

## Autumn lecture: Dr D E Schoenherr 'Two Burne-Jones manuscripts: Account Books and the Cartoon Book'

Dr Douglas E Schoenherr, retired Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, was co-organizer of the exhibitions 'The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and his Circle from Canadian Collections' in 1993, and more recently 'Ottawa Collects Burne-Jones' at the National Gallery of Canada. His talk centred on two manuscripts from Morris & Co.: the *Account Books* (now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK) and the *Cartoon Book* (now in the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA), which documented the first big sale (1901–4) of Burne-Jones's stained glass cartoons; however, it proved to be as much about personalities as paper records as the speaker gave a highly personal account of the history both of his own enthusiasm for these works of art as well as that of early 20C collectors and dealers.

His story began in 1964 as an art history undergraduate at the University of Toronto with his first sighting of a work by Burne-Jones (BJ): an 1884 painting of Caroline Fitzgerald an American bluestocking and heiress, which was regarded by the Faculty as a bit of a joke and an embarrassment ... though 30 years later she featured in the exhibition on the Morris circle (The Earthly Paradise). A couple of years later on a Grand Tour, Dr Schoenherr discovered a love of stained glass on visiting Chartres cathedral where he experienced the 13th C 'Rose de France' as 'coloured light from Heaven'.

In his first job post-Doc in the Picture Division at the Public Archives of Canada, he began his book collecting with a Kelmscott Press edition of Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung* with 2 BJ illustrations. In 1977 he started collecting BJ drawings, the first being the 'Sponsa de Libano', one of a series embroidery designs from the Song of Solomon that BJ did in 1876 for his close friend Frances Graham, Lady Horner. His first stained glass cartoons were a pair dating to 1873: St Stephen and Daniel, from G F Bodley's St Martin's-on-the-Hill in Scarborough (an important early commission for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co). His acquisition of these fired his curiosity to find the original owner from *The Cartoon Book*, which led him to study in turn BJ's *Account Books*.

He then discussed these cartoons in further detail. BJ had executed both in brown wash (his favourite medium at the time), corrected with opaque white over traces of graphite. He usually produced these in an evening after dinner by candlelight, ensuring a bold approach. The Daniel cartoon had just a few corrections in white to the drapery over the knees, whereas St Stephen was extensively reworked using a very liquid white wash applied so quickly that it ran down from both of the elbows and was stopped only by the artist's rather inