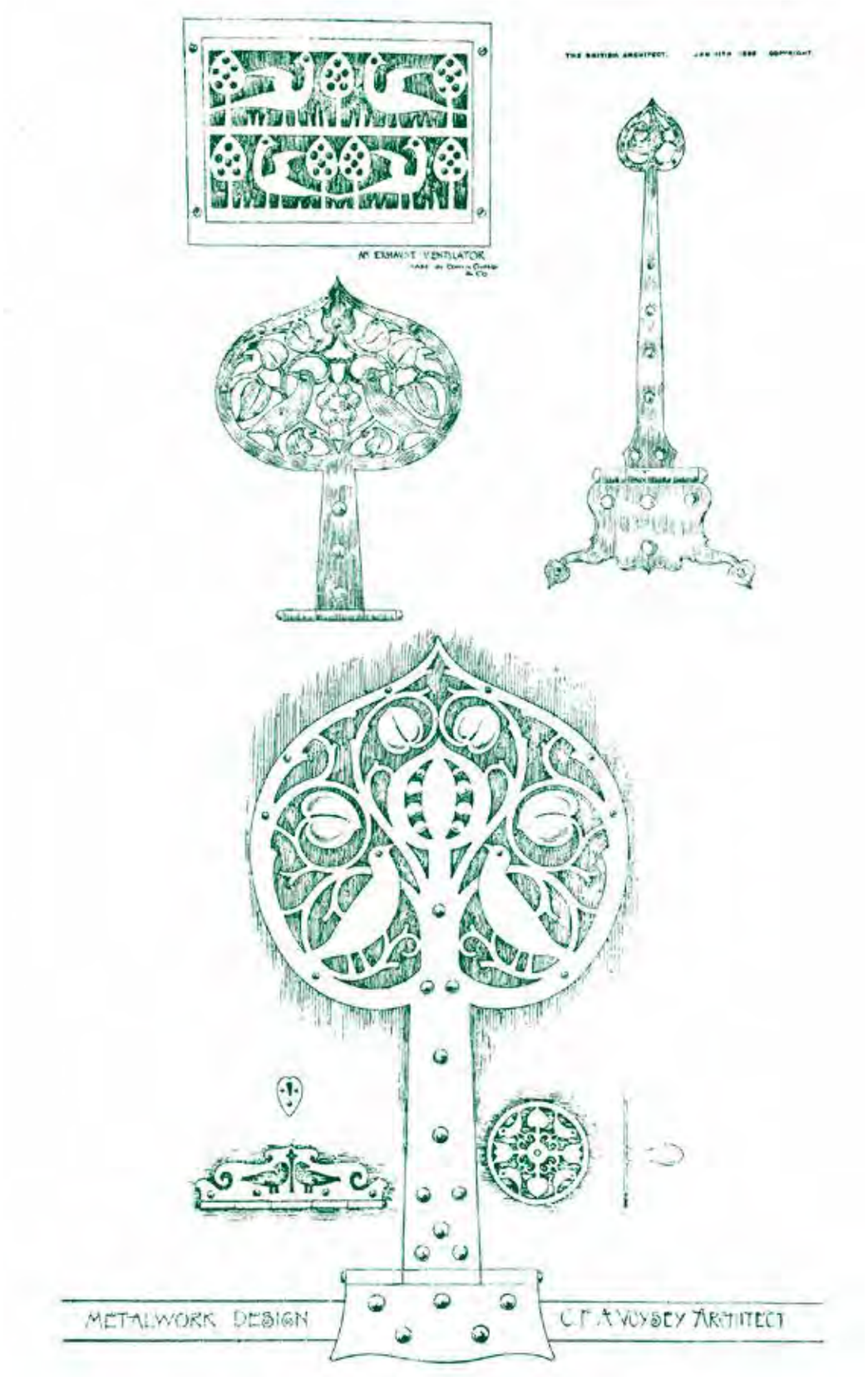
Postscript
by Tony Peart

In the thirty-two years that have passed since Ruth Allford presented her dissertation much new material has come to light regarding Voysey's activities as a designer of metalwork. This postscript is intended to supplement and clarify some of the content of Ruth's original paper.

Voysey's earliest recorded metalwork designs are captured in the 'Black Book'[27] where an entry for 1884 records: '*Designs for and working drawings for crematory urns*' with the client named as a J C Hanham. This is a remarkably early date as cremation had only just been made legal in February of that year. Further crematory urns are recorded in 1889 (for a Mrs Herriot) while a third design, for a Miss Pidgeon was executed and exhibited the same year at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition.[28]

Voysey is well-known for his cast-iron fireplaces and cabinet fittings and these too arrive relatively early in his career. Designs for chimney pieces, grates and associated press advertisements were provided to Lewis & Co. in 1888 and by 1890 a new form of 'Save All' fireplace was being manufactured by the Birmingham firm of Parkes Brothers.[29] In respect of cabinet fittings, an unexecuted design for a window treatment with fitted cupboards, executed in August 1890 for The Quarto Imperial Club is the earliest design to show Voysey's use of strap hinges.[30] This design features elaborately profiled 'Gothic' strap hinges clearly showing the influence of Voysey's hero A W N Pugin. However, within a few years, these would evolve into the simplified, streamlined designs featuring silhouetted birds with which he is synonymous. With the benefit of hindsight, Voysey can also be credited with inspiring a younger generation of architects and designers such as Baillie Scott and Mackintosh (along with many commercial furniture manufacturers) to take up the use of decorative strap hinges a practice which had fallen out of fashion many years earlier with the demise of the Gothic Revival.

The line illustration *(figure 21)* featured in the January 1895 edition of *The British Architect* features a compilation of Voysey's metalwork design from the proceeding few years. The largest, most elaborate hinge was designed for a 'Lady's Work Cabinet' exhibited at the 1893 Arts & Crafts Exhibition and was executed by William Bainbridge Reynolds (1855-1935).[31] Reynolds initially trained as an architect under John Dando Sedding and later George Edmund Street before turning to 'Art Metalwork' design and manufacture in the early 1890s. Voysey and Reynolds were lifelong friends, probably first meeting when they were both articled pupils in the 1870s and by 1892 Reynolds had joined Voysey as a member of the Quarto Imperial Club. Although the name of Thomas Elsley Ltd. is now synonymous with the manufacture of Voysey's metalwork theirs was a relatively short commercial arrangement of approximately ten years (c.1896-1906). William Bainbridge Reynolds had a much longer working relationship with Voysey. He was his favoured manufacturer in



21 *opposite*
Compilation drawing of Voysey's metalwork designs

the years prior to the arrangement with Elsley and, following its dissolution, took up the manufacture (to order) of the Voysey cabinet furniture previously made and retailed by Elsley. Bainbridge Reynolds, an excellent craftsman and designer in his own right, ran a small workshop and foundry in Camberwell (later Clapham) where he also undertook work to commission for most of the leading architects of the day. However, this was a modest facility that only had the capacity to manufacture in relatively small quantities. Early in his career this was not an issue for Voysey as he was ordering bespoke pieces for his architectural and furniture projects as and when they were required. As his reputation as a designer grew, it is understandable that he would turn to a manufacturer (Elsley) who could potentially monetise his metalwork designs by manufacturing them on a commercial basis and even more importantly, promote and retail them to the public.

The Voysey designed metalwork manufactured by Thomas Elsley Ltd. was widely illustrated in contemporary publications both at home and abroad with *The Studio* featuring photographs of three strap hinges and a cabinet handle exhibited at the 1899 Arts & Crafts Exhibition.[32] A lavishly illustrated catalogue: *Designs by C F A Voysey Architect* was also issued c.1905-06, featuring over seventy individual designs for architectural hardware and this, combined with the widespread press coverage, has created the impression that this was a commercially successful venture.[33] In reality, this was almost certainly not the case, with Voysey's metalwork designs appealing only to a niche and wealthy clientele. For example, a single strap hinge retailed for the equivalent of approximately £80 at today's prices taking them beyond the budget of most amateur makers. Another issue was the designs themselves which were so characteristically and recognisably 'Voysey' in style. This precluded their use by any other architect who wished to maintain any sense of their individuality when specifying fixtures and fittings for their own architectural projects. Ironically, it is likely that Voysey himself was Elsley's biggest customer as during this period he was at his busiest as an architect with most of his houses featuring a wide array of Elsley manufactured hardware. The issuing of the catalogue was probably a last-ditch attempt by the company to promote a failing range, but it was unsuccessful. A firm the size of Elsley's was entirely profit-motivated and so within a year or two of the catalogue's issue, Thomas Elsley Ltd. ceased commercial production of Voysey's designs. Subsequently the production of many of the cabinet fittings featured in the catalogue passed to William Bainbridge Reynolds but these were now only available as special orders.

For the execution of hollowware (inkwells, jugs, vases etc.), Voysey had to look elsewhere as Thomas Elsley Ltd. was primarily a manufacturer of architectural fittings, not hand-crafted domestic ware. The designs for these pieces first appear around the turn of the twentieth century with some of the earliest being manufactured

BRASS INKSTAND, HAMMERED COPPER INK-STAND, HAMMERED COPPER VASE, DOUBLE BRASS INKSTAND, HAMMERED COPPER VASE : DESIGNED BY C. F. A. VOYSEY, EXECUTED BY R. LL. B. RATHBONE.

22
Voysey's metalwork designs executed by Rathbone

by the metalworker Richard Llewellyn B Rathbone (1864-1939). These include simple, raised vases in copper and the well-known, domed-topped inkwell that could be supplied as a single, double or even triple version. Rathbone was known to Voysey through his good friend, Arthur Simpson the Kendal furniture make who used Rathbone cabinet fittings on much of his furniture. A selection of these simple pieces *(figure 22)* were exhibited in the Applied Art Court at the Educational Exhibition, St. George's Hall, Liverpool in late 1900.[34] The inkwell was also exhibited at the 1903 Arts & Crafts Exhibition alongside a range of hollowware including a five-piece silver tea service *(figure 23)*, a kettle on stand and jug and washbasin *(figure 14)* all made by Alfred Newey a Birmingham based

23
Voysey's metalwork designs executed by Rathbone

24
Voysey's metalwork designs influenced by A S Dixon

metalworker. Although striking and remarkably austere for the time, these pieces are not original and clearly show the strong influence of pieces executed by The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft *(figure 24)* to the designs of Arthur Stansfeld Dixon (1855-1929) which Voysey would have seen and inspected at previous Arts & Crafts exhibitions. In this area of his design practice Voysey was demonstrably a follower and not a leader.

It was not until the 1910 Arts & Crafts Exhibition that Voysey exhibited any new domestic metalwork. The bulk of these pieces were initially designed for his own use, executed in silver by Barnard and Sons *(figures 10, 11 & 12)* and remained in the possession of the family until relatively recently. Subsequently some of these designs were available commercially (on a very limited basis) with Arthur Simpson exhibiting some at his showrooms in Kendal. In a letter to Simpson dated 2 December 1909, Voysey reveals that these will be sold at cost to the retailer (Simpson) as if any percentage was added for himself: *"we should over-weight the price and then no one would buy. I don't want any profit. I only want the things to sell."*[35] This is a remarkable attitude when one considers the very difficul financial situation in which Voysey found himself – a situation that would continue to dog him for the next thirty years. Only ten months later, in another letter to Simpson, Voysey reveals that he cannot speculatively commission a wooden clock case from him because:

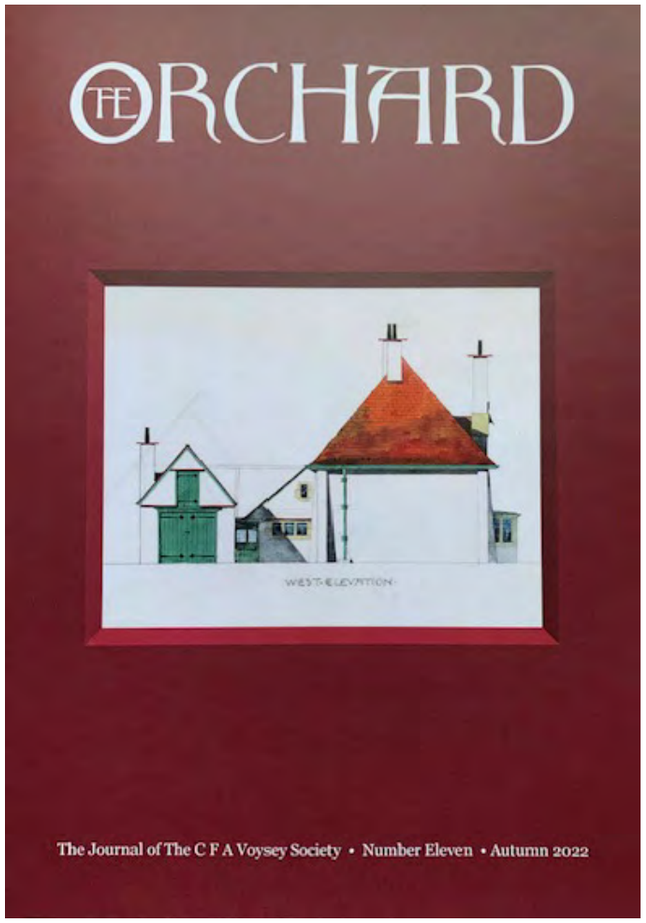
> *"I fear I could not stand the expense. I have only £10 left in the bank and not many pounds in hand and when or where the next will come from Heaven only knows. The outlook is very black & I find it hard to keep ones mind at rest."* [36]

Voysey's career as a designer of metalwork mirrors his career as an architect and designer of furniture, textiles and wallpaper. He was at his most prolific during the years that fell around the turn of the twentieth century, essentially 1893-1910. In his declining years he did design a few further pieces in metal, but these were all unique commissions for private clients. [37]

1
Country Life, 20th July 1978, vol. 164, p153
2
Country Life, 20th July 1978, vol. 164, p152
3
The Royal Institute of British Architects Journal, vol. 1 1894, p418
4
House and Garden, July 1978, vol. 33, p41
5
The Journal of Decorative Arts, April 1895
6
The Journal of Decorative Arts, April 1895, p87
7
Brighton Catalogue C F A Voysey - architect and designer 1857 – 1941, p132
8
The Studio, 1897, vol. 9, p192
9
The Studio, 1899, vol. 18, p45
10
The British Architect, October 1896, vol. 46, p290
11
The English House, Herman Muthesius, p198
12
The British Architect, April 1906, p271
13
Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Nikolas Pevsner, p148
14
Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Nikolas Pevsner, p148
15
The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design, Nikolas Pevsner, p127
16
The Batsford Gallery Catalogue – C F A *Voysey and his works*, October 1931, p7
17
The Studio, 1893, vol. 1, p236
18
The Studio, 1893, vol. 1, p236
19
The Batsford Gallery Catalogue – C F A Voysey and his works, October 1931, p7
20
The Studio, 1903, vol. 28, p35
21
Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Nikolas Pevsner, vol. 2, p145
22
The English House, Herman Methusesius, p186
23
The Studio, 1903, vol. 28, p179
24
Reason as a basis of Art, C F A Voysey, p24
25
The Studio, 1903, vol. 28, p179
26
The Architectural Review, vol. 89, p113

Addendum Notes

27
Voysey's personal record of his architectural projects - RIBA Archive at the Victoria & Albert Museum (reference VoC/1/1).
28
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 274.
29
Black Book
30
The Quarto Imperial Club was an informal group of architects and designers who met regularly to discuss one another's designs. These were executed on quarto sized sheets of paper and made in response to a specific architectural or design challenge set in advance of each gathering. Two volumes of the compiled drawings are held at the RIBA Archive at the Victoria & Albert Museum (reference VOS/133 & VOS/134).
31
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 165.
32
The Studio, vol. 8, October 1899, p. 44.
33
Copy at RIBA Archive (reference VoC/6/14/10).
34
Architectural Review, vol. 9, January 1901, p. 40.
35
Voysey – Simpson Letters, RIBA Archive (reference BrJo/Box 5/5).
36
Ibid.
37
See: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. *C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, pp. 269-272.



The Sculpture of C.F.A. Voysey

The Orchard (The Journal of the C.F.A. Voysey Society)
Vol.11, pp. 6-27 (2022).

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The sculpture of C.F.A. Voysey

Tony Peart

Architecture and sculpture are both concerned with three-dimensional form and, historically, both disciplines have been closely related through the role sculpture has played in architectural decoration. With such a close relationship it is surprising how few architects have concerned themselves with the creation of sculpture, the most well-known being: Antoni Gaudi; Le Corbusier and more recently, Gottfried Böhm and Daniel Libeskind. Throughout his career Voysey, along with many fellow architects, would often design sculptural embellishments for buildings (both executed and unexecuted). However, unlike these contemporaries, Voysey not only designed these elements on paper but on occasion was also prepared to execute sculptural pieces himself, a practice that continued throughout his long career. This article seeks to explore Voysey's attitude towards sculpture, his activities as a sculptor and his friendships with many of the leading sculptors of his day. It commences with his only period of formal education, the eighteen months he spent at Dulwich College between 1872-74.

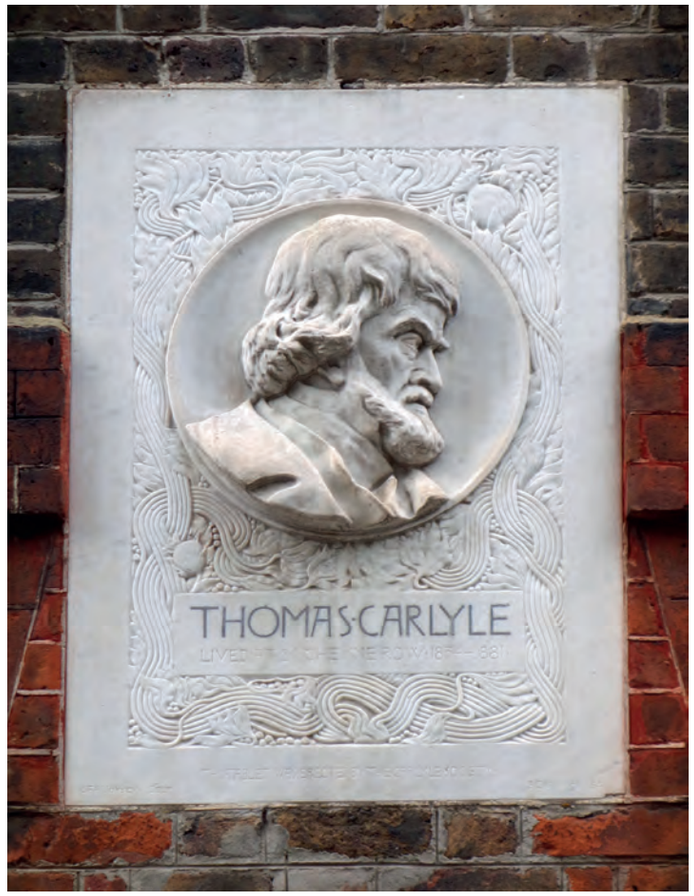
Bronze paperweight designed in 1907 for use in the offices of The Essex & Suffolk Equitable Insurance Company, Broad Street, London

Although it seems certain that the seeds of Voysey's subsequent career as an architect and designer of both pattern and furniture were first sown during the years 1874-79 whilst a pupil of John Pollard Seddon, his skills as a draughtsman and modeller of sculpture may be traced back a little earlier to the unhappy time he spent at Dulwich College. The view of his art master that he was: *"no good at all, and quite unfit for an Artist's Career"* is well known whereas the man whose opinion it was, is not.[1]

The art master in question was John Charles Lewis Sparkes (1833-1907) and it would be easy, from his comment regarding Voysey, to assume he was a narrow-minded and conservative tutor. This would be a mistake as Sparkes was one of the most respected and progressive art educators of his generation. Born at Brixton, he trained at The National Art Training School, before becoming drawing master at Lambeth School of Art in 1856 and by the following year its headmaster. During the 1860s Sparkes formed a close relationship between the School of Art and Henry Doulton's nearby pottery, encouraging Doulton to undertake the manufacture of decorative wares. Susan Beattie in The New Sculpture writes:

> *"Sparkes's early interest in pottery developed into a deep concern for the art of clay modelling in general. He came to believe that its proper teaching was of crucial importance in raising standards of industrial design and when he set about the improvement and expansion of Lambeth's classes in life drawing, modelling and design it was sculpture's interests that he had chiefly in mind."[2]*

During his time at Lambeth, Sparkes was instrumental in supporting and developing the nascent careers of the ceramic sculptors George Tinworth and Robert Wallace Martin and one of the leading figures of 'The New Sculpture' movement (and later, a close friend of Voysey's), George Frampton. It was while still in his post at Lambeth that he also took on the role of art master at Dulwich College.



1
Thomas Carlyle memorial plaque; designed by CFA Voysey, executed by Benjamin Creswick, 1885

Voysey would have benefited from Sparkes' belief in the importance of teaching life drawing and may well have also learned the basics of clay modelling from him at this time. Later, from 1876 until his retirement in 1898, Sparkes would hold the post of headmaster of the National Art Training School (after 1896 The Royal College of Art) influencing a generation of painters and sculptors

Leaving Dulwich in 1874 for an apprenticeship in Seddon's office Voysey's years of pupillage coincided with the senior architect's close involvement with the design and manufacture of modelled ceramic pieces with relief tiles executed by Maw & Co. and a range

of jardinieres, tankards jugs and architectural pieces manufactured in stoneware at the Fulham Pottery. A detailed drawing of a Seddon designed salt-glazed, stoneware capital and base survives, brilliantly executed in watercolour by the 20-year-old Voysey.[3] This is a work that was obviously painted 'from life' and one may speculate that Voysey's detailed depiction is of an object he may well have had an active role in sculpting under Seddon's supervision.

It is well known that Voysey's independent architectural career (commenced in late 1881), took many years to establish and it proved necessary for the young architect to explore alternative sources of income. By 1884 Voysey had been taken under the wing of the slightly older architect and designer Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) who introduced him to the basis of pattern design. Mackmurdo had established the Century Guild of Artists in 1882 bringing together a group of architects, painters, decorative artists, and sculptors in an enterprise that prefigured the ambitions of the later Arts and Crafts Movement. Dating to these years is a low relief, commemorative portrait of the essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle, executed in 1884 for The Carlyle Society. This large, carved marble plaque (figure 1) captures Voysey's developing skills as a pattern designer and calligrapher but also features a large, central roundel bas-relief of Carlyle's head in profile. The final piece was executed by one of Mackmurdo's close associates, the sculptor Benjamin Creswick (1853-1946) and it would be easy to assume that this was a joint effort with Voysey designing the two-dimensional elements and Creswick providing the sculpted portrait. This was not the case as a full-size plaster maquette of the portrait survives (figure 2) signed in the plaster 'C. F. A. Voysey, 1884' clearly demonstrating that Creswick was employed as an artisan to render in marble, a piece modelled entirely by Voysey. The earliest extant example of commissioned work executed by CFA Voysey is therefore a piece of sculpture.

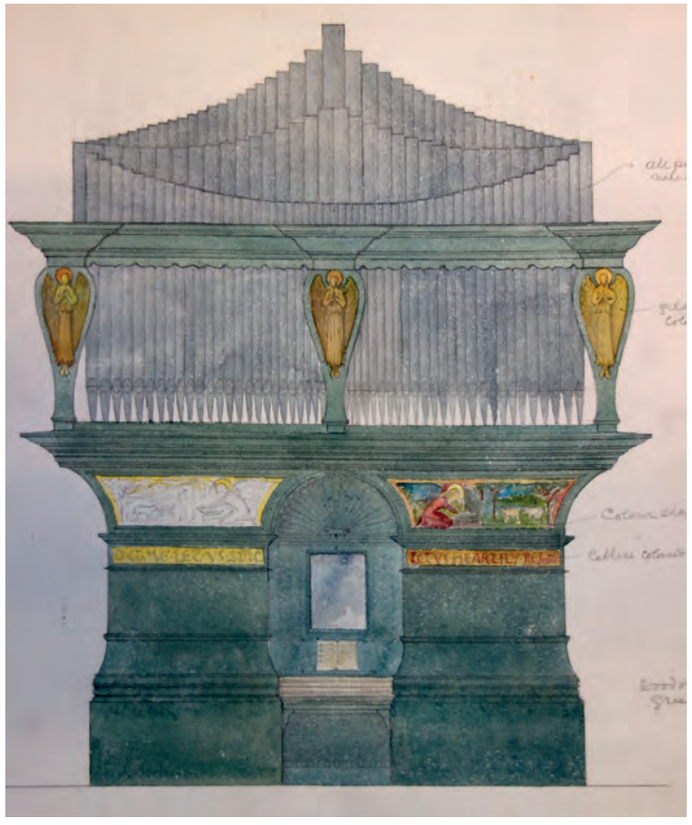
2
Thomas Carlyle: plaster modelled by Voysey, 1884 (National Trust Collections)

Richard Hollis has written of 'Voysey: the clubbable man', documenting the various artists' clubs and associations joined throughout his long career, and in this milieu many long-lasting friendships with sculptors were formed.[4] The earliest of these groups was the Art Workers' Guild which he joined shortly after it was founded in 1884. The Guild was created by a group of young architects, designers, and artists as a place where practitioners of the fine and applied arts could meet on an equal footing. The first Master of the Guild was the sculptor, George Blackall Simonds and fellow early members were Edward Onslow Ford and Hamo Thornycroft who would soon become leading figures of the 'New Sculpture' movement.[5] The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society evolved from The Guild and held its first exhibition at The New Gallery on Regent Street in 1888 with Voysey exhibiting only five pieces. Four were designs for fabric or wallpaper but one was a framed photograph of the Carlyle memorial, clearly demonstrating Voysey's desire to position himself as more than a designer of pattern.

3
St. John the Baptist, Healaugh: detail of the late Norman south doorway.

A second portrait sculpture (now lost) is recorded in an 1887 entry in Voysey's 'Black Book' the year before his first building, The Cottage in Bishop's Itchington near Warwick, was erected. This was a commission to execute a *"portrait model for tablet in clay and casting"* of John Charles Holder (1838-1923), a successful Midlands brewer for whom Voysey would also design a beer bottle label. One must assume that as with the Carlyle memorial, this work was a naturalistic portrait however, 'realism' would prove to be rare in Voysey's sculptural oeuvre. Most of his work from the 1890s onwards features much simplification and stylisation – often including caricature - and demonstrates the profound influenc of the sculpture of the Middle Ages, something Voysey was exposed to at an early age.

In 1864, at the age of seven, his father became vicar of Healaugh in the East Riding of Yorkshire, a church well-appointed with a dizzying array of carved medieval decoration including many grotesque heads (figure 3). As Voysey was educated at home and lead a relatively solitary life in this isolated village, their effect on



4
Design for an Organ Case for The Quarto Imperial Club, March 6, 1891 (RIBA Collections)

his developing visual imagination must have been considerable. Writing in later life it is very evident that Voysey understood and valued the close relationship in previous centuries between artistic execution and a belief in a higher power: *"we are induced to feel that mediaeval men did their work as if it were a form of worship, whereas the modern workers as if it were a competing form of play, hoping it may please and pay."* [6]

In 1890, Voysey joined The Quarto Imperial Club (QIC), a loose association of young architects including his friends Walter Cave and Charles Spooner. The group met frequently but at somewhat irregular intervals finally dissolving in July 1897. A set agenda for every meeting was followed with a theme (e.g., 'furniture', 'window treatment', 'wallpaper' etc.) being decided in advance. The members would bring with them a single sheet of 'Quarto Imperial' (a quarter-sheet of Imperial paper) on which they had executed a

design is response to the given theme. One member of the club was tasked with delivering a lecture on the meeting's theme to those assembled and following that, the individual designs were shared, scrutinised, and discussed. These designs were retained by the club for future reference and were compiled in two velum-bound volumes with Voysey executing the cover design of the second.[7] Several of Voysey's designs for the club contain sculptural elements including two featuring carved angels: a 'design for an organ case'

5
Design for a Carved Newel for The Quarto Imperial Club, November 1, 1892 (RIBA Collections)

of 1891 (figure 4) and a 'design for a rood screen' of 1893. Most of the designs contained in the QIC volumes were never intended for execution but it seems likely that the 'carved newel post design' (figure 5) that Voysey contributed to the November 1892 meeting had been installed as part of his 1889 re-design of the showrooms of the wallpaper manufacturers Essex & Co..[8] The bearded, caricatured figure is most likely to be Walter Richard Essex, the owner of the

company and is one of the earliest examples of Voysey's propensity to gently poke fun at his clients through the inclusion of caricatures or grotesque profiles.[9

From the outset of his architectural career, sculptural elements would often feature in the overall scheme. The austere and striking Bedford Park tower house designed in 1890-91 for the portrait painter J W Forster featured caricatures of the client as decorative corbels supporting the mantel of the chimney piece.[10] The 1892 Hans Road townhouses in Knightsbridge, designed for the Liberal MP Archibald Grove, were initially conceived with sculpted decorations above each entrance porch. As executed, these elements were moved within the open entrance porches, with the sculptor Conrad Dressler (who Voysey knew through the Art Workers' Guild) creating two ceramic, high-relief plaques, one symbolic of night, the other of day. Within the year Dressler had commissioned Voysey to design a row of four studios for him at Glebe Place, Chelsea but sadly, the project never came to fruition. Concurrent to Hans Road, Voysey was also working on designs for another large terrace of townhouses for Lord Wentworth's estate at Swan Walk, Chelsea. The final design of this unexecuted project was later published in The British Architect and shows how the run of casement windows which ran the full width of the second storey of each, were to be enlivened by the addition of a sculpted 'medieval' figure in a niche.[11

Voysey and his family moved to St John's Wood in 1891, an area of London favoured by many leading artists and sculptors. The St John's Wood Arts Club was instigated in 1895; Voysey being a founding member along with his friend from the Art Workers' Guild, the sculptor Edward Onslow Ford. Another sculptor neighbour and a fellow member of both the Art Workers' Guild and the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, was George Frampton who was rapidly establishing an international reputation as a leader of the 'New Sculpture' movement. Both these sculptors were associate members of the Royal Academy and in April 1895, Voysey was nominated for membership by Onslow Ford, seconded by Frampton. Unfortunately, the application by secret ballot was unsuccessful but as both his sponsors were sculptors, it would be fascinating to know if Voysey's application was made on the basis of his activities as a sculptor, an architect, or both?

By the latter half of the 1890s Voysey's reputation as an architect was rapidly becoming established and he was busy undertaking commissions for many of the iconic houses that would make his name. More specialised buildings were also designed, including studios in St John's Wood for George Frampton and fellow sculptor George Blackall Simonds, first Master of the Art Workers' Guild. [12] Even during this, his busiest period as an architect, Voysey continued to actively pursue opportunities as a designer of both pattern and furniture and even more remarkably, he continued to

model and sculpt.
The fifth exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1896, held at ¬-The New Gallery, Regent Street featured Voysey designed tiles in low relief exhibited by Pilkingtons. A review of the exhibition in *The Studio* reveals that the tiles were not only designed by Voysey but also modelled by him.[13] He also found the time to provide designs for a hanging bookcase, topped by carved finial of a medieval scholar, to the Home Arts & Industries Association for execution by members of their many woodworking classes. These carved figures (figure 6) feature in enlarged detail on the design drawing and are accompanied by an emphatic instruction to those carving them: *"These figures to be very squarely cut + not at all realistic in detail."*

His first cast bronze sculpture 'in the round' was exhibited at the 1899 Arts and Crafts Exhibition, recorded in the catalogue as follows: "Finial for Newel-Post. Designed and exhibited by C.F.A. Voysey. Executed by Henry Pegram." Aymer Vallance, reviewing the

6
Detail of a design for a Hanging Bookcase for The Home Arts & Industries Association, pre-1896

exhibition in The Studio explains the circumstances of its execution: The 'seated figure' in bronze, representing a man writing, is one which Mr. Voysey designed on paper and began to model in wax with his own hand, but subsequently, owing to pressure of other business, had to abandon. Mr. Pegram then undertook to carry out the work. It was originally intended to form the finial of an oak newel, of which the pedestal shown should represent the upper portion.[14]

Examples of the cast (figure 7) do remain in situ in at least two Voysey houses (figure 28) with the figure variously interpreted as

7
Bronze Figure for Newel-Post, designed by Voysey and sculpted by Henry Pegram, 1899 (Private Collection)

a portrait of his ancestor John Wesley or perhaps, an idealised self-portrait of the architect. The latter interpretation may be supported by an inscription hand-written on the rear of the design when it was re-drawn and reproduced as a greetings card in 1928:

> *Trying hard to write with fervour all I would be as a server*
> *But failing so, what can I do for you dear friend?*
> *What can I pay, with naught but love to give away?[15]*

During the same year, Voysey was working on a commission to supply fitted bookcases to Ashburnham House at Westminster School and sought to include a pair of bronze, scholar figures as an

integral part of the design.[16] Although the only surviving example bears the signature of the sculptor William Reynolds-Stephens it seems likely that, as with the figure for the newel post, the original was modelled in wax by Voysey, with Reynolds-Stephens brought in to see it executed in bronze (figure 8)

By the turn of the twentieth century, Voysey's reputation as both an architect and designer were established and lucrative, 'exclusive' contracts had been entered into with various wallpaper, textile, and carpet producers. Unsurprisingly, metalwork manufacturers were also eager to execute and market Voysey designs although no contract of exclusivity would be signed. Instead, the architect providing a variety of designs to companies such as William Bainbridge Reynolds; Thomas Elsley; George Wright; and Longden & Co. The latter three firms all produced Voysey designed cast iron fireplaces, many featuring birds modelled in low relief. How involved Voysey was with the creation of the master moulds is unclear and many could well have been factory made interpretations of two-dimensional drawings. However, in the case of the fireplace (figure 9) manufactured by George Wright Ltd. shortly before 1903, which features detailed and beautifully modelled ravens in a ploughed field, one can detect the hand of the designer at work

Birds had featured prominently in Voysey's pattern design for well over a decade and were a subject with which he had a great affinity sketching them frequently throughout his career and so

their appearance within the medium of metal should be of no surprise. Although their individual character traits and appearance were obviously appealing to him, birds also played a central role in Voysey's highly idiosyncratic, symbolic iconography. In later life he wrote that: *"Birds, like men, walk erect, and they also soar into the sky and so symbolise aspiration and spiritual activity."* With specific reference to ravens he observes their "supposed wonderful sagacity" but also notes that *"the eagle which is the highest flyer and the furthest seer stands for aspiration, and revelation, the heavenwards quest, which in other words, is true philosophy."*[17]

8
Bronze Figure of a Scholar, designed by Voysey and modelled for casting by William Reynolds-Stephens, 1899 (Westminster

9
Detail of fireplace modelled by Voysey and manufactured by George Wright Ltd, c.1903

10
Falcon and Eagle paperweights photographed alongside The Architect's Devil and Figure for a Newel-Post, c.1907

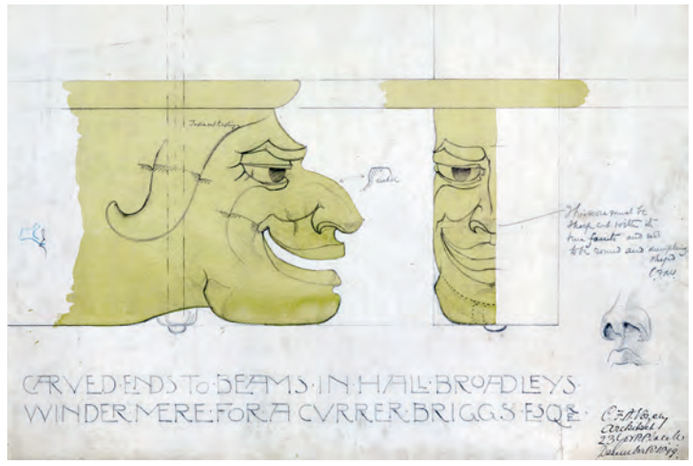
11
Cast-lead jardinière manufactured by Thomas Elsley & Company, c.1900

Three-dimensional birds, sculpted 'in the round' were also incorporated into various fireside accessories to complement the relief decoration of the fireplaces. These were executed by Thomas Elsley's, Portland Metal Works and would feature in a lavishly illustrated catalogue: *Designs by CFA Voysey Architect,* issued c.1905-06 containing over seventy individual designs for metalwork. The majority of these designs were first revealed to the public in 1903 at the 7th Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Exhibition, with a striking fire-iro stand and ensuite fire screen widely illustrated in contemporary journals.[18] Both of these pieces were topped with falcon finials which, in terms of erect pose and style of execution, are reminiscent of Ancient Egyptian depictions of Horus the god of kingship and the sky. This model was later re-used as a bronze paperweight alongside a delicately modelled figure of an eagle, perched atop an elevated sphere (figure 10) which was created in 1907 for use in the office of The Essex & Suffolk Equitable Insurance Company at Broad Street, London.

Two other Elsley produced pieces featuring sculpted birds are worthy of note: a small, brass fire screen and a lead jardiniere on stand. The small eagle finials which perch around the fire screen, playfully warming their backs against the fire, are precursors to the later Essex & Suffolk eagle paperweight. The lead jardiniere (figure 11) is an altogether more 'Gothic' conception, featuring four aggressively styled eagle's heads as decorative handles.

Voysey continued to employ sculpture within his architectural projects, probably the most well-known use being at Broad Leys overlooking Lake Windermere. Here, the double height hall features a pair of grotesque, caricature heads (figure 12), most likely modelled on the owner, Arthur Currer Briggs, carved into the beam ends that

12
Carved beam-end featuring a caricature head, Broad Leys, Lake Windermere, 1898-1900



13
Voysey's detail drawings and annotations for the Broad Leys carved beam-end (RIBA Collections)

support an elevated corridor. The drawing of this detail survives at the RIBA, showing a side and front view and a few detailed instructions to the carver including: *"This nose must be sharp cut with its true fascets [sic] and not to be round and dumpling shaped C.F.A.V."[*19]

An ambitious but unexecuted 1901 scheme for a new grammar school at Lincoln would have featured a pair of life-size, carved stone scholar figures (probably an enlargement of the Westminster School bookcase figures) sited high on pinnacles at the apex of each gable of the assembly hall.[20]

Sculptural elements would also feature in one of Voysey's greatest interior schemes, the 1906 remodelling of Garden Corner on the Thames embankment in Chelsea, for the MP, Emslie John Horniman. The servant's staircase retains six, identical, carved oak newel posts featuring a caricature of a four-faced head. Voysey

14
Mr Looking Fourways, carved oak newel, 1906 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

had a sample carved to show his client, an object he subsequently retained for used as a hat stand (figure 14). An inscription on the reverse of a photograph which includes this item records in Voysey's own hand an explanatory note: *'Newel Post for an M.P. / Mr. Looking fourways'!*[21] Elsewhere in the house, cast bronze falcons, identical to those used earlier on fireplace accessories manufactured by Thomas Elsley, serve as decorative finials on the four-poster bed designed for the Horniman's master bedroom.[22]

As work on Garden Corner progressed, Voysey commenced work on Littleholme, Guildford a home for his friend and the builder of many of his houses, George Müntzer. This project involved elaborate, hard landscaped gardens which were embellished with Voysey designs including a lead gargoyle and, as a focal point to the double staircase that descends to the lawn, an extraordinary, carved stone figure (figure 15) of a crouching devil, later revealed to be the designer's own 'cast-out devil'.[23] Voysey's 'Expense Book' charts its creation and execution which commenced with a small version in clay or more likely, the relatively new modelling material of Plasticine. By July 1907 the maquette was complete and was sent to T & E Nicholls of 28 Wincott Street, Kennington Road, London. This was a long-established and well-respected firm of architectural sculptors, established by Thomas Nicholls Sr. in the 1850s. The elder Nicholls had worked for William Burges at Cardiff Castle however, by the late 1890s his sons Thomas and Edward had taken over the company. The original maquette modelled by Voysey was used by the Nicholls brothers to sculpt the much larger, stone version for Littleholme but while it was at their workshop Voysey had them produce a handful of actual size replicas in electrotyped copper. One of these was entered into the following year's Royal Academy Exhibition: unfortunately for Voysey, it was rejected.

15
Devil, sculpted in stone for Littleholme, Guildford by T & E Nicholls, 1907

By the end of the first decade of the new century, Voysey's reactionary response to the widespread adoption of the Classical Revival within the architectural profession had been to adopt overtly 'gothic' elements within his work be it architecture, furniture, commercial art, or pattern design. Sculpture would be no different and a 1909 commission, to design a house for a quarry owner, proved the perfect opportunity to revisit the Tudor past he admired so much. Thomas Sturge Cotterell's quarry was near Bath, and he tasked Voysey with creating a building that would act as both a showcase of the quarry's stone and the skill of its masons. Cotterell, a keen antiquarian asked Voysey to design a building that would remind him of his undergraduate days at Merton College, Oxford. Lodge Style, as the house is called, is built around an open courtyard creating a building with the feel of a college quadrangle. It is unequivocally, the required 'essay in stone' demanded by Cotterell with the brief extending to the interior where the walls are of exposed, highly finished stone. The skill of the Bath & Portland Stone Firms Ltd. stonemasons was also showcased in three architectural sculptures placed prominently

near the entrance of the building. A small, kneeling angel (figure 16) remains in situ, but two other pieces (figure 17) are now lost. A wonderfully bizarre pig's head gargoyle once drained water from the small, two-storey tower and adjacent to this, on top of a buttress, stood a near life-size sculpture of a medieval King. This was probably intended to represent Edward I, the monarch whose figure is prominently sited on the gatehouse of Merton College. Earlier in the year Voysey had read a paper titled "Ideas in things" at the Carpenters' Company on 24th February. It gave him the opportunity to expound on his belief in symbolism and its relationship to style in sculpture, noting we may use some of a building's budget to:

> *"...devote to one spot of sculpture, one point of pre-eminent interest in which we might suggest some merriment like the old grotesques. If, however, we use figure sculpture, let it not be a gentleman without his hat, or a lady with nothing on. For in this climate such exhibitions only excite our pity and discomforting sympathies. Hence the severe convention that the old workers always adopted. If the material selected to represent our merry thought is handled with due regard to its intrinsic nature, we shall be helped to feel that the image is only stone or wood or lead, or whatever it be, invested with ideas - in short, a symbol, the idea of which so dominates that our pity is not aroused. The more materialistic our minds, the more realistic our art. Realistic rendering of material qualities should only be allowed so far as is absolutely necessary for the force of spiritual expression."[24]*

16
Kneeling Angel, Lodge Style, Combe Down, Bath, 1909 (photo by John Trotter)

17
Lodge Style, Combe Down, Bath, shortly after completion in 1909

18
Bronze eagle, originally designed as a finial, 1909

19
Bas-relief angel, Atkinson's shop, London, 1911 (RIBA Collections)

20
The Royal Warrant on Atkinson's shop front, London, 1911

The same year Voysey created yet another sculpted bird (an eagle), designed to be displayed as a set of six finials on an elaborate oak dresser designed for an old client, Miss McKay of Birkenhead.[25] A few were also produced with an integral base (figure 18) to act as freestanding sculptures and/or paperweights. All would have been cast for Voysey by his long-standing metalwork manufacturer, William Bainbridge Reyolds, at his foundry in Clapham.

The apogee of Voysey's executed forays into Tudor architectural styling is arguably the 1911, remodelling, of Atkinson's perfume shop on Old Bond Street, London. Designed to be visually at odds with its neighbours, the austere, fortress-like exterior was enlivened by sculptural detail, designed by Voysey and executed by T and E Nicholls. Small, bas-relief figures of angels, appropriately enough swinging censers (figure 19), were placed between each of the arched windows on the Burlington Gardens elevation. The main entrance on Old Bond Street was surmounted by a large, deeply carved and coloured Royal Warrant shield (figure 20). This was positively received by an anonymous reviewer in The British Architect who states: *"Over the doorway in Bond Street is a coat-of-arms in stone, evidently carefully detailed by the architect, for it is a bit of really good architectural carving."*[26] Four years later Voysey added a large mosaic to the north west corner of the building. This too was praised by a reviewer from the same magazine who also complemented the heraldic carving: *"Mr. Voysey has enriched the entrance of Messrs. Atkinson's building with unusually excellent carving and colour, and we could wish our shopkeepers would emulate this good example."*[27] Good example or not, all of Voysey's work would be swept away only twelve years later when the building was once again drastically re-modelled, this time by E Vincent Harris.

A reduced, coloured plaster version of the warrant crest (also executed by Nicholls) was exhibited internationally, first at the Exposition Universelle et Internationale in Ghent in 1913 and the following year at the exhibition of British Arts and Crafts organised by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in Paris. At Ghent the plaster was joined by other examples of Voysey's sculpture: the 'Mr Looking Fourways' newel post and one of the electrotype 'Devil' casts.

21
Four angels singing grace, carved oak by William Aumonier & Son, London, 1912

During the years leading to the First World War, Voysey's architectural commissions had reduced to barely a trickle. To maintain any semblance of fin ncial stability he was forced to seek out commercial opportunities for his graphic, wallpaper and textile designs and sculpture would also feature in this mix. Two, late commissions for furniture featured carved angels, one a wardrobe (now lost) featuring six, inset, panels carved in low relief and a simple serving table, decorated at each corner with four carved oak figures 'in the round' depicting angels singing grace. The level of woodcarving skill required by Voysey for their execution was beyond that of his usual cabinet makers and so they were made by the specialist ecclesiastical carving firm of William Aumonier of Tottenham Court Road. Once executed (figure 21), these were fixed to cabinet work manufactured by his favoured, London cabinet maker, F C Nielsen. A later re-drawing of the four figures contains this specific instruction to the carver: *"These angels to be carved in English oak & not to look either male or female."* The reason is revealed in a 1930, published review by Voysey of two exhibition where he observes: *"...that the*

ancients, when representing angels in illuminations, stained glass, embroidery, wall decoration and other crafts, always showed them without any definite indication of sex; while the modern designer invariably makes his angels feminine, of the barmaid type, forgetting that man in his most exalted moods is divorced from the lusts of the flesh for the time being. He does not associate a buxom female of a beefsteak complexion with the angelic state." [28]

Various references to casts of 'angel figures' and 'gilded angel panels' feature in Voysey's 'Expenses Book' at this time, likely indicating an attempt by the architect to reproduce these unique, carved wooden sculptures on a small-scale, commercial basis.

22
Bronze, self-portrait medallion to celebrate his sixtieth year, 1916 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

Voysey's strangest sculpture, almost expressionist in style, a larger than life-size hand clutching a heart, dates to 1915 (see figure 26). This was almost certainly designed for the wallpaper manufacturers Arthur Sanderson & Sons as it is a three-dimensional rendition of the company logo also designed by Voysey. In the architect's arcane language of symbols this represents the 'tenacity of friendship'.[29] The following year found Voysey engaged in the production of a small, realistic, self-portrait bronze medallion (figure 22), likely a self-commemoration of his sixtieth year and perhaps intended for exhibition at the Royal Academy annual exhibition where it was eventually shown in 1919. This being the first time Voysey's work was displayed outside of the Academy's 'Architecture Room'. Now in the collection of the V&A, the medallion forms part of a small group, accompanied by plasticine models, negative moulds and a plaster model which all reflect the various stages involved in the production of the final cast bronze. Proud to be not only the designer but also the sculptor, the reverse is inscribed in Voysey's own hand; *'CFA Voysey Invt. et fecit 1916'*.

The years following the ending of hostilities in 1918 saw Voysey receive several commissions relating to the design of war memorials. He was invited to exhibit a design for a memorial window at the 'War Memorials Exhibition', held at the Royal Academy during October and November 1919 and shortly afterwards was invited to design a war memorial at Malvern Wells, Worcestershire. The timing of the commission is probably coincidental as Voysey had recently commenced work on the design of a cottage for Major G A Porter, a wealthy local landowner. Haslington Cottage (now called Cobb Nash) is located a few hundred yards from the site of the war memorial. The design Voysey produced is both austere and solemn, comprising a free-standing column of Portland stone with capital, above an octagonal base, all featuring concave sides. The capital is carved with a decorative leaf design and is surmounted by a carved, stone pelican feeding its young. The 'Pelican in its Piety' – the bird plucking at its own breast to feed its young – was an appropriate motif, symbolising as it does, self-sacrificing love. Voysey had previously used the device as a bookplate, designed before 1907 for a relative, Annesley Voysey.[30]

Ever the perfectionist, to fully familiarise himself with his subject, Voysey took himself off to London Zoo on Christmas Eve to make drawings from life of pelicans. By January 1920 work could commenced on modelling the sculpture. The 'Expenses Book' records multiple purchases of Plasticene and modelling tools and a scaled-down maquette (figure 23) was duly completed. The original intention was to have the pelican executed in gilt bronze on a marble base, but one suspects cost became an issue as the final version was executed entirely in Portland stone. Voysey was obviously very proud of his Plasticine maquette and by October had plaster casts made which were sent to Thomas Elsley for casting in bronze. The final bronze was accepted for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1921 along with the design drawings for a wall-mounted memorial for York Minster.

As executed, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry memorial, sited in the west aisle of the north transept is a simplified version of the initial concept which originally featured a mosaic of the pelican in her piety. Nonetheless, it remains an impressive achievement making good use of low-relief, sculptural elements and raised lettering (the whole cast in bronze). The dark mass of metal is relieved with inset gems, areas of colourful enamel and a border of mother of pearl. In terms of variety of materials, it must rank as

23
The Pelican in Her Piety, original Plasticine model for Malvern Wells War Memorial, 1920

one of Voysey's most exotic pieces. Once more the 'Expenses Book' reveals the stages the work went through and as at Malvern, Voysey commenced with hand-modelling the relief elements before the project was transferred to William Bainbridge Reynolds for casting in bronze, the whole process taking fourteen months from August 1920 to October 1921.

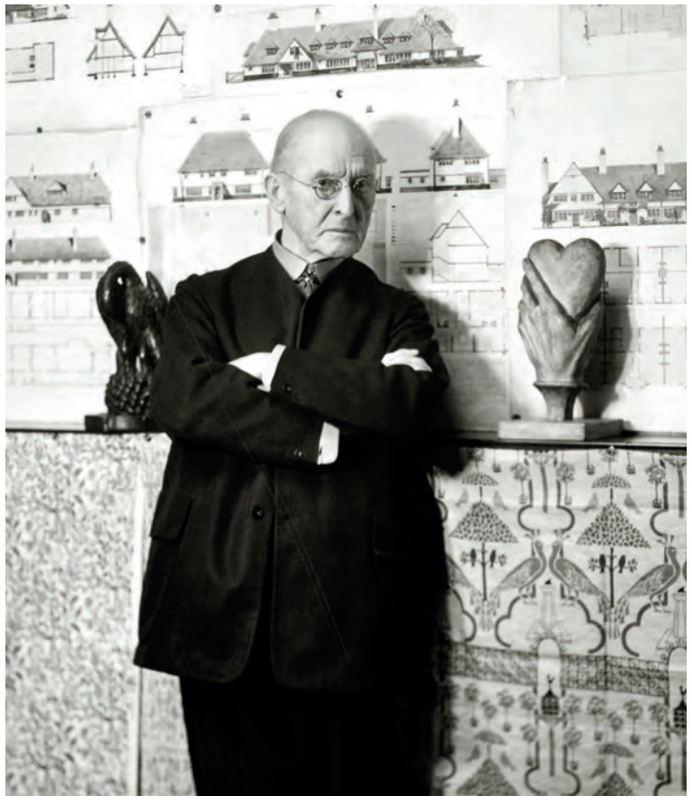
24
Bronze eagle for the tomb of Arnold Jacob Cohen Stuart, Hampstead Cemetery, 1921

A second, free-standing, stone memorial was executed in 1921 in this case a tomb to Arnold Jacob Cohen Stuart, a Dutch-born engineer who is best known for establishing the mathematical foundations of optimal tax structure. An altogether more medieval design than Malvern Wells, it features a squat tower within a kerbed plot which terminates in a 'crown' of crocketed pinnacles supporting flying buttresses attached to a central column. This column was originally topped with a striking gilt bronze, heraldic eagle (figure 24) taking flight. Unfortunately, the tomb has been subject to vandalism and only the bird's feet remain. The Expenses Book indicates that a freestanding, cast bronze version was executed shortly after completion of the commission by William Bainbridge Reynolds for one of Voysey's most loyal patrons, C T Burke owner of Holly Mount near Beaconsfield

In the 1920s, with his architectural career virtually over, Voysey's 'Expenses Book' records a sporadic but continuing engagement with sculpture although most of the projects listed are now lost. In 1923 a cast of a cow was made – perhaps for a shop sign – and various heraldic plaques relating to the Herald's Office Later in the decade in 1927, a relief panel – presumably in bronze - was designed for the Malay States Offic and further casts of the 'Devil' were ordered from Bainbridge Reynolds. To celebrate his seventieth birthday Voysey created a second, bronze self-portrait medallion (figure 25). Identical in layout and lettering to that for his sixtieth birthday, upon close scrutiny the rendition of the head clearly reveals the passage of a decade on the architect's face. This medallion was exhibited the following year at the fourteenth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Exhibition held at the Royal Academy.

25
Bronze, self-portrait medallion to celebrate his seventieth year, 1927 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

The end of Voysey's recorded activities as a sculptor coincide with a retrospective exhibition held in 1931 at the Batsford Gallery, hosted by *The Architectural Review*. A photograph taken to document the event (figure 26) shows Voysey posed defiantly in a gallery whose walls are totally obscured by the mass of his architectural drawings and lengths of printed fabric. However, prominently flank ng him on either side are examples of his sculpture; the 'Hand and Heart' and the 'Pelican in Her Piety'. We can gain an insight into the value Voysey placed on his activities as a sculptor from a set of autobiographical notes compiled around this time.[31] Here, in a relatively short document of only two pages, Voysey is at pains to



26
Voysey at his 1931, Batsford Gallery retrospective exhibition flanked by his sculptures, Hand and Heart and The Pelican in Her Piety

proudly record that he has: *"exhibited many times in the Sculpture Room and Architectural Room of the Royal Academy."* Clearly flagging for posterity his 'establishment' validated credentials as both an architect and a sculptor, something that sets him apart from his contemporaries and illustrates the 'individuality' that was the watchword of his life.

Over his long career, Voysey enjoyed the friendship of many leading sculptors including Edward Onslow Ford RA; Conrad Dressler; Robert Anning Bell RA and Sir George Frampton RA. In his later years Voysey would spend his days at the Arts Club in Dover Street, sipping sherry and talking with his friends.[32] Voysey's portrait had been painted on a number of occasions, but it seems appropriate that the final portrait commission – appropriately enough for the Arts Club – should have been awarded to a sculptor, William Reid Dick RA (1878-1961). The resulting portrait bronze (figure 27), a powerful depiction of the seventy-seven-year-old architect was exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1934. Thus, Voysey's final lifetime appearance within the Royal Academy was not in the 'Architecture Room' but the 'Sculpture Room', something one suspects that would have pleased him greatly.

27
Bronze portrait of CFA Voysey, by William Reid Dick RA, 1934

Notes

[1]
Voysey, CFA. The Value of Hidden Influences, as Disclosed in the Life of an Ordinary Man, 1931, Ref: RIBA VoC/4/6.
[2]
Beattie, S. The New Sculpture. New Haven: Yale, 1983, p. 17.
[3]
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 23.
[4]
See: Hollis, R. 'Voysey: The Clubbable Man', The Orchard, No. 1, 2012, pp. 57-61.
[5]
The New Sculpture was a movement in late 19th-century British sculpture placing an emphasis on naturalistic poses and spiritual subject matter. It was widely and enthusiastically adopted by a generation of young sculptors and had become the leading style by the dawn of the twentieth century.
[6]
Voysey, CFA. 'English Church Art', Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (vol.37), 1930, p.644
[7]
Both volumes held at the RIBA Drawings Collection: RIBA VOS134 & VOS135
[8]
Black Book, RIBA VoC/1/1.
[9]
See: King, P. 'Profiles and grotesques in Voysey's work', Available at: https://www.voyseysociety.org/voysey/biography/profiles.html
[10]
See: http://www.voysey.gotik-romanik.de > Executed Buildings > 1890-91 South Parade
[11]
See: http://www.voysey.gotik-romanik.de > Unexecuted Projects > 1891 Houses on Lord Wentworth's Estate
[12]
Black Book, RIBA VoC/1/1.
[13]
The Studio, Vol. 9, Issue: 45, December 1896, p. 192.
[14]
The Studio Vol. 18 Issue: 79, October 1899, p. 45.
[15]
RIBA SB/120VOY [895]
[16]
See: Peart, T. 'Voysey's Work at Westminster School', The Orchard, No. 9, 2020, pp. 79-83.
[17]
Voysey, CFA. Symbolism in Design, 1930-32, RIBA SKB458/2.
[18]
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 232.
[19]
RIBA SB/113VOY [138]5.
[20]
See: http://www.voysey.gotik-romanik.de > Unexecuted Projects > 1901 Design for Lincoln Grammar School
[21]
RIBA Photograph 41440/26
[22]
Illustrated in: Hitchmough, W. CFA Voysey. London: Phaidon, 1995, p. 195.
[23]
Catalogue of An Exhibition of The Works of C. F. Annesley Voysey F.R.I.B.A., At The Batsford Gallery 15 North Audley Street, London W.1, October 12th To 17th, 1931.
[24]
Voysey, CFA. 'Ideas in Things' in The Arts Connected with Building, edited by T. Raffles Davison. London: Batsford, 1909, p. 124.
[25]
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 224.
[26]
The British Architect, 12th April 1912, p. 273.
[27]
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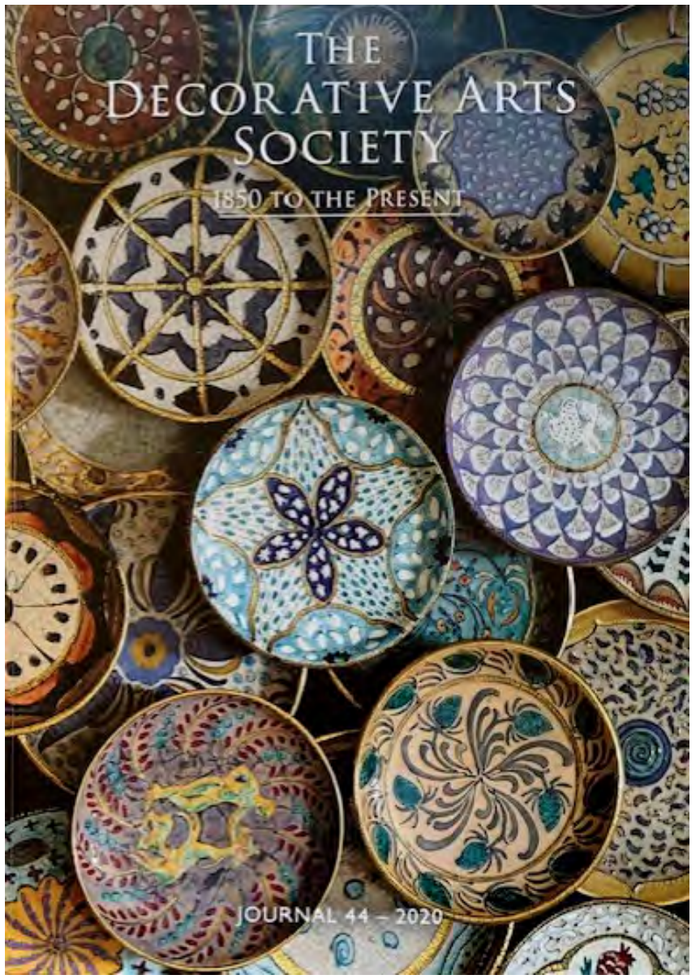
[28]
Voysey, CFA. 'English Church Art', Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (vol.37), 1930, p.644
[29]
Voysey, CFA. Symbolism in Design, 1930-32, RIBA SKB458/2.
[30]
Ibid.
[31]
RIBA VoC3/4
[32]
Donat, R. 'Uncle Charles', Architect's Journal (Vol.93), 1941, pp.193-194

28
The 'seated figure' in bronze, in situ, as a finial topping a typical Voysey design newel post in the main stair at White Cottage, London, 1903



Indian Summer: The Reinvention of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft in the Twentieth Century

The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present
Vol. 44. pp. 19-45 (2020).

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16 The National Radiator Building, Great Marlborough Street, London (the author).

Indian Summer: The Reinvention of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft in the Twentieth Century

Tony Peart

In September 1890, Charles Robert Ashbee the founder of the Guild of Handicraft, addressed a meeting of the newly established Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, an organisation consciously modelled on his own philanthropic venture. He offered the assembled audience of local dignitaries (including the Lord Mayor), advice on how their nascent enterprise could be developed, based on the experience of his own Guild established at Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel, only two years previously. By 1907, the harsh commercial realities of the early 1900s had forced Ashbee's Guild into liquidation. Surprisingly, the Birmingham Guild not only managed to survive this difficult period but ultimately prospered, becoming one of the country's leading architectural metalworking firms during the inter-war years. This article will explore how and why a small-scale, philanthropic 'craft' workshop of the late nineteenth century managed to evolve, adapt and ultimately, successfully re-invent itself in the twentieth century.

The Birmingham Guild of Handicraft was established in 1890, growing out of evening classes for working men and boys run by The Birmingham Kyrle Society. It was supported by the City's wealthy, Liberal party members and grew steadily under the direction of its chief designer, the merchant and architect Arthur Stansfeld Dixon (1856-1929) and the solicitor Montague Fordham (1864-1948). Soon, those younger staff members and students from Birmingham School of Art, known as The Birmingham Group, became involved, including Claude Napier-Clavering (1869-1938) and Arthur Gaskin (1862-1928) who established a Guild Press in 1894. A year later the Guild became a Limited Company, run on co-operative principles, with Dixon, Fordham and Napier-Clavering acting as its first directors. In late 1896 the wealthy Birmingham industrialist William Kenrick (1831-1919) became the company's majority shareholder, probably to help secure the financial prospects of his future son-in-law, Claude Napier-Clavering. By 1898 the Guild had its own purpose-built workshops (designed by Arthur Dixon) on Great Charles Street in central Birmingham and was quickly establishing a national reputation for its austere domestic and ecclesiastical metal ware, its extensive range of electric lighting, jewellery designs and publications from the Guild Press.

As the twentieth century dawned, the Birmingham Guild appeared to be one of the most successful of the Arts & Crafts craft workshops. In the previous decade it had evolved from evening classes given in a church hall to a Limited Company occupying a large, purpose-built workshop with agents in London, Berlin and Paris. However, this outward appearance was deceptive as major changes within the organisation had been taking place. The first was the departure of Montague Fordham who left Birmingham in late 1899, shortly after visiting Hirschwald's Gallery in Berlin to arrange an exhibit of Birmingham Guild metalware. [1] This seems to have been something of a personal fact-finding mission as, upon returning, he established his own, very similar, fine art and craft gallery in Maddox Street, London. Arthur Dixon, the leading light of the Guild during its early years, whilst still a director and shareholder, was concentrating on furthering his career as an architect. His absence can also be explained by his disillusionment with the direction the company had taken under its majority shareholder William Kenrick. [2] In December 1899 Dixon's friend C.R. Ashbee reported finding him 'a little bitter' and recorded his concern:

> *'Your Kenricks and Steely Ones have got hold of it and capitalised it and the tonnage they run over it is too heavy for the rails. It ought to have been built up more gradually, more humanely, and Dixon feels this and it's true – but then why must Napier-Clavering go and marry a Kenrick… …the thing must be made to PAY; and it don't pay, in more senses than one.' [3]*

1 Claude Napier-Clavering, a photograph probably taken in North America c.1911 (courtesy Julian Mulock).

By 1903 the 34-year-old Napier-Clavering had taken on Dixon's twin roles of Managing Director and Chief Designer, with most of the Company shares now held between himself and his profit-focused father-in-law William Kenrick. In retrospect, Claude Napier-Clavering (**Fig. 1**) appears a tragic figure – friends and family invariably referring to him as 'poor Claude'. [4] A charming, if somewhat hapless, character he was unquestionably devoted to the Guild but found himself in a very difficult position: simultaneously struggling to cope with the demands of maintaining and expanding the business while trapped in a loveless marriage to the daughter of his Company Chairman and chief financial backer who, although in his seventies, was a demanding and controlling figure. It seems clear that in the eyes of his father-in-law, 'poor Claude' had been found wanting as managing director and something had to be done to rectify the situation. That 'something' occurred in October 1906 when, in a move that has puzzled many commentators, the Birmingham Guild merged with a much smaller company, established little more than two years previously. In a formal announcement, circulated to all interested parties, it was stated that: '…an amalgamation has taken place between the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft Ltd. and Gittins, Craftsmen, Ltd., who will in future carry on the joint business under the name of the former Company…' As a justification for the merger it concluded: 'We trust that the special capabilities of each firm will be of such service to the other that the amalgamation may prove advantageous to the customers of both.' [5] However, this statement was disingenuous as both companies undertook broadly similar work. To uncover the most likely reason for the merger, we must consider the establishment and meteoric rise of the smaller company.

Gittins, Craftsmen, Ltd. was probably established in 1904 and was named after the 23-year-old metalworker Edward Russell Gittins (1881-1949) who was the major shareholder when the Company became incorporated in October 1905. Gittins was financially supported by his extended Leicester family including his aunt, Mary Gittins (1840-1930), who had been an active committee member of the Birmingham Guild in its early years and was a woman well-connected to wealthy, non-conformist, Liberal circles in London, Birmingham and Liverpool. Mary's Liverpool connections explain why both the brother and mother of the metalworker R.L.B. Rathbone (1864-1939) were shareholders in Gittins, Craftsmen Ltd. The nascent company was able to issue a lavishly illustrated catalogue (**Fig. 2**) in January 1905 featuring photographs of 97 different examples of their metalwork ranging from simple door handles and finger plates, to repoussé memorial tablets inlaid with enamel and elaborate electroliers. [6] Surprisingly, the catalogue also demonstrates that Edward Gittins was not the primary motivating force behind his eponymous company since his name simply appears as one of the four craftsmen involved in making. Much more prominently featured are the names of the brothers C.A. Llewelyn and R. Hugh Roberts with the publication being described as a 'catalogue of metalwork designed by C.A. Llewelyn Roberts' and the production and arrangement credited to the company secretary, R. Hugh Roberts. The merger with The Birmingham Guild was undoubtably conducted to allow the Guild chairman William Kenrick, to secure the services of these motivated and ambitious young men, one a talented designer, the other an astute businessman. In effect, the merger was an injection of 'fresh blood' into an ailing company.

Charles Arthur Llewelyn Roberts (1879-1951) and his younger brother Reginald Hugh Roberts (1883-1955) were 27 and 23 years old respectively at the time of the merger with the Birmingham Guild. Their paternal grandfather had been a wealthy solicitor living in a large property in Bangor, North Wales, whereas their father Hugh Stewart Roberts (1852-1907) lived a much more modest, somewhat peripatetic life employed initially as a slate merchant and later as a travelling agent for an engineers and iron founders. The brothers were born in London but by the early 1890s the family had relocated to the King's Norton area of Birmingham with both completing their schooling in the city. Llewelyn went on to study architecture and design at Birmingham School of Art (1897-1901) while his brother Hugh attended Birmingham University. The 1901 census records them still living at the family home with Llewelyn as an 'architect's apprentice' and Hugh as a 'gunsmith's apprentice'. Unfortunately, the circumstances of the founding of Gittins Craftsmen, Ltd. three years later, are not recorded although it would appear the Roberts brothers and Edward Gittins were good friends, as they were sharing a house together in Rednal, Worcestershire at the time. [7]

2 E & R Gittins, Craftsmen. Catalogue of Metalwork Designed by C. A. Llewelyn Roberts, 1905 (private collection).

In 1906, at the time of the merger with Gittins Craftsmen, Ltd., the Birmingham Guild was primarily engaged in the manufacture of small-scale, hand-made, domestic and ecclesiastic hollow wares in silver and non-ferrous metals, alongside an extensive range of electric light fittings. During the following two years, probably due to the influence of Llewelyn Roberts, the Guild started to diversify and made its first, tentative forays into the field of architectural metalwork. The move was necessary as sales of its staple items were beginning to falter. Managing director Claude Napier-Clavering had a habit of seeking orders from his Kenrick in-laws and their friends but these were rapidly drying up. The company also faced those harsh commercial realities that put paid to C.R Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft in 1907. Birmingham was the leading centre for the production of cheaply made, mass-manufactured metal goods, known throughout the country as 'Brummagem wares'. Ironically, one of the founding principles of the Guild had been to demonstrate that it was financially viable to manufacture well designed, handcrafted wares in a city synonymous with the production of 'shoddy' metal goods, thus acting as an exemplar to local commercial manufacturers. However, as these companies were easily able to produce similar looking items that retailed at prices that were on average, 50% cheaper than those of the Guild, the battle was being lost. Another likely spur into the field of architectural work came from the success of the nearby Bromsgrove Guild who were rapidly establishing a national reputation, most notably for the much publicised 1905 commission to manufacture the gates for Sir Aston Webb's re-modelling of the forecourt of Buckingham Palace.

The Guild maintained a London office and showroom at 7 Newman Street and Llewelyn Roberts began to spend much of his time there seeking out and working on commissions. By 1909 his reputation was such that *The Studio Yearbook* referred to him as 'a well-known designer of metal-work.' Going on to say that: 'His recent important commissions include the whole of the decorative metal-work – bronze, brass and iron, electric fittings, cast bronze and marble columns, wrought-iron balconies etc. – for Messrs. Debenham and Freebody's premises

3 Wrought-iron screen and gates for the Hamburg-Amerika Linie Building, 14-16 Cockspur Street, London (Architectural Review, 1908, vol. 24, p. 129).

in Wigmore Street, London.' [8] However, it must be noted that this large, well-publicised commission of 1908 also came about through Claude Napier-Clavering's Kenrick family connections as Ernest Debenham (1865-1952), the proprietor of the firm, was his brother-in-law. During the same year, the Guild contributed chandeliers, other light fittings, ormolu and bronze screens and a very large wrought-iron entrance screen and gates to the newly built Hamburg-Amerika Linie Building at 14-16 Cockspur Street, London (**Fig. 3**). This Neo-Baroque office building was designed by the architect Arthur T Bolton and was widely publicised in the architectural press of the day. In the same year the Guild was awarded a gold medal at the Franco-British exhibition. The following year a trade stand was taken at the Building Trades Exhibition and architectural metalwork was exhibited alongside fine, silver tableware. *The British Architect* describing a wrought-iron screen as: 'in the best traditions of the craft.' [9]

During the following years, a range of small-scale architectural commissions followed, including some for Aston Webb, but the Company's finances remained in a perilous state. In November 1909, in order to 'reconstruct the old company' the committee resolved that it should be wound up. The following month, the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft Ltd., with total debts of £2772/1/2 went into voluntary liquidation. Shortly after it re-emerged as 'The Birmingham Guild Ltd.', with increased financial backing and new shareholders, although the bulk of the company's shares remained in the hands of the chairman, Kenrick (4200) and managing director Napier-Clavering (3395). [10]

In January 1911, Edward Gittins – who had strong family ties to Merseyside – moved to Liverpool to established The Birmingham Guild (Liverpool) Ltd., relinquishing his role of craftsman to act as an agent, with the intention of increasing the Company's sales in: 'Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, Cheshire and in North Wales, The Isle of Man and Scotland.' [11] The parent company and Charles Sydney Jones (Liverpool shipowner) were the joint majority shareholders in this venture followed by Gittins. Two other members of Liverpool's wealthy, Liberal, political elite; Elizabeth and Georgina Holt (respectively the widow and daughter of shipowner George Holt) invested £100 each. The following year, through this connection, the Guild supplied all the light fittings to the new Holt Line offices in the recently completed Royal Liver Building. A few months later, during the summer of 1911, Claude Napier-Clavering decided to travel to New York in the hope of finding new markets for the Birmingham Guild in North America. As recounted by his son, the trip did not go according to plan; once free of his wife, family and controlling father-in-law, 'poor Claude' found himself distracted by the ladies

of New York. He soon stopped writing home and all contact was lost. After a few months of silence, a cousin who happened to be travelling to the United States on business was tasked with locating and returning the errant businessman. The mission was successful and late in the year Claude was returned to Birmingham a 'defeated and diminished' man. [12] By now the elderly William Kenrick must have lost all patience with his wayward son-in-law and Claude in turn was totally disillusioned with his role as managing director of the Guild. The situation limped along, unresolved, until early 1914 when Claude decided to sell his shares in the Company 'for a song'. The Birmingham Guild Ltd. was duly reconstructed with Kenrick and Gittins staying on as directors and shareholders and company secretary Hugh Roberts and his elder brother Llewelyn Roberts stepping to the fore. As was typical of the man, 'poor Claude's' decision to sell could not have fallen at a more unfortunate time, as events were unfolding in Europe that would shortly see the Company's declining fortunes change dramatically.

4 Wrought-iron screen and gate designed by Llewelyn Roberts (*The Studio Yearbook of Decorative 1915*, p. 149).

The commencement of the First World War in July 1914 seems to have had little immediate impact on the company which continued to manufacture architectural metalware and lighting. An elaborate, wrought-iron garden gate (**Fig. 4**) featuring a fruiting vine motif, was illustrated and favourably reviewed in the 1915 *Studio Yearbook*. [13] However, by August of that year advertisements were being placed in local newspapers for: 'fitters, fillers and strikers for government work'. [14] This move into 'war work' seems to have coincided with the departure of majority shareholder William Kenrick who finally relinquished his controlling interest at the advanced age of 86. Henceforth, the company would be entirely under the control of Hugh and Llewelyn Roberts and it is now, for the first time, that we get a sense of their complementary personalities. Llewelyn, although older and artistic, was a much more retiring character content to devote himself to creating designs for the company, alongside maintaining and building contacts with clients and architects in the City. To this end he remained based at the Guild's London showroom and office, leaving his brother to manage the day-to-day running of the workshop in Birmingham. Hugh, on the other hand, while outgoing and personable was not remotely artistic, although he was appreciative of fine craftsmanship throughout his life. (**Fig. 5**) However, he did bring a drive and natural talent for business to the partnership that was to prove crucial in the coming months and years and quickly began to demonstrate the business acumen that would eventually take him beyond the Guild and into the wider, manufacturing world as a highly successful, serial entrepreneur. [15]

Sometime in early 1915 the Birmingham Guild Ltd. turned itself over to the specialist manufacture of aircraft parts, placing it at the forefront of a cutting-edge technology little more than a decade old. This was a remarkable and dramatic re-invention of a company which, when founded 25 years before, had been inspired by the medieval guild system. Looking to the future and not the past undoubtedly saved the Guild and would characterise its approach for many years to come. A retrospective newspaper feature published in 1958 reveals:

> *'The Guild's first contact with the de Havilland Company goes back considerably further... Since the early days of the 1914-1918 war there has been an association between the two companies and the Guild can claim to be one of the oldest, if not the oldest of the sub-contractors to de Havilland. There are several workpeople still in the Guild's employ who can recollect manufacturing parts for the D.H.4., D.H.9., and D.H.10. Of those early days, products included petrol tanks, ammunition boxes and a peculiar circular seat fixed on a tubular ring to which three Lewis guns were attached. The gunner had to swivel round in his seat to fire whichever gun was in line with his target'. [16]*

5 R. Hugh Roberts seated in the Director's Office of The Birmingham Guild Ltd., Great Charles Street, Birmingham c.1918-19 (private collection). Hugh is surrounded by the work of his predecessor, Arthur Stansfeld Dixon who designed virtually all the metal items on display and the hanging shelves, desk and the chair to the left of the fireplace.

In January 1916 the Military Service Act was passed which imposed conscription on all single men aged between eighteen and 41 while a second Act, passed in May 1916, extended conscription to married men. Contemporary newspaper advertisements document the rapid growth of the company up to this time and its constant need to recruit more labour. These Acts would potentially have a hugely detrimental effect on both future recruitment and the size of the existing workforce and so, the ever-pragmatic Hugh Roberts turned his attention to an un-tapped resource. Advertisements started appearing in 1916 for: 'educated women, previous experience not essential', followed in 1917 by requests for: 'educated women, aged 20 to 35, of strong physique.' [17] (**Fig. 6**) Many years later he would be remembered as being one of the: 'first to undertake the organisation of the services of educated women.' [18] Concurrently, in July 1916, Edward Gittins, with no products to market, was forced to liquidate The Birmingham Guild (Liverpool) Ltd. but remained a director and shareholder of the parent company. The huge profitability and rapid growth of the Guild during the war years is strikingly demonstrated by the construction of a new building adjoining the Great Charles Street workshop virtually doubling the available space. The visual contrast between the two buildings is both striking and deliberate. (**Fig. 7**) Arthur Dixon's 'workshop' building of 1897-98 is a quintessential piece of understated, Arts & Crafts architecture. Although constructed for industrial use, it effects the appearance of domestic buildings and is rendered in a vernacular idiom reminiscent of certain sixteenth and seventeenth-century buildings in Dixon's beloved Cotswolds. In contrast, the new 'factory' building makes no attempt to harmonise with its neighbour, adopting a simple, rectilinear, proto-modernist aesthetic that visually reinforces the rejection of the past and the embracing of the future. Although the Guild exited the war as a highly specialised aero-parts manufacturer: 'the largest producers of exhaust manifolds in the Kingdom', according to *Flight Magazine*, the cessation of hostilities required a rapid return to the pre-war focus on architectural metalwork. [19] However, the post-1918 Guild was a radically different company to that which had 'limped' into the war. It now exhibited a bullish vigour and self-confidence that can only have resulted from the huge profits it had recently made, combined with its director's progressive and open-minded attitude to the work it was willing to undertake.

Birmingham Guild work produced before the war was hand-made, using little in the way of machinery other than a spinning lathe and some small-scale casting. Architectural projects were, out of necessity, relatively modest in scale but in the early years, this was considered a virtue and not a limitation. Arthur Dixon went so far as to state in 1895 that: 'The Guild does not minimise the importance of this commercial aspect of its industry, but it seeks only to make as much profit as is necessary to cover the expenses of its work, and to provide its designers and craftsmen with a sufficient remuneration.' [20] This is quite clearly the voice of a socially-minded philanthropist, but we must also remember that Dixon was independently wealthy and only had to consider the welfare of a small workforce which, at the turn of the twentieth century, numbered around 20 men. The Roberts brothers were of a younger generation and, while still exhibiting some aspects of Dixon's idealism, were far more progressive in their outlook. War work had exposed them to the benefits of batch-production, diversification of product lines and economies of scale. They had also accrued a much larger workforce, probably numbering over 200 at the cessation of hostilities, who needed to be gainfully employed. Rather than taking stock and consolidating, Hugh Roberts saw a golden opportunity and went on the offensive. In one decisive act, the manufacturing capabilities of the Guild were massively increased by merging with a venerable, Birmingham-based metalworking company.

By 1919, although well-known and widely respected, the firm of Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. was struggling, having been in decline for many years. It was a company with a long and distinguished history, synonymous with finely produced architectural and ecclesiastical metalwork – invariably in the Gothic taste – and had executed pieces designed by many of the 'great and the good' of High Victorian architecture including: Seddon, Talbert, Burges, Butterfield and Waterhouse. Its history stretched back over a century to 1817, when Charles Hart opened an ironmonger's shop in London. In the 1840s he was joined by his son and, as the business prospered, they expanded into the manufacture of ecclesiastical metalwork. Hart & Son benefited greatly from the exposure and acclaim their wares received at the 1851 Great Exhibition and the firm grew rapidly. Around 1866 they merged with Peard & Jackson to form Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. The new firm had London showrooms in Brook Street and Regent Street and a small factory in Drury Lane. For large scale manufacture and casting, however, the firm looked to Birmingham, the country's leading centre for the manufacture of non-ferrous metal items. To this end Charles Hart moved to the city to open a large factory, including a forge and foundry, at Grosvenor Street West, named The Grosvenor Works, close to the city centre. (**Fig. 8**)

6 Interior of one of the Great Charles Street workshop spaces c.1918-19 (private collection).

7 The new factory extension (right) to Arthur Dixon's original Guild Building of 1897-98 (left). A photograph taken from Great Charles Street c.1918-19 (private collection).

8 The sand-casting workshop of Hart, Son, Peard & Co. Ltd., Grosvenor Street West, Birmingham c.1920 (private collection).

Fifty years later this struggling concern provided the financially buoyant Birmingham Guild with an opportunity that was too good to miss. Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. offered Hugh and Llewelyn Roberts three things: the necessary plant and equipment to undertake much larger scale architectural projects, a highly skilled workforce experienced in a wide range of metalworking techniques and much needed space in which to expand. Although technically a 'merger' this was to all intents and purposes a takeover. Although some of Hart's former directors did accept seats on the board of the newly restructured Birmingham Guild Ltd. they delegated the day-to-day running of the company to the Roberts brothers, who were both joint-managing directors and majority shareholders. The brothers now had the capabilities to take on ambitious projects and embrace the opportunities offered by the post-war world. A radical transformation was now complete; the pre-war, small-scale 'medieval' craft workshop was gone, and the Birmingham Guild had successfully re-invented itself as a large, 'modern' organisation where design and craftsmanship could merge with industrial production.

Since the mid-1890s the Guild had promoted itself through the infrequent publication of illustrated trade catalogues showcasing its work. In the post-war environment the issuing of catalogues increased dramatically and so did the range of work they featured. The first: *Hand Wrought Church Metalwork* published shortly after the war ended and before the merger with Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. appears anachronistic and could easily be mistaken for a much earlier work. [21] It features standard pre-war products such as altar crosses, candlesticks, chalices and ewers, the majority executed to the designs of A.S. Dixon who by this date had severed his association with the Guild. However, the last few illustrations were devoted to bespoke memorial plaques which were in huge demand during the first few years of 'the peace'. This booming market was specifically targeted within a matter of months by the publication of a second catalogue: *Memorials: the work of the Architect and Craftsman in the execution of war memorials illustrating examples of the crafts of enamelling & carving in marble and stone.* [22] This 'wordy' 28-page catalogue is a curious work that combines a lengthy polemic on the relationship between sculptor, architect and craftsman alongside a brief survey of historical and contemporary war memorial designs from the likes of Alfred Stevens, Ralph Knott and Thomas S. Tait. Finally, it launches into its intended purpose of promoting and documenting memorials recently executed by the Guild. The chosen examples all demonstrate the increased range of techniques the company now had at its disposal following the merger with Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. and for the first time, we gain an insight into the intentions and preoccupations of Hugh and Llewelyn Roberts. Various production methods and materials are discussed in some detail before an enamelling technique, recently pioneered by the Guild, is introduced for the first time. This involved using vitreous enamel as a replacement for wax, to pick out or emphasise engraved lettering on brass or bronze plaques and signs and would soon become a very profitable area of activity. (**Fig. 9**) The advantage of enamel was: 'Apart from the greater brilliance of colouring to be achieved by vitreous enamel, there is the obvious advantage of its entire permanence and the fact that it only has to be dusted and cleaned.' Common to the various technical processes discussed is an overarching focus on high quality typography: 'the design and execution of good lettering.' For chief designer Llewelyn Roberts, the 'exemplar' is the carved lettering found on the base of Trajan's Column: 'the source and inspiration of all noble and dignified lettering.' Like so many others, the Roberts brothers' response to the horrors of the First World War was to reject romanticism and adopt a cool and considered classicism. They conclude by stating:

> *'We trust that our efforts in this direction, which we believe to be the only true and proper one, will receive encouragement, and that simplicity and dignity may take the place of meretricious over-ornamentation which in the past so often disfigured the walls of our Churches and Public Buildings'.*

9 Examples of enamelled bronze tablets from Memorials: *The Work of the Architect and Craftsman… c.*1920, p. 27 (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery).

'Simplicity and dignity' would indeed characterise much of the work produced by the Guild in the years that immediately followed the war. An approach further demonstrated in a third catalogue, *Lettering*, published in January 1919 and subtitled: *examples of the productions of the Birmingham Guild Ltd. for commercial and office purposes fascia & stall board lettering, signs and name plates in brass, bronze and enamel.* [23] As verbose as *Memorials,* but aimed squarely at a commercial audience, it adopts a very direct, almost 'hard sell' tone. Commencing with a one-page polemic on: 'The advantages of good lettering as a selling force', it argues the importance of creating a positive first impression by utilising: 'design of dignified and artistic conception which gives the initial character to the shop front and forms the best advertisement for the whole business.' Shop owners are urged to avoid 'the worst form of economy' which is to not spend enough on their shop fronts! It is admitted that the Guild do not manufacture 'cheap' lettering, however, their services as designers would be provided to facilitate: 'the placing and arrangement of this lettering so that your name may tell to the best advantage and guarantee the value of your goods.' Even though recent advances in technology and production techniques allowed some cost savings to be passed on to the customer, the fact remained that costly, skilled handwork was involved in virtually all the products the Guild manufactured; the need to justify the prices it charged became a major theme of much of its promotional material.

The company's forceful advocacy of rational design combined with the use of 'good' and 'dignified' lettering in public spaces echoes the major concerns of The Design & Industries Association which was founded in 1915. Post-war membership of this organisation, devoted to persuading manufacturers and designers to adhere to principles of 'good design', vastly increased the Roberts brothers' circle of contacts and introduced them to business leaders and influential designers such as Ambrose Heal, Gordon Russell and Harold Stabler. The clarion call of the D.I.A. was 'fitness for purpose' and as we have seen, this criterion was eagerly adopted by the Guild, espoused in its promotional literature and applied to its own austere, in-house designs. (**Fig. 10**)

10 James Lyle & Co. Ltd. shopfront including iridescent enamelled, bronze letters and bronze architectural metalwork c.1919 (private collection). An example of the cool, understated, rational design promoted by the D.I.A.

The D.I.A. was an organisation deeply suspicious of ornament and decoration. However, by slavishly following its 'approved' principles of 'good design', many competing manufactures found their products becoming very similar. The widespread use of the Guild's favoured 'Trajan' font by many of the exhibitors at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, was wryly commented upon in the publication *Commercial Art*. Their reporter states: 'at the exhibition it has been "Trajan, Trajan, all the way".' [24] For the Guild a watershed had been reached and whether it was through commercial concerns, or born out of creative frustration, or simply a response to the zeitgeist of the Roaring Twenties, the wholesale adoption of D.I.A. principles was jettisoned. Presaging this change in direction was the arrival at the Guild during the early 1920s of the mysterious Japanese workmaster, Shozo Kato (b.1863). [25] Kato was a master enameller and sometime dealer in Japanese Art who worked closely with Harold and Phoebe Stabler during the years 1912-1918. It was probably through this connection that he met Llewelyn Roberts who successfully persuaded him to relocate to Birmingham. He had an immediate impact on the work of the Guild as his expertise, previously applied to jewellery, was used to pioneer the use of large-scale vitreous enamelling within an external architectural context. (**Fig. 11**) *The Studio* magazine commenting in 1921:

> *'The Guild has recently experimented with the use of enamel for exterior decorative effect, and an example of its use may be seen in the entrance hall of Messrs. Marshall & Snelgrove's premises in Oxford Street, London, where this form of treatment has been employed. Attention has been called in* ***The Studio*** *and elsewhere to the need for a little more colour in London exteriors, and this experiment, therefore, is a move in the right direction'. [26]*

11 A large champlevé plaque designed by Llewelyn Roberts and executed by workmaster Kato *c.*1926. Frontispiece to *Tradition and Modernity in Metalwork*, 1929 (author's collection).

Kato, despite steadfastly refusing to reveal his techniques to his fellow craftsmen, did develop a close working relationship with his employer and appears to have been a major factor in spurring him towards a remarkable Indian summer as a creative designer. Previously content to work in the background, interpreting architects' drawings and sometimes making his own, understated contribution to architectural schemes, the Guild's chief designer Llewelyn Roberts, now in his mid-40s, unexpectedly stepped into the limelight.

12 Original design in pencil by Llewelyn Roberts from *Smithcraft* c.1926 (private collection).

There were more contributing factors to this remarkable turn of events than simply the arrival of workmaster Kato. The move away from restrictive D.I.A. design principles opened up new approaches and it is important to understand that by the mid-1920s, the day-to-day responsibility for running the Guild had been delegated to Llewelyn. His younger brother Hugh was preoccupied with other, even more profitable businesses that he had been developing since 1920. The middle-aged Llewelyn must also be credited with taking a keen interest in, and much inspiration from, the latest developments in the applied and decorative arts, particularly those of France and the USA. He wholeheartedly embraced the stylistic treatments and decorative motifs of the design trend that would become known as Art Deco. (**Fig. 12**) A major stylistic influence on his work at this point derived from the art of ancient Egypt. Llewelyn was not alone as many designers fell under the spell of 'Egyptomania', a transatlantic vogue, massively stimulated by widespread media coverage of the major archaeological discovery of the decade: Howard Carter's excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. He would also have had plenty of opportunity to study the detailed reconstruction of that tomb that proved to be one of the most popular exhibits at the British Empire Exhibition. Prior to 1925 Llewelyn's designs can be characterised as being stylistically eclectic, earnest and a trifle staid; after this date they become coherent, colourful, dynamic and playful. In mid-life, Llewelyn Roberts proved himself to be a highly inventive designer of decorative architectural metalwork.

A pair of Guild catalogues, *Smithcraft* and *Enamelcraft* (c.1925-26) serve as a suitable introduction to the 'reinvented' Llewelyn Roberts. They feature striking examples of his design as cover images and contain an introductory text that serves both as a succinct history of each craft and as a brief autobiography of the designer. *Smithcraft* talks about the industry's reaction to the 'extravagances of the *New Art* movement' by retreating to a position of austere over-simplification but concludes on an optimistic note:

> *'At the present moment partly under the influence of the notable French Smiths' work exhibited at the* ***Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs Modernes*** *there appears to be a far more wholesome trend in the direction of real imagination in design, and the right and proper use of material'. [27]*

Four of the illustrations in *Smithcraft*, show the work or design drawings of Llewelyn Roberts although the first image is of a large set of wrought iron memorial gates recently executed by the Guild for the British Medical Association to the designs of Sir Edwin Lutyens. The Guild were

by now executing designs for the leading architects of the day: Lutyens, in particular, would have a long, close relationship with the company, often overseeing the manufacture of his designs at the Grosvenor Works. (**Fig. 13**) In *Enamelcraft*, a publication that features many colour illustrations, Llewelyn Roberts subconsciously undermines his younger self by gently mocking the, 'finger plates, hearth canopies and curbs embellished with spots and roundels of enamel – bright assertive patches – the last relic of commercialised *Art Nouveau*.' [28] The Guild distances itself from these 'trifles' by explaining that its motivation was to explore, 'the possibility of colour decoration in architecture – a colour decoration that would be permanent, harmonious, strike a note of gaiety without being bizarre, and capable of production at a moderate cost.' (**Fig. 14**) Then follows a long description of the Guild's development of memorial tablets, name plates and signs. By the mid-1920s, these had become so successful they were becoming ubiquitous with clients including: the London General Omnibus Co. (bus stops), the General Post Office (location signs) and the Royal Borough of Kensington (street name signs). (**Fig. 15**) In conclusion Roberts explains that the Guild's experiments with enamel techniques were,

> *'with a view to evolving a serious form of exterior decoration of buildings on a scale hitherto unattempted – Its designers considered that on many types of architectural elevations such as shop frontages, entrance doors, windows etc., colour decoration might well take the place of mouldings and enrichments in relief; that it was quite unnecessary that it should be crude or assertive, but that it could be used soberly and with distinction…'.*

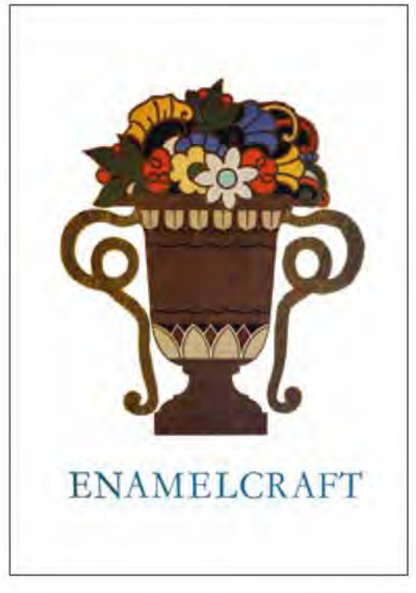
The publication ends by stating, '*The Birmingham Guild's* designers welcome the opportunity of co-operating with architects who desire to use this new form of decoration on their buildings.' This appears to have had the desired effect, catching the attention of a New York-based architect who had taken on a large, commercial commission in central London.

The National Radiator Building on Great Marlborough Street was designed in 1928 by the leading American architect Raymond Hood (1884-1931) working in collaboration with the Scotsman, S Gordon Jeeves. (**Fig. 16**) It was a reduced version of Hood's 1924, American Radiator Building on Bryant Park, Manhattan, the New York premises of the parent company of the English firm. It stands as Hood's only European building and is a rare example of an American tower block design on a London scale. Clad in polished black marble, picked out with vibrant enamel trimmings manufactured by the Guild, it is a striking edifice, especially when compared to Liberty's Tudor-revival building opposite, built only four years previously. The Egyptian-influenced, enamel trimmings of formalised lotus and geometric patterns in yellows, oranges and greens that surmount the ground floor windows and doors are likely to have been designed by Llewelyn Roberts, since they feature many motifs similar to those found in his signed drawings of this period. [29]

The architectural application of another innovative material, Firth's 'Staybrite' steel, was pioneered by the Birmingham Guild during the mid-1920s. This was a stainless steel invented in 1924 which included nickel in addition to chromium, in its composition. This combination created a highly polished, corrosion-proof, silver metal, ideally suited to exterior use. A catalogue was issued (**Fig. 17**) demonstrating the combined potential of vitreous enamel and stainless steel, *Permanent Exterior Decoration in Staybrite Steel and Guild Enamel*. [30] The virtues of this 'wonder' material were extolled as follows:

> *'The advent of* ***Firth's Staybrite Steel****, in combination with the* ***Guild Vitreous Enamel*** *decoration has made it possible to have a Shop Front of polished silver effect with colour cunningly introduced like that of a jewel – and this effect is permanent – proof against rain and weather, acid-laden atmosphere, sunshine or fog. The frame needs cleaning only in the same way by the same method, and by the same man who cleans the plate-glass window'.*

13



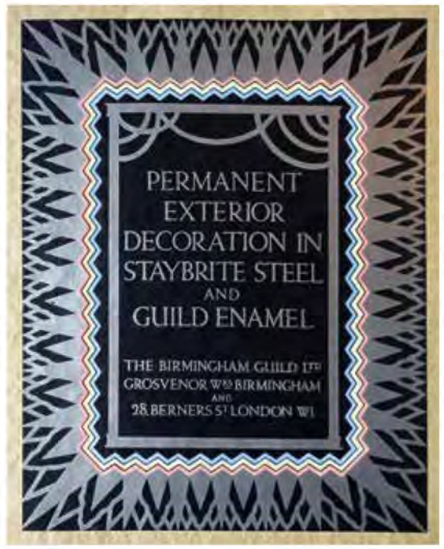
14

15

13 The towering gates of Government House, Delhi, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens *c.*1929 (private collection).

14 A typically exuberant champlevé bronze architectural adornment designed by Llewelyn Roberts graces the cover of *Enamelcraft c.*1925 (private collection).

15 Cast iron and enamelled bus stop designed by Llewelyn Roberts from *The Birmingham Guild Ltd., Architectural and Decorative Metalworkers c.*1932, p. 78 (author's collection).



17 A suitably 'jazzy' cover design for the Guild's introduction of Staybrite Steel c.1927 (private collection).

20 The cover of *Decorative Uses of Nickel Alloys* 1932 (Birmingham Library, Wolfson Collection).

18 The Guild's exhibition stand, designed by Llewelyn Roberts, for the 1927 British Industries Fair, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham (private collection).

19 Promotional postcard for the British Industries Fair, 1927 (private collection). The repoussé panel is that featured lower right in the Guild's exhibition stand for the fair.

The publication also explains the benefits of shop fittings manufactured in stainless steel as 'silver clashes with no colour' and was therefore an ideal backdrop to any product. To promote the material further, it created a striking 'Staybrite' trade exhibition stand, showcasing Llewelyn Roberts' most recent designs, for the 1927 British Industries Fair. (**Figs 18, 19**) 'Staybrite' was such a commercial success for the Guild that by the early 1930s, when The Bureau of Information on Nickel produced a richly illustrated guide: *Decorative Uses of Nickel Alloys*, almost all the examples shown were designed by Llewelyn Roberts and manufactured by the Guild. [31] (**Fig. 20**)

The September 1928 Edition of *Architectural Review* contained a long, well-illustrated appreciation of The Guild's work by the leading architectural writer Sir Lawrence Weaver (1876 –1930). It was re-printed shortly afterwards as a lavishly produced catalogue entitled, *Tradition and Modernity in Metalwork*, printed on hand-made paper with tipped-in illustrations. [32] This celebratory off-print contained a long and frequently inaccurate history of the Guild, painting Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. as the more significant 'parent' company. One illustration features a small detail of a very recent work that must rank as Llewlyn Roberts' masterpiece: the lift enclosures for Selfridge's department store on Oxford Street, London. (**Figs 21, 22**) These elaborate, monumental wrought-iron screens were installed on all eight floors of the building and feature many highly stylised foliate and figurative cast-bronze panels emblematic of the figures of the zodiac. These openwork panels are backed with yellow glass which could be backlit to spectacular effect. The quality of Llewelyn Roberts' design is such that for many years the whole scheme was thought to be the work of the designer of the lift interiors, the leading artist-blacksmith of his era, Edgar Brandt (1880-1960). Weaver uses the Selfridge's lifts as an example of the Guild's pragmatic approach to a commission that necessitated much repetition of the cast elements, making batch production the most cost-effective method for the client. He congratulates the Guild and defends their approach refuting, 'That there is something essentially base about repetitions and something

21 Zodiac themed lift enclosure for Selfridge's department store, Oxford Street, London, 1928: as displayed at The Museum of London (the author).

of outstanding virtue about making everything different, [these] are among the delusions which die hard.' The publication ends with a postscript added by Llewelyn Roberts, aimed squarely at architects, in which he argues passionately – from the standpoint of a designer of architectural metalwork – for more creative collaboration within the process. He states, 'It seems wise that designer craftsmen should not be regarded as outsiders working to precise and dogmatic instructions, but rather as essential elements in an orchestra of which the architect is the unquestioned conductor, without the desire to play every instrument in turn.' The piece ends with a remarkable *cri de coeur*:

> *'It is over twenty years ago that I ceased to be an ironmonger's bagman, but during the many years it was my business to supply various sorts of metalwork, under the direction of architects, I was not too often treated as a person whose fairly close study of his trade entitled his views to much respect. Where I was recognized as an expert in my own very small field I think I was able to give a service which was of real value to architects who employed and treated me as not wholly negligible in the field. I know at least that those who did encourage me got a first class job'.*

The Wall Street crash of 1929 followed by the worldwide depression seemed to have had little immediate effect on the Guild but it may be the reason why, in that year, it formed an association with the Crittall Manufacturing Company Ltd., well-known makers of metal casement windows. This close cooperation had great benefits for the Guild as it now gained world-wide representation through Crittall's many overseas agents, giving it access to new markets in South America, Africa, Asia and Australasia.

22 Details (compilation) of figures emblematic of the four winds from Selfridge's lift enclosure, 1928 (the author).

Llewelyn Roberts' voice is also clearly distinguishable in a feature article devoted to the Guild, in the *Birmingham Gazette* of Tuesday 24 June 1930, commencing as follows:

> *'Perhaps it is not realised or appreciated by those with artistic talent what a wealth of opportunity is offered in the designing of decorative metal work. For it is among metalworkers more than any other group of related craftsmen, that a liking for new forms and new treatment is most visible to-day. New processes of metal working are opening up vistas which may lead to an era of metal architecture which will supremely affect the range of contrasts and associations of colour in relation to neighbouring materials. In fact, we may one day awake from a world largely dull and drab with its unpretentious wood and brick buildings to a world embellished by rust-less metal architecture because its decorative value is recognised by commerce'. [33]* (**Fig. 23**)

The article continues as a lengthy history of the firm and documents more recent developments including the merging of the sales organisation with that of the Crittall Manufacturing Co. It also reveals that the Grosvenor Works were in the process of being almost doubled in size with the workforce rising to approximately 500. Under the heading, 'Craftsmanship First', the feature concludes by explaining that very little machinery is used, since all workers were highly skilled and the Guild was the biggest firm in the country confined entirely to this type of architectural work. It commends the Guild for, 'The part it is playing in retaining the old craftsmanship of the blacksmith and in beautifying the outward signs of commerce with the aid of influential architects is incalculable and must inevitably be reflected in a raising of the aesthetic standard in years to come.'

23 Repoussé Staybrite steel entrance doors for The National Provincial Bank, Coventry, 1929-30 (the author).

24 The Guild's showroom at 22 Bruton Street, London, illustrated in *The Birmingham Guild Ltd., Architectural and Decorative Metalworkers* c.1932, p. 120 (author's collection). The table, lamp, chairs, metal doors, panelling and plaster ceiling were all designed by Llewelyn Roberts.

Around 1930 the Guild moved its London showroom from 28 Berners Street (north of Oxford Street) to 22 Bruton Street in fashionable Mayfair. Here Llewelyn Roberts designed every element of what must rank as one of the capital's greatest, 'lost', Art Deco interiors. (**Figs 24, 25**) This stylish scheme was an interior worthy of a Hollywood movie, featuring an extensive use of colourful, decorative enamels and much use of expensive, exotic materials including ebony, cloisonné enamel and vellum. This, and other recent work, were included in the largest of the Guild's inter-war catalogues, *The Birmingham Guild Ltd. Architectural & Decorative Metalworkers,* published c.1932. [34] A testament to how far the Guild had come in little over a decade, it featured work ranging from huge architectural schemes such as the monumental, cast-bronze doors for the Bank of Boston in Buenos Aires and Lutyens' towering, wrought-iron gates for Government House, Delhi to more humble shop frontages, cast balustrades and a popular line in decorative, enamelled pub signs. (**Figs 26, 27**) The catalogue graphically captures the company at its zenith and proudly records that the Birmingham Guild Ltd. is,

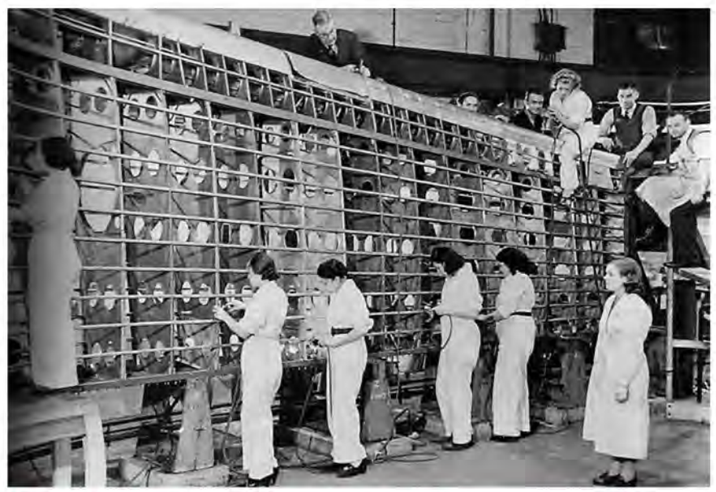
> *'A company of metalworkers, who produce from their own and architects' designs, wrought and cast ironwork, such as gates, railings, grilles, staircases, lift enclosures, fireproof steel doors, and escape staircases, bronze doors and windows, bank grilles, shopfronts, nameplates in bronze and enamel, memorial tablets, door furniture, electric fittings, cast lead work, fibrous plaster work, stained glass and woodcarving.'*

25 Table lamp in ebony and champlevé enamel for the Bruton Street showroom designed by Llewelyn Roberts c.1930 (private collection).

26 Cover of *Public House & Inn Signs* c.1934 (private collection). 'By Hammer & Hand' was the Guild motto from its earliest days.

27 Vitreous enamel pub sign in a bronze frame from *Public House & Inn Signs* c.1934 (private collection).

The company continued to provide all these services throughout the 1930s but as the prospect of war loomed, returned once more to aircraft production, recruiting female, oxy-acetylene welders as early as June 1939. [35] During the Second World War all architectural work ceased and, as in the First War, it returned to aviation contract work with a largely female workforce. It also renewed its connection with the de Havilland Company and much of the war was spent fabricating a wide range of parts for the iconic Mosquito fighter-bomber. (**Fig. 28**) However, unlike the First War, following the cessation of hostilities the Guild continued in the aviation industry well into the 1950s, eventually making parts for the de Havilland DH 106 Comet, the world's first commercial jet airliner, which entered service in 1952. Hugh Roberts' son, Roger Wyatt Roberts (1912 – 1997) became director of the Guild in 1940 with his father staying on as chairman, ultimately celebrating 50 years with the firm in December 1954. Hugh's older brother Llewelyn, the true driving force of the Guild, left before him, retiring at the close of the war aged 66.



28 Female workers fabricating an aircraft wing at the Grosvenor Works c..1944 (private collection).

The story of the post-war Guild is one of diversification and a long, slow decline. The company concentrated on four areas of work: architectural metalwork; aircraft components; Hart Agricultural (concerned with the manufacture of 'muck-spreaders' and potato elevators) and a foundry, still trading as Hart, Son, Peard & Co., Ltd. The architectural side of the business was hard-hit by a combination of post-war austerity and the younger generation of architects' wholesale embracing of 'Modernism'. Finding itself in a world where there was little place for ornate decoration or expensive materials, it tried to adapt as best it could, turning to utilitarian architectural metal fittings. It even had some success with a modular spiral staircase it had devised, named the 'Grosvenor' after its Grosvenor Works. [36] (**Fig. 29**) However, as the post-war Birmingham car industry boomed, it also proved difficult to attract and retain the skilled labour it had always relied upon as automotive work was better paid, not as dirty and much less strenuous. The decline continued into the early 1970s when the workforce had shrunk to under 100. In 1974 Roger Wyatt Roberts sold the Birmingham Guild to another pair of brothers who had a long association with the glass industry, Michael Weston and Brian Wynyates Smith. Henceforth, the Guild was a company specialising in the manufacture and installation of double-glazing units, with the Grosvenor Street West site being sold for redevelopment in 1985. The Birmingham Guild name was sold for a final time in 1997 to a Swiss glass manufacturer although it had long since ceased to exist as a trading company. [37]

29 The *Grosvenor Spiral Staircase* as displayed at the Ideal Home Exhibition c.1964 (private collection).

The history of the Guild is the tale of two interlinked but very different organisations, each creating a significant body of work under the leadership of two remarkable designer-directors. The better known is the first: the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft which, in the 1890s, under the direction of Arthur Stansfeld Dixon, produced some of the most radical and austere metalwork of the whole Arts and Crafts Movement. [38] The second iteration is largely forgotten today but during the 1920s and 30s, the Birmingham Guild Ltd., under the leadership of designer-director C.A. Llewelyn Roberts, became the country's leading manufacturer of architectural metalwork and was responsible for creating some of the most exuberant and progressive examples of British Art Deco design. (**Figs 30, 31, 32**) For too long, a veil of obscurity has masked the achievements of this second Guild and, those of its director Llewelyn Roberts, a man who considered himself to be a designer-craftsman, sympathetically interpreting in metal, designs made by architects and sculptors. When, in the mid-1920s he came to the fore as a designer, his graphically dynamic, two-dimensional work fell somewhere between each of the two professions, placing him in a no-man's land. This undeserved obscurity was further compounded by the protocol of the time whereby only the supervising architect would receive credit for a given project, irrespective of how significant Llewelyn Roberts' own contribution had been. Today the architectural sculpture of figures such as Gilbert Bayes and Charles Sargeant Jagger is widely known and appreciated as is the architectural metalwork of Edgar Brandt. A forgotten figure of twentieth-century British design, C.A. Llewelyn Roberts deserves a place alongside these names as an outstanding architectural decorator and technical innovator, a designer who demonstrably made a significant impact on the streets of towns and cities both at home and abroad.

30 Cast bronze ornaments designed by Llewelyn Roberts c.1930 from *The Birmingham Guild Ltd., Architectural and Decorative Metalworkers* c.1932, p. 116 (author's collection).

31 Wrought iron pub sign designed by Llewelyn Roberts c.1928 from *The Birmingham Guild Ltd., Architectural and Decorative Metalworkers* c.1932, p. 77 (author's collection).

32 Champlevé bronze door over-mantel, attributed to Llewelyn Roberts, for The National Radiator Building, Great Marlborough Street, London, 1928 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank: Mark Roberts, Alison Higgins, Tim Spencer, Mark Weston Smith and the staff of the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research within the Library of Birmingham.

NOTES

Please note: For brevity, publications of (Birmingham: The Birmingham Guild Ltd.) are credited as The Guild Ltd.

1 Hermann Hirschwald (1849-1906) opened his Berlin *Kunstgewerbehaus* (Arts and Crafts House) shortly after S. Bing opened his well-known gallery in Paris in 1895. The *Kunstgewerbehaus* hosted regular, themed exhibitions showcasing leading, contemporary European applied arts including one devoted to the British Arts and Crafts Movement in 1898.

2 William Kenrick (1831-1919) was a director of the family firm; the iron founders and casters, Archibald Kenrick & Sons. He served as mayor of Birmingham and MP for Birmingham North. His home The Grove (demolished), was rebuilt by J. H. Chamberlain. A highly decorated, panelled room from this scheme survives and is on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

3 King's College, Cambridge, Ashbee Journals, letter of 11 December 1899. The 'Steely One' was Joseph Chamberlain, who had no direct involvement with the Guild.

4 Alan Napier, *Not Just Batman's Butler: The Autobiography of Alan Napier* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2015), p. 16. Claude's son Alan became an actor, best remembered for playing Alfred, the butler, in the TV series, *Batman* (1966-68).

5 Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG): uncatalogued papers bequeathed by Hugh Birkett in 2002.

6 Only one copy is known, in the possession of the Roberts family.

7 Public Record Office (PRO). BT 31/11278/86238. Company No: 86238 Gitting [sic] Craftsmen Ltd.

8 *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art 1909* (London: *The Studio*, 1909), p. 153.

9 *The British Architect*, 23 April 1909, p. 289 and *The British Architect*, 30 April 1909, p. 312.

10 PRO. BT 31/19132/106403. Company No: 106403; Birmingham Guild Ltd.

11 PRO. BT 31/19802/113531. Company No: 113531; Birmingham Guild (Liverpool) Ltd

12 Napier, (as note 4) pp. 29-30.

13 *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art 1915* (London: *The Studio*, 1915), p. 149.

14 *Birmingham Mail*, 24 August 1915, p. 1.

15 At his death in 1955 R Hugh Roberts was: Chairman of The Birmingham Guild Ltd; Chairman and managing director of Super Oil Seals and Gaskets Ltd.; Chairman of Whitfield's Bedsteads Ltd.; Chairman of Bay Tree Hotels Ltd. and a former chairman of Fisher & Ludlow, a highly successful manufacturer of pressed motor body parts.

16 *The Birmingham Post & Gazette*, 4 October 1958, p. 9.

17 *The Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 December 1915, p. 1 and 10 September 1916, p. 1.

18 *Western Mail & South Wales News*, 1 March 1941, p. 4.

19 *Flight* (London) 28 November 1918.

20 *The Quest*, (The Guild Ltd.,) vol. 2, 1895, p. 27.

21 *Hand Wrought Church Metalwork* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1918-19. Copy at Birmingham Library, Wolfson Collection, LS10/B/154/1/6.

22 *Memorials: The Work of the Architect and Craftsman in the Execution of War Memorials Illustrating Examples of the Crafts of Enamelling & Carving in Marble and Stone* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1920. Copy at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (uncatalogued).

23 *Lettering: Examples of the Productions of the Birmingham Guild Ltd. for Commercial and Office Purposes Fascia & Stall Board Lettering, Signs and Name Plates in Brass, Bronze and Enamel* (The Guild Ltd.), February, 1919. Copy at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (uncatalogued).

24 F.A. Baker, *Commercial Art*, (London) vol. 3, July 1924, p. 60.

25 Shozo Kato was born in 1863 in Osaka, Japan. At the time of the 1911 census he was living in London with his English-born wife Edith and was a self-employed dealer in Japanese art with a gallery at 8 New Oxford Street, London.

26 *The Studio,* vol. 81, issue 337, April 1921, pp. 160-62.

27 *Smithcraft* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1925. Copy at RIBA Library, 729.9:691.7 // BIR.

28 *Enamelcraft* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1925. Copy at RIBA Library, 729.9:691.7 // BIR.

29 See *Smithcraft*, (as note 27) p. 4 for a drawing of a wrought iron gate featuring a similar, central flower motif with scalloped backdrop.

30 *Permanent Exterior Decoration in Staybrite Steel and Guild* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1927. Copy in the possession of the Roberts family.

31 *Decorative Uses of Nickel Alloys, With Illustrations by the Birmingham Guild Ltd.* (London: The Bureau of Information on Nickel, 1932). Copy at Birmingham Library, Wolfson Collection, LS 11/5/63/247162.

32 Sir Lawrence Weaver K.B.E., F.S.A. *Tradition and Modernity in Metalwork* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1929. Copy in the author's possession.

33 *Birmingham Gazette,* 24 June 1930, p. 10.

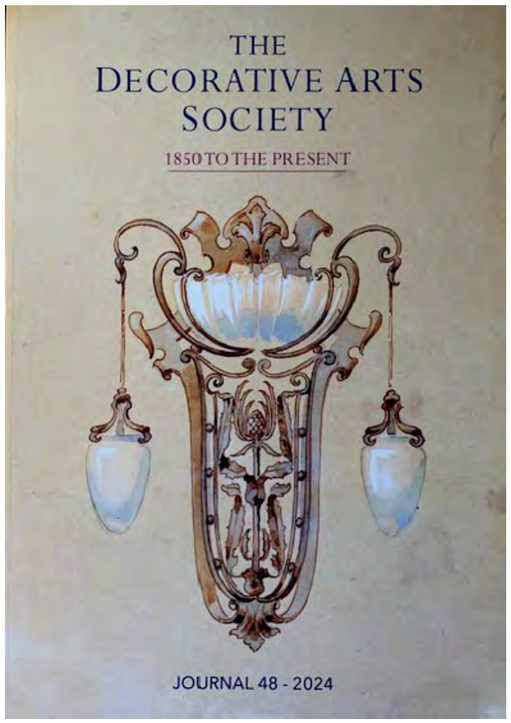
34 *The Birmingham Guild Ltd. Architectural & Decorative Metalworkers* (The Guild Ltd.), c.1932. Copy at Birmingham Library, Wolfson Collection, LS10/B/154/1/3

35 *Birmingham Mail,* 16 June 1939, p. 1.

36 *Guild Spiral Staircases*, c.1977. Leaflet at Birmingham Library, Wolfson Collection, LS10/B/154/1/2/1-4.

37 Telephone conversation with Mark Weston Smith, 8 August 2019.

38 Arthur Dixon's middle name was regularly mis-spelled as 'Stans*field*' during his lifetime, a practice which has continued to the present – he was given his mother's maiden name of 'Stans*feld*'.



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The Journal of The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present
Vol. 48. pp. 58-79 (2024).

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The Forgotten Radicals of 1930s British Furniture Design

TONY PEART

Much of the avant-garde, European-influenced, modernist furniture designed and manufactured in Britain during the 1930s has been well documented and exhibited, with a focus invariably falling on two related enterprises: Jack Pritchard and Wells Coates's Isokon company (which commenced manufacturing furniture in 1933) and Gerald Summers's Makers of Simple Furniture (established 1931–32). However, this is only part of a more complex story as Bauhaus-influenced, rational design was not the only European avant-garde style to make its way across the English Channel. In 1931 The Betula Ltd., a small woodworking company was established in London, producing furniture influenced by the design ideas of the Austrian philosopher architect, occultist, and educational reformer Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). The expressionist furniture they manufactured exemplified 'anthroposophical' design, a term coined by Steiner from 'anthropo' (human) and 'sophia' (wisdom). This was an all-encompassing approach to design and architecture evolving from the wider spiritual movement founded by Steiner that is part philosophy, part mysticism, and is focused on an intellectual and creative pursuit of the spiritual world.

The Betula Ltd. had four co-directors; Gladys Mayer, Francis Nevel, David Haes and Marjorie Turner but it is Mayer (1888–1980) (**Fig. 1**), who must be regarded as the prime instigator of this remarkable venture.[1] Born in Alsager, Cheshire but moving to Liverpool at an early age, hers was a large, comfortable, middle-class family (her father worked in the chemical industry) but following his bankruptcy and early death in 1902 the family lived in somewhat straitened circumstances. Nonetheless, Mayer studied at Liverpool School of Art for six years followed by a year spent in Spain, Egypt, Greece, Italy and France, studying in art galleries and museums. In 1915, in the British Museum Library, she read *The Way of Initiation*

9. *(left)* Chairs designed by Gladys Mayer for Betula Woodwork Association c.1932. Image courtesy Rudolf Steiner House and Sheffield University Special Collections.

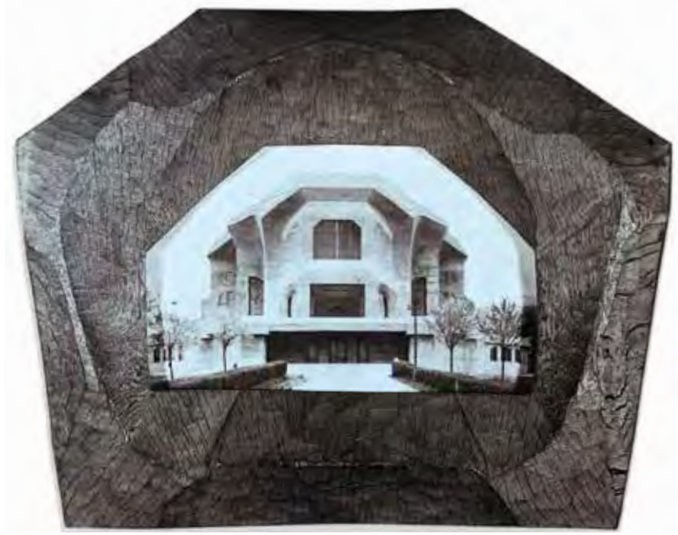
1. *(right)* Gladys Mayer c.1970. Image © Charlie Lawrie.

by Rudolf Steiner.[2] Although she was somewhat sceptical of its message, it left a lasting impression. During World War I she enlisted as a Red Cross nurse but following the cessation of hostilities and disillusioned with contemporary art, she began to study political economy, writing and lecturing to help promote the limited women's franchise, recently established by the Representation of the People Act of 1918. Mayer's study of political economy led to the study of sociology under the influence of Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1932) followed by active campaigning for The Liberal Party during the early 1920s. Gladys Mayer developed a strong social conscience, finding she had a natural gift for education and social enterprise that could be applied to the development of society on new lines. In April 1922, aged 34, she attended a meeting that set in motion a series of events that were fundamentally to alter the course of her life. As a delegate to The *New Ideals in Education* conference held in Stratford-upon-Avon, Mayer came across a copy of the Steiner book she had read in 1915 and discovered that the author would be delivering two papers at the conference. Although Steiner spoke in German (with an English translator), he was a mesmerising orator and his two lectures *Drama and Education* and *Shakespeare and the New Ideals* had a profound effect upon her. Steiner's first book on educational theory and practice, *The Education of Children,* appeared in English in 1911. The original Waldorf School, the first to put his ideas into practice, opened in Stuttgart, Germany, in September 1919. The Stratford conference presented the ideal opportunity for Steiner to plant the seeds of Waldorf education and his anthroposophist views within the Anglosphere. Taking place so soon after the end of the Great War, there were few in the conference audience, who had not been directly affected by the tremendous loss of life and injury. However, Steiner described an alternative vision of society and explained that:

> 'from 1913 until now … through the whole period of the war, while nearby the thunder of the cannon was heard, members of no less than seventeen nations have been working together at Dornach (Switzerland). That seventeen nations could work together peacefully during the greatest of all wars, this, too, seems to be a great ideal in education. What is possible on a small scale should be possible on a large scale.'[3]

Steiner's charisma and vision were enough to prompt Mayer to visit Vienna a few weeks later to hear him speak at the International Congress of the Anthroposophical Movement's 1922 conference, *East and West*. However, the decisive turning point came the following year when she first visited Steiner's community at Dornach in Switzerland. Here Steiner had designed and overseen the construction of the Goetheanum, a remarkable example of expressionist architecture, which served as a cultural and artistic centre and as the international headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society. The building housed performance spaces, a library, educational facilities, and artists' studios. During this visit Mayer was given personal instruction by Rudolf Steiner and decided that her future lay with the Anthroposophical Society. She returned to England to settle her affairs before moving to live in Dornach in 1924. Her arrival coincided with the construction of a second, larger Goetheanum (**Fig. 2**), built between 1924–28 in cast concrete after the original, largely wooden building was destroyed by an arson attack in 1922. In Dornach Mayer studied anthroposophical painting and gave art lessons while continuing her personal instruction with Steiner. As she later explained:

> 'When we talked together, I felt that I had known him for all time. I told him of all the terrible and wonderful experiences I had gone through… He listened quietly, and one had the impression he made his whole being receptive, soul to soul. Then explained my experiences with the simple words: "*Dies ist eine karmische sache!*" I felt enormous relief. Here, at last, is someone who understands, who takes all these astounding events calmly, and is competent to give advice. This is a matter of Karma.'[4]



2. *(left)* The Betula Woodwork Association anthroposophical frame, designed by Gladys Mayer c.1932 It features a photograph of the second Goetheanum, Dornach, Switzerland. Image courtesy Rudolf Steiner House.

3. *(right)* Paul Bay (1891–1952), anthroposophical sideboard and picture frame c.1928. Image courtesy Sheffield University Special Collections

Like William Morris before him, Steiner reacted to industrialisation and materialism by idealising the craftsmen of the Middle Ages, seeking to achieve spiritual renewal for society through art and design. His approach to creating a healing environment emphasised organic motifs to benefit those living in an overtly industrial age. As an architect he strived to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), in which there was to be no distinction between art and design, believing that both affected the body, mind and spirit. Steiner also maintained that the arts were most socially effective when put to use by the people. Far from being luxuries, anthroposophical art and design were spiritual necessities.

Although primarily engaged in painting, it is clear that during her stay at the Goethaneum Mayer closely scrutinised the anthroposophical furniture, picture frames and objects being produced by the architects and designers who had been drawn to Steiner, who included Paul Bay (**Fig. 3**), Felix Kayser, Oswald Dubach, Hans Itel and Herman Ranzenberger.[5] To them, an anthroposophical approach meant considering equally functional utility, spiritual function and individual artistic expression. As the designers absorbed Steiner's teachings, they developed individual approaches to furniture forms born of these shared values. Although difficult to define, anthroposophical furniture exhibits certain traits. These include the avoidance of the confining, right-angled 'box', a love of asymmetry and irregular flowing forms and a belief that the creator's soul is captured in the work. They also celebrate the essence of the natural material (wood), revealed through lively relationships and the use of double curves, which transition from convex to concave and give surfaces (often textured with the use of an adze) an organic, kinetic quality. Steiner saw a direct correlation between furniture and the human form. For him, the uppermost portion of a piece of furniture corresponded to the human head and mind and as such had a spiritually uplifting role and should be carefully considered by the designer and shaped accordingly.

Rudolf Steiner died in 1925, but his disciples, including Gladys Mayer, carried on their teacher's artistic vision, ensuring the continuity of his philosophy of design. Some became teachers at Waldorf/Steiner schools (which were rapidly being established across Europe) and imparted anthroposophical ideas to their young pupils. Although The Anthroposophical Society would be banned in Germany by the Nazis in 1935, the international movement survived World War II and continued to expand. Mayer was dismayed at the factionalism and in-fighting that developed in the Dornach community following Steiner's death and returned to England, determined to devote herself to promoting the cause. The timing of her return proved fortuitous as the Britain of the late 1920s was proving remarkably receptive to Steiner's ideas, resulting in a rapid growth in anthroposophical-inspired initiatives and social enterprises along with the establishment of many Steiner schools.

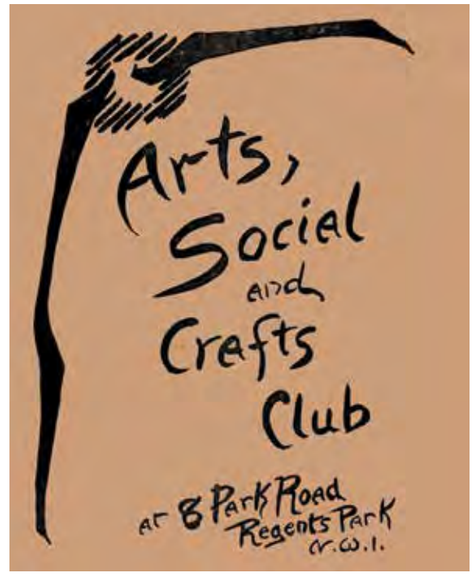
The Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain was established in 1923, based at 46 Gloucester Place in London, accommodation which soon proved inadequate. A purpose-built headquarters, Rudolf Steiner Hall (later House), was opened on 1 June 1926 at 35 Park Rd, adjacent to Regent's Park, in London (**Fig. 4**). Designed by the architect Montague Wheeler (1874–1937), an active member of the society, it was constructed in stages between 1926–37, and remains the capital's only expressionist building.[6] Mayer took a flat nearby in Gloucester Place, enabling her to devote herself fully to the work of the society. The close of the decade saw her pursuing a punishing schedule, commuting between London and her mother's house in Liverpool from where she ran weekly, fee-paying classes in Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, Llandudno, Harrogate, Leeds, Bradford and Ilkeston. Alongside her anthroposophical art classes, Mayer would lecture on a wide range of Steiner-related topics, offering instruction in Eurythmy (a form of expressive dance created by Steiner) and German language lessons (for those wishing to better comprehend Steiner).

As Steiner House evolved, Gladys Mayer lobbied to have an upper floor added to provide studio and workshop space for the informal arts and crafts club she established. Ultimately, she was displaced from the building when Ita Wegman (1876–1943) the co-founder (with Steiner) of anthroposophical medicine requisitioned the space. Mayer immediately, and somewhat provocatively, rented accommodation for her classes at 8 Park Road, located immediately opposite Rudolf Steiner House, putting The Arts, Social & Crafts Club (as it was named) on a more formal footing in 1930 by issuing a promotional leaflet (**Fig. 5**). This stated it was,

> 'founded to bring together people interested in Rudolf Steiner's work, especially in the domain of Art, and in making Art the bearer of a more spiritual impulse in social life as a whole.'[7]

4. *(left)* Rudolf Steiner House: the main staircase designed by Montague Wheeler c.1926. Image the author.

5. *(below)* Promotional leaflet for Gladys Mayer's Arts, Social and Crafts Club, 1930. Image courtesy Sheffield University Special Collections.



Its objectives were:

1. To develop the impulse given by Rudolf Steiner in the Arts
2. To make a study and application of the principles given by Rudolf Steiner in *The Threefold Commonwealth*[8]
3. To develop economic activities arising out of the new impulse in Arts and Crafts.

It was also stated that, 'The Club contains a Studio, Workshop, Tea Room and Club Room open to members daily, afternoons and evenings.' Mayer ran a Saturday afternoon class in painting and modelling and lectured on anthroposophy and art. Significantly, interior decoration and furnishing were to be the basis of the crafts work and Mayer also used the leaflet to promote private classes she would give in painting, modelling, metal work and embroidery design.

The postscript of a letter written in London on 31 August 1930 to Arnold Freeman (1886–1972), founder of The Sheffield Educational Settlement and a fellow disciple of Steiner, captures Mayer's excitement and shows her attention was turning to the creation of anthroposophical furniture,

> 'I have a great scheme of development for the Arts & Crafts here this winter, I am trying to see how the provincial group work can fit in so shall be interested to discuss it with you when possible. There's going to be a good deal of furniture required before long (Anthrop) – I wonder would it be possible for any of your wood workers to tackle it, with my designs to go on! It's got to be good workmanship of course too – I wish I could see a way to bring them in, hope it may be possible.'[9]

The 'good deal of furniture' was required to satisfy a newly established market comprising members of The Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain wishing to furnish their homes along anthroposophical lines, for Steiner House and other anthroposophical initiatives (such as the Sheffield Settlement) and also for the growing number of Steiner Schools being established at the time.[10]

The small-scale production of anthroposophical furniture must have commenced at 8 Park Road shortly afterwards as, by December 1931, it was thought necessary to hold a meeting of 'all those interested in the furniture making'. Here it was proposed and carried that, 'An association should be formed to put the furniture making on a[11] firm basis and extend it. It should be called the "Betula Woodwork Association".' The name Betula was chosen as it was the Latin genus of the birch – a pale wood much favoured in anthroposophical circles. It was also stated that, 'The Association shall be an Association of Producers and Consumers to further the impulse given by Dr. Rudolf Steiner in the sphere of Wood and Craft work.' A committee of five was duly elected, the most significant name listed being 'Mr. Knefel' (**Fig. 6**).

Franz Knefel (1911–1993) (anglicised to Francis Nevel during the mid-1930s), was born in Czechia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His mother, a family governess, placed him in care as the result of an affair with the married father of the household.[12] At the end of World War I a group of Red Cross workers, including Gladys Mayer, came across him in a camp near Vienna and sponsored his relocation to England. The Famine Area Children's Hospitality Committee, a charity that helped starving refugee children by bringing them to England for temporary foster-care, became involved in his case. Most of the children supported by the charity were returned to their native countries during 1921 but Francis Nevel was not. His continued stay was jointly sponsored by Marjorie Turner (1889–1972) and her younger, married sister Ruth Mallory (1891–1942), wife of the climber George Mallory, who perished attempting to climb Mount Everest in June 1924. The Turner sisters' father was the Arts & Crafts architect Hugh Thackeray Turner (1853–1937), a friend of William Morris and a prolific designer and decorator of ceramics, which were often shown at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society exhibitions.[13] Both sisters were close to their father; Marjorie lived in the Turner family home, Westbrook, a large house designed by Thackeray Turner, near Godalming and Ruth in her home, The Holt, nearby.

Probably on the recommendation of Chris Fraser Davies, (Gladys Mayer's right-hand-woman in the Arts, Crafts and Social Club), Francis Nevel initially attended Priory School, King's Langley, where Davies taught, spending his school holidays with the Mallory family in Surrey. This independent school was run by Margaret Cross (1866–1962), the first headteacher in Britain to adopt Steiner/Waldorf methods. Nevel was later removed from the school over concerns he was becoming malnourished and from 1926–29 he attended Rendcomb College (established in 1920), in the Cotswolds. The Founder and the first Headmaster, J. H. Simpson, fostered a keen interest in the arts and crafts and encouraged his pupils to use their hands. From its earliest days Rendcomb developed links with the Guild of Gloucestershire Craftsmen and with Loughborough College, particularly in the field of furniture-making. Thus, the young Francis Nevel became familiar with Cotswold furniture, both at school and during the holidays spent with the Turner family, for following George Mallory's death, Marjorie Turner took over the role of his principal guardian. Westbrook, where he spent his holidays, contained much fine furniture by Gimson and other members of the Cotswold School.[14]

6. Francis Nevel c.1935. Image courtesy Ternex Ltd.

After leaving school, Francis Nevel moved to London, gaining a job on the reception desk of The Waldorf Hotel. Although never a committed anthroposophist, he renewed his connection with Gladys Mayer and attended social events at Rudolf Steiner house and 8 Park Road, becoming part of her close social circle. He joined the committee of The Betula Woodwork Association and notes in the surviving, committee minute book, show that Nevel was both motivated and had a sound head for business. Having been appointed company secretary, one of his initial tasks was to locate suitable premises for the nascent enterprise, since both the first workshop, (in a derelict building in Park Street near Baker Street) and the second (in a cellar beneath Swiss Cottage Underground station) had proven inadequate.[15] The architect Montague Wheeler suggested locations in Kennington and Bray but eventually a lease was taken on a workshop centrally located at 1a Sharpleshall Street, Primrose Hill, a 30-minute walk from the company's registered office and showroom at 8 Park Road. This narrow, two-storey building, with a cellar, comprising former stables and coach houses, accessed through large gates down a cobbled side street, would serve as the company's primary workshop for the following 30 years. The cellar was used for timber storage (English hardwoods with an emphasis on walnut, sycamore, and oak), the ground floor had space for woodworking machinery, workshops and packing while the upper floor housed offices and a photography studio.

With the enthusiastic support of the close-knit anthroposophical community orders were received, including architectural woodwork for Rudolf Steiner House (**Fig. 7**), and work commenced. Gladys Mayer provided most of the designs for furniture, which was initially made only to commission, avoiding the need to pay regular wages. Funds were sufficient to purchase the company's first woodworking machine, costing £30, during the summer of 1932. A promotional flyer was produced for a small, three-day exhibition held at 8, Park Road in early June. Clearly aimed at anthroposophists it opened with a short paragraph introducing the company as one which had, 'the object of developing the impulse given by Dr. Rudolf Steiner in the sphere of woodwork'.

7. Betula Woodwork Association double door installed in Rudolf Steiner house c.1932. Image the author.

At around this time David Haes (1912–2002), a former schoolfriend of Francis Nevel's from Rendcomb College joined the enterprise. Haes had embraced furniture making while at Rendcomb and upon graduation had become an apprentice cabinetmaker at A E Winter & Co. of Norwich.[16] Made redundant during the economic slump of the early 1930s, which severely hit the furniture industry, he had moved to London looking for employment. As the company grew, he assumed responsibility for overseeing the manufacturing side of the operation and joined Gladys Mayer and Francis Nevel as the third of four company directors. The fourth director (a sleeping partner) was Marjorie Turner, Nevel's former guardian, who provided much needed financial investment when required.

At the committee meeting held on 16 June 1932, it was proposed to exhibit Betula furniture at an anthroposophical gathering at Glastonbury on 18 July and recent orders were discussed. Attempting to control the nature of the furniture produced, Gladys Mayer proposed that responsibility for designs should not rest with the maker but should be approved by the committee or by 'one appointed by the committee' who could assess quality from an artistic point of view. Mayer was duly appointed to this role. At the following meeting in October 1932, it was considered necessary to ask the company's financial backers to subscribe more capital, which was 'needed for extension' and permission was given for the workshop to make 'utility furniture' (i.e. utilitarian) alongside the bespoke anthroposophical furniture. It was also decided that an exhibition of recent work should be arranged for the following month.

The Betula never seems to have published a catalogue and the company appears to have promoted its output primarily by word of mouth, favouring studio photographs of completed pieces, which could easily be posted to potential clients, or in substantial

8. Betula Woodwork Association carved wooden fruit bowls c.1932

photograph albums to be consulted and returned, three of which survive.[17] The earliest of these albums contains only anthroposophical furniture designed by Mayer and indicates that until around 1933, 53 different designs had been produced. Although neither Steiner nor his ideas are mentioned, this album's anthroposophical credentials are established from the outset. The first image of a striking, heavily carved frame (see **Fig. 2**), is modelled on the front elevation of Steiner's second Goetheanum and displays a photograph of the building. Other examples of a deeply carved surface can be found in a set of 'yin and yang' fruit bowls (**Fig. 8**). This highly labour-intensive surface treatment was applied to much of the furniture made in Dornach, which was often executed without the use of machinery. However, the clean lines and smooth surface finish of The Betula furniture shows that from the outset it was designed with machine production in mind. Most of the furniture appears to be for domestic use and includes many chairs with hard or stuffed seats, folding variants (probably for institutional use) and even fully upholstered examples (**Fig. 9**). Washstands, beds and combination wardrobes also feature and found a market with flat-dwellers and were also used to furnish the dormitories of Steiner boarding schools. A highly asymmetric writing desk (displaying a framed portrait of Steiner) and a simple but stylish, faceted bookcase (decorated with Steiner's Eurythmy figures) also feature in the album (**Figs. 10, 11**).[18] Garden structures were also undertaken including an anthroposophical gazebo or summer house and a garden bench (**Figs. 12, 13**).

In February 1933 David Haes was co-opted onto the committee and there was much discussion regarding the design of furniture for The Betula. The committee Minute Book records some revealing observations,

> 'It was felt that a good deal of the furniture which has been made was not either designed or sanctioned by Miss Mayer, nor strictly utilitarian. But owing to economic difficulties, the furniture produced was in many cases for outsiders, and made according to the customer's taste. If the demand for furniture designed by Miss Mayer were big enough and continuous, then probably no furniture made to customers or other persons designs would be executed. There appeared to be no clear definition of what is "utilitarian furniture" and

10. *(above left)* Betula Woodwork Association desk designed by Gladys Mayer c.1932. Note the framed photograph of Rudolf Steiner.

11. *(above right)* Betula Woodwork Association bookcase with picture frame above, both designed by Gladys Mayer c.1932.The bookcase supports a selection of Rudolf Steiner and Edith Maryon's coloured plywood 'Eurythmy' figures.

what is "Anthroposophical furniture" but it was obvious that a good deal of the furniture made was in between the two, being neither one nor the other. Mr Knefel (Nevel) always thought that the customer should be allowed to choose the design they liked for furniture they were going to buy, and that it wasn't the Betula's business to impose designs on the customer which the customer didn't like. He thought that the policy of Betula should be as Mr Dunlop said in his speech at the opening of the Arts Social & Crafts Club to "cater for all tastes".[19] Miss Mayer did not feel in the same way about it. The problems facing the committee were:

- What is utilitarian furniture?
- What is anthroposophical furniture?
- Who is to be the judge as to what furniture the Betula may or may not make?
- Who may or may not make designs for furniture?'[20]

In these early exchanges one gains a strong sense of what would become an on-going, underlying tension between the company's instigator, Gladys Mayer, who clearly wanted The Betula to be an exclusively anthroposophical venture and the more pragmatic Francis Nevel who was keen to broaden the company's client base and produce designs that appealed to a wider audience. This friction would continue while Gladys Mayer was closely involved with the company. The second photograph albums of The Betula designs, dating from slightly later, contains a few examples of 'utilitarian furniture' (**Figs. 14, 15**), alongside a selection of more restrained anthroposophical pieces, and a large selection of Mayer's original designs.

At the Committee Meeting held on 27 February 1933, there was a discussion as to whether The Betula should be closed down owing to lack of funding for advertising purposes, or to carry on and attempt to raise £700 of additional capital. It was unanimously decided to pursue the latter course.

A general meeting was held on 15 March 1933, in the Studio of The Arts, Social & Crafts Club which had recently relocated

12. *(above left)* Betula Woodwork Association anthroposophical summer house c.1932.

13. *(above right)* The Betula Ltd. garden bench, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1936.

the short distance to 33a Park Road. The balance sheet showed a net profit of £43-14-7 for the year and discussion centred on the possibility of issuing a small catalogue of anthroposophical furniture for the members of The Anthroposophical Society of Great Britain, and that a separate catalogue should be issued for 'other' people. It was suggested (most likely by Gladys Mayer) that the aim of The Betula should be to make furniture of 'quality and distinction' which one could not obtain from any other organisation, which would be better than trying to make everyday furniture in competition with mainstream commercial manufacturers (**Figs. 16, 17, 18**). However, it was also pointed out (probably by Francis Nevel), that The Anthroposophical Society alone could not keep The Betula fully employed and that the general public must be approached. At the same meeting it was agreed to launch an appeal to raise £800 of essential capital investment. At a subsequent meeting in July of the same year, it was decided that, 'Mr. Knefel (Nevel) should bring forward a

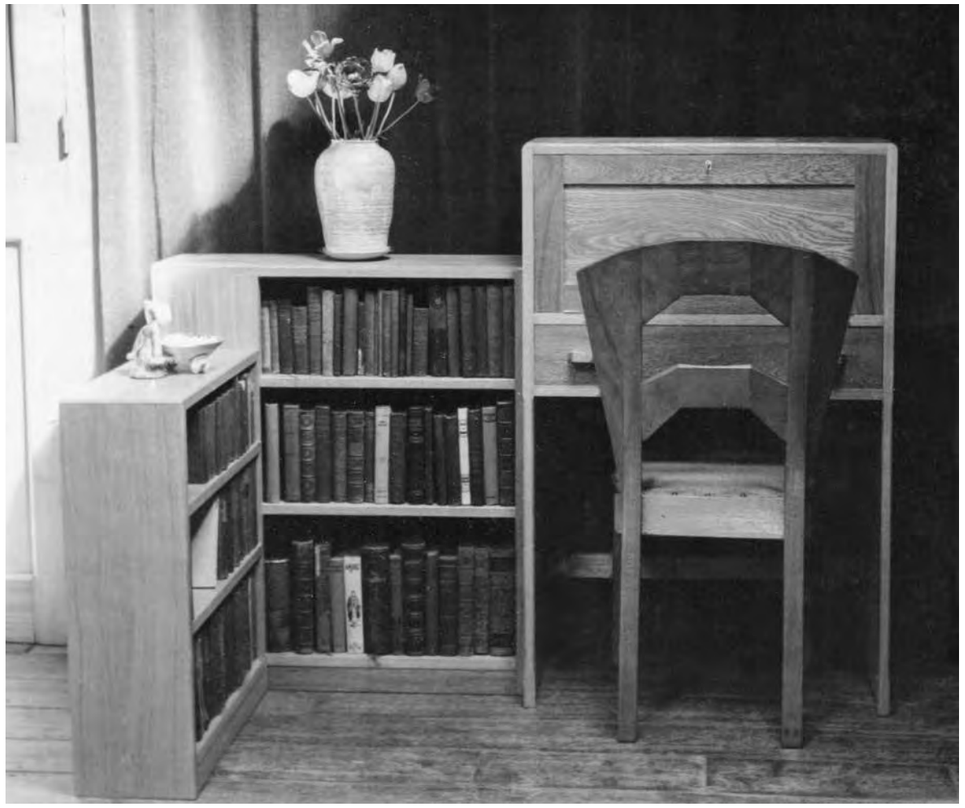
14. *(right)* The Betula Ltd. combination wardrobe, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1936. An example of the 'utilitarian' furniture the company could produce, and a type often found in the dormitories of Steiner Schools.

suggestion for a new payment basis for Miss Mayer's designing and forward the suggestion to her for acceptance or rejection.'

At the committee meeting held on 31 May 1934, accounts were accepted showing an increased annual profit of £66-13-0. Francis Nevel questioned the commission paid monthly to the Arts and Crafts Club run by Mayer, feeling that commission should only be payable on orders received. Mayer disagreed with his suggestion on the grounds that, 'since her Arts and Crafts Club had given The Betula the "send off" in the first place, it would be rather a pity to break away now, especially at a time when the position of the Club was in its present condition.'

The final meeting documented in The Betula Woodwork Association Minute Book, held on 13 December 1934, recorded a proposal that the association become a limited company, which was agreed to be a sound idea and approved unanimously. It was pointed out that the cost of converting the company would be between £20 and £30 and because there were some sixteen shareholders (many living outside London), the limited liability would be a wise move. This would make it easier for the company to raise more capital which was badly needed.

By 1935 the day-to-day running of the company had transferred to Francis Nevel and David Haes with the freehold for the Sharpleshall Street workshop, previously rented, purchased with capital supplied by David Haes's father. There had been no falling out with Gladys Mayer, but her



15. The Betula Ltd. combination corner bookcase and writing desk, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1936. Another example of 'utilitarian' furniture, the chair is an earlier anthroposophical design by Gladys Mayer.

16. *(right)* The Betula Ltd. combination bed and side cabinet, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1936, pictured in the Sharpleshall Street workshop.

17. *(below left)* The Betula Ltd. corner wardrobe, designed by Gladys Mayer c.1932.

18 . *(below right)* The Betula Ltd. dressing screen, designed by Gladys Mayer c.1932.

attention had shifted back to promoting the wider Rudolf Steiner movement through her tireless lecturing, art teaching, writing and involvement with various Steiner inspired initiatives.[21] She continued to provide occasional designs but most of the later furniture designs were provided by Haes and Nevel. The less assertive David Haes was content to focus on the making side of the business (he had his own workshop at Sharpleshall Street), leaving the more outgoing Francis Nevel to develop a role (never officially sanctioned) equivalent to managing director. There was still a focus on anthroposophical design, demonstrated by a letter written in 1935 from Nevel to Captain Michaele, a potential client. The correspondence reveals how business was conducted and the flexibility of the company,

> 'Enclosed is a selection of photographs, perhaps from them you could form some definite ideas as to what you would like. Please let us know the number of pieces of furniture required, approximate sizes and descriptions. Also whether you would like the furniture in Oak, Walnut, Beech, Birch, Maple or Mahogany etc. And further, do you like what we know as Anthroposophically designed furniture, or would you prefer something with hardly any forms in the design, or even something more in a period and conventional style? We rather assume that you would like something Anthroposophical. We would forward you drawings for anything required.'

An invoice from August 1935 relating to the loan of capital from David Haes's father, records the company as having the following departments: 'Furniture Manufacturing; Panelling; Upholstery; Furniture Repairing; Garden Furniture; Summer Houses; Decorating and Removals.' On 31 January 1936, the restructured limited company, now simply titled 'The Betula Ltd.' commenced trading.

With Francis Nevel at the helm a more serious attempt was made to market the company; a logo and promotional flyers were designed (**Fig. 19**). He also consciously sought to move away from a predominantly anthroposophist clientele. The company exhibited with the long-running Home Arts and Industries Association in November 1936 at their annual exhibition held at Dorland Hall, London. The company's exhibits found favour with *The Cabinet Maker* which illustrated a chair and writing table in walnut (**Fig. 20**). The anonymous reviewer stated,

> 'Excellent "grown-up" furniture was displayed by The Betula, a small firm now in its fifth year of working. The wood used is for the most part English walnut, but oak, maple, birch, beech, sycamore and yew are also employed. A particularly good exhibit was a chair in walnut with its comfortable curved back splayed at the top and filled with squared slats, its square tapered legs and pleasantly shaped arms. A sideboard, a cabinet, a nest of occasional tables and other occasional tables in various designs were also shown, and there was an interesting selection of standard and table lamp pedestals in wood, many of which were of an unusual seven-sided pattern, which was curiously attractive. The designs are by Francis Nevel and D. B. Haes.'[22]

19. A selection of Betula Ltd. promotional material c.1936–39. The embroidered maker's label (middle) was fixed to the interior of cabinet furniture.

20. *(above left)* The Betula Ltd. partners desk and chairs in walnut, exhibited at the Home Arts and Industries Association, exhibition at Dorland Hall, London, November 1936.

21. *(above right)* The Betula Ltd. glazed bookcase, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1937.

Surviving photographs and examples from this period demonstrate a new-found vigour and a widening in both the scope and ambition of the furniture. Anthroposophical designs still predominate but are now more streamlined and make a greater use of symmetry demonstrated by a glazed bookcase (**Fig. 21**) and a remarkable, large school cupboard (**Fig. 22**). A huge, anthroposophic boardroom table (**Fig. 24**) was also executed, probably for the Scott Bader chemical company, a large, multi-section wardrobe (**Fig. 23**) for Francis Nevel's home at South Mimms and a series of remarkable anthroposophic, upright pianos (**Fig. 25**) were also made.[23]

Following the first year of trading as The Betula Ltd., the Directors' Report and accounts for 31 January 1937 showed a small profit for the year of £26-17-3, less the company formation expenses of £30 resulting in a small net loss. The company's auditor was Basil Mayer, Gladys Mayer's younger brother.

Building on the success of their exhibition at Dorland House the previous year, the company ambitiously took a stand at the Ideal Home Exhibition held at Olympia between 30 March and 24 April 1937. They exhibited furniture in a room setting, decorated with understated, anthroposophical domed panelling along with a built-in rectilinear fire surround. The following year the company also took out

22. *(above)* The Betula Ltd. large school cupboard with book matched veneers, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1937. Image the author.

a full-page advertisement (**Fig. 26**), and were also featured in, *Furnishing & Re-Furnishing…*, published by *Country Life*.[24]

Unfortunately, the Directors' Report for January 1938 found the company posting a loss of £343-3-1 but this was largely put down to the heavy expenses incurred in exhibiting during the previous year. However, it was hoped that the company would eventually benefit from such costly activities through increased turnover. More significantly, commencement of the manufacture of 'small woodware' during the latter part of 1937 was noted. The report continued,

> 'this will be of benefit from several points of view. The goods are readily saleable and their manufacture requires little capital. It will provide work during slack periods, and so enable the business to retain its craftsmen.'

23. *(below)* The Betula Ltd. wardrobe in walnut, probably designed by Francis Nevel c.1937.
Image courtesy Woolley & Wallis Auctioneers, Salisbury.

24. *(above left)* The Betula Ltd. large boardroom table, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1937.

25. *(above right)* The Betula Ltd. anthroposophical upright piano, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1937.

26. *(left)* The Betula Ltd. full page advertisement from *Furnishing & Re-Furnishing*, 1938.

27. The Betula Ltd. *Elegance with Betula Woodware*, cover of a 16-page tableware catalogue, early 1950s.

This strategy proved relatively effective as evidenced in the accounts delivered in January 1939. Increased trade had resulted in, 'an increase of nearly 40% in turnover, due mostly to development in the small woodware side of the business.' It was also noted that, 'This satisfactory result, has, however, been obtained at the cost of sales at unremunerative prices.' To counter this, a revised price list was issued with more accurate costings. Sadly, there was to be no time to improve the ailing furniture manufacturing side of the business as war was declared in September 1939.

The Sharpleshall Street workshop was requisitioned by Woolwich Arsenal, which, because of its vulnerability on its Thames-side site below Greenwich, was being dispersed to the north. At one stage during the war, The Betula were employing approximately 50 people, nearly half of them women, along with Jewish refugee teenagers from Germany and Austria.[25] The firm made rifle butts, dummy aircraft shells and assembled ammunition boxes. The contract work proved profitable and other nearby properties were purchased. A second workshop in St. George's Mews was used to paint the ammunition boxes with olive green 'dope paint' and a nearby terraced house was purchased where Nevel, Haes and some of the staff could live, as commuting proved difficult. This building also doubled as a works canteen.

Following the end of the War, and in a stable financial position, the company took the opportunity to re-invent itself. Gladys Mayer and Marjorie Turner remained as directors (but in name only) as the company was now managed entirely by Francis Nevel with David Haes overseeing manufacture. Production was focused on smaller tableware and the turned items that had proven so profitable during the pre-war period. Although the manufacture of furniture was still advertised, little seems to have been produced. August 1948 saw the publication of an extensive wholesale woodware price list itemising over 100 different items including, ash trays, biscuit barrels, bowls in various shapes and sizes, bread boards, butter dishes, cheese boards, cruet sets, wooden handled cutlery sets, egg cups, jam pots, serviette rings, trays, table lamps and toast racks. These were available in oak, elm, cherry, chestnut, walnut, maple, sycamore or rosewood and proved popular with a public still subject to post-war privations, being seen as an 'affordable luxury'. Effective marketing of Betula Woodware (as it styled itself) (**Fig. 27**) saw the products available in gift shops nationally and in leading department stores such as Harrods, Fortnum & Mason and Selfridges.[26] This allowed the company to post annual profits of £9,395-17-10 in the year ending 31 January 1950. The streamlined design aesthetic of the Betula Woodware caught the zeitgeist for Scandinavian-influenced design, ushered in by the 1951 Festival of Britain, and during the 1950s the company became the UK market-leader for fine, wooden tableware. Specialist turners were employed, many of them subcontractors working from their own premises. Designs also came from in-house sources including, from 1953 the Swiss-born Marianne Nevel (née Koch), who had married Francis Nevel the previous year. Although not from an arts background, she designed a particularly successful range of Coronation-themed tableware (**Fig. 28**) in English walnut that were vigorously marketed. At its height, the company was exporting its wares worldwide, supported by The Design Council who endorsed and exhibited many of its products both internationally and at The Design Centre in Haymarket, London.

The decline of The Betula Ltd. was gradual. The import of cheap, wooden tableware, manufactured in teak in India, grew in the late-1950s, stealing much of the market share. Concurrently, the public's taste had moved away from high maintenance, hardwood tableware (each Betula item carried instructions, 'NEVER WASH Wipe with a cloth damped in vinegar, and polish with clear wax polish') to the much more practical, and washable, stainless steel. As sales declined the company shifted its focus. The Betula purchased Ternex Ltd. a woodworking company that had both competed with, and subcontracted manufacture for The Betula, for its stock and machinery. Much of the company's supply of English hardwood, mostly English walnut, which was hard to come by, was sourced by Francis Nevel with the logs being sent to the Brocket Sawmill in Ayot Green, Hertfordshire to be cut into planks and air dried. The well-seasoned timber could then be delivered to the Sharpleshall Street workshop when it was required. The company that leased the Ayot Green sawmill went bankrupt in 1959 and, sensing an opportunity, Francis Nevel used Ternex Ltd. to take on the lease from the liquidators and so entered the timber business. This shift in direction proved the perfect opportunity for David Haes to amicably leave the business and focus on his main passion for furniture making. To release the capital he had tied up in The Betula, the Sharpleshall Street premises were sold and Haes subsequently established his own furniture workshop in Guildford,

28. The Betula Ltd. Coronation tableware in walnut, designed by Marianne Nevel in 1953.

producing much work for churches. Francis Nevel soldiered on, still primarily focused on the manufacture and sale of wooden tableware and giftware. The Betula and Ternex operated in parallel for a short time but to streamline the business and simplify accounting, the two were merged and trading continues to the present day under the Ternex Ltd. brand.[27]

The Betula Ltd. ceased trading in 1965 and was officially wound-up on 26 March 1968. Today, if remembered at all by the wider community, the company's reputation rests on the production of the stylish, high-quality, wooden tableware that proved so popular with the British public during the 1950s and early 1960s. Its pre-war role as a manufacturer of radical, Steiner-influenced, expressionist furniture was never widely known or advertised. The company primarily catered to an appreciative but closed, audience of anthroposophists and today, it is only in certain

29. The Betula Ltd. glazed, breakfront side cabinet in walnut, probably designed by David Haes and/or Francis Nevel c.1937. Catalogued as 'Cotswold Style' when sold at auction in 2009.

sections of the Steiner community, that it is remembered and valued. On the rare occasions that examples of The Betula Ltd. furniture have appeared on the open market (**Fig. 29**) their anthroposophical credentials have not been recognised by auction houses or vendors. They have been sold as either 'Arts & Crafts' or, unsurprisingly considering Francis Nevel and David Haes's Rendcomb College background, 'Cotswold School'. It is the author's hope that the term 'Anthroposophical Design' can finally, and belatedly, enter the lexicon of British design styles and movements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank: Vince Nevel (owner of Ternex Ltd.) and his sister Christine Kingdom for sharing their memories of their father Francis Nevel, The Betula Ltd. and the Turner family. Vince provided generous access to his archive of Betula Ltd. records, photographs, and promotional material without which this paper would not have been possible. I am also indebted to Charlie Lawrie who provided valuable biographical information about his friend Gladys Mayer and to her godson, Paul Langston, who provided further details. John Beer shared his childhood memories of the Nevel family and Ian Botting, librarian at Rudolf Steiner house was very helpful, as was Sibylle Eichstaedt, Editor of *The Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain Newsletter* and Jane Gunner, Editor of *The Old Rendcombian.* Finally, thanks are due to Jonathan Meades who, in 1990, made a passing reference to the 'Betula Company' in his BBC documentary *Right is Wrong*, twenty seconds of airtime that provided the impetus for 34 years of research.

ENDNOTES

1 Gladys Mayer's remarkable life is partially documented in: 'Gladys Mayer Memorial (1888–1980)', *Mercury Arts Group Journal* (Easter 1982). This special edition contains tributes from friends, selections of her own writing and is illustrated with many examples of her anthroposophical painting and graphic art. A follower of Steiner to the end, she died, aged 92, in London on 21 January 1980 following a traffic accident as she walked home from an exhibition devoted to Rudolf Steiner's architecture.

2 Rudolf Steiner, *The Way of Initiation* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1908), translated by Max Gysi. In this work, Steiner provides a detailed, structured introduction and guide to personal development on the spiritual path.

3 Dr. John Paull, 'Stratford-on-Avon: In the footsteps of Rudolf Steiner', *Elementals – Journal of Biodynamics Tasmania* (Spring 2013), pp. 12–18.

4 Gladys Mayer, 'The Initiate and the Teacher', *The Golden Blade* (1959) pp. 27–34.

5 European anthroposophical design has only recently been subject to academic research and public exhibition. For further information see: Mateo Kries, (ed.) Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg et al., *Rudolf Steiner: Alchemy of the Everyday.* (Vitra Design Museum, Zurich, 2000); Reinhold Johann Fäth, *Dornach-Design* (Futurum, Dornach, 2011); Reinhold Johann Fäth and David Voda, (eds.), *Ænigma – One Hundred Years of Anthroposophical Art* (Arbor Vitae, Prague, 2015).

6 See: Anon, 'The Rudolf Steiner Hall, London, W.', *The Architect & Building News* (15 Oct 1926), pp. 425–428.

7 The University of Sheffield, Western Bank Library: *The Sheffield Educational Settlement Papers,* 91/39/12/12.

8 Rudolf Steiner, *The Threefold Commonwealth* (London, 1922). Steiner thought it crucial to make a distinction between three spheres of society – the political, economic, and cultural. He believed that when each is relatively independent of one another, they check, balance, and correct one another, leading to greater social health and progress.

9 The University of Sheffield, Western Bank Library: *The Sheffield Educational Settlement Papers,* 91/39/13/7. The Settlement in Shipton Street, Sheffield, was founded by the YMCA in 1918 under the Wardenship of Arnold Freeman. The YMCA, concerned about debts accumulating under Freeman's ambitious Wardenship, dissociated itself from the venture in 1921, at which point Freeman, who became a committed anthroposophist, was able to proceed with his educational plans.

10 In the years leading up to World War II Steiner Schools were established in Kings Langley (Priory), London (Michael Hall, which later moved to Forest Row), Ilkeston (Michael House), Selly Oak (Elmfield), Hampstead (Waldorf), Gloucestershire (Wynstone's) and Edinburgh (Rudolf Steiner).

11 *Betula Woodwork Association. Minute book of Committee and General Meetings* (1931–34). Uncatalogued, hand-written booklet in the possession of Ternex Ltd., Ayot Green, Herts. N.B. Unless noted, all subsequent archive material quoted in the text relating to The Betula Ltd. is from the same source.

12 Peter and Leni Gillman, *The Wildest Dream* (London, Headline Pub., 2000), p. 225. Later his mother married her lover (following the death of his wife) and tried to reclaim Franz, but he chose to stay in England with Ruth Mallory supporting his decision.

13 Robert Prescott-Walker, 'Hugh Thackeray Turner: Professional Architect, Amateur China Painter', *Decorative Arts Society Journal* 27 (2003), pp. 22–35.

14 Francis Nevel inherited much of this furniture.

15 David Haes, *Old Rendcombian Society Newsletter* (May 1994), p. 14. Written in memory of Francis Nevel.

16 *Rendcomb College Magazine* (Vol. III, No. 2, January 1930), p. 3.

17 Three of these albums survive, the earliest (c.1932) labelled *The Betula Woodwork Association, i*s in the library at Rudolf Steiner House. The second, identical in format but including a few different designs, is at The University of Sheffield, (as note 9) 91/39/38/4. The final, disbounded album, dating to c.1936, is in the collection of Ternex Ltd.

18 Around 1913, Rudolf Steiner created Eurythmy, a new form of movement to represent, physically, the experience of speech and music. The English sculptor Edith Maryon (1872–1924), a close collaborator of Steiner's, attempted to represent gestures in sculpture but Steiner suggested using stylised painted, two-dimensional cutouts on plywood. In late 1922 he made a series of sketches and Maryon and others eventually produced a series of figures in 35 different poses.

19 Daniel Nicol Dunlop (1868–1935) was a Scottish entrepreneur, founder of the World Power Conference and other associations, and a theosophist-turned-anthroposophist. He was the father of artist Ronald Ossory Dunlop.

20 Committee meeting held 14 Feb 1933 at the Sharpleshall Street workshop.

21 A partial bibliography for Gladys Mayer comprises: *Sleeping & Waking and the Life of Art* (1930); *New Ways of Thinking About Social Problems (*1938); *Reincarnation and Our Future* (1958); *Colour and the Human Soul* (1959); *The Mystery-Wisdom of Colour* (1962); *Behind the Veils of Death & Sleep* (1965); *Colour and Healing* (1971); *The Gifts of the Season* (1971); *How Art Speaks* (1972); *Universal Science for our Coming Age* (1982); *Colours: A New Approach to Painting* (1983).

22 Anon, 'British Handicrafts – The Home Arts and Industries Association', *The Cabinet Maker and Complete House Furnisher,* (5 December 1936), p. 350.

23 Ernest Bader was a close friend and patron of Mayer. With his wife Dora Scott he founded the chemical company Scott Bader, in 1921. In 1951 the company was given to the employees under common ownership, becoming the Scott Bader Commonwealth.

24 *Furnishing & Re-Furnishing, a guide to contemporary furnishing (*London, *Country Life Ltd.*, 1938), pp. 19, 76.

25 David Haes, *Old Rendcombian Society Newsletter* (May 1994), p. 14.

26 Walnut was sourced from The Sandringham estate, metalware for cutlery from Sheffield and Bernard Leach provided ceramic containers for some of the *hors d'oeuvre* sets.

27 Ternex Ltd. continues to thrive under the management of Francis Nevel's son, Vincent, who has diversified, modernised and expanded the timber company. It undertakes bespoke joinery, furniture and cabinet making, the manufacture of timber framed buildings, staircases and bespoke CNC machining.

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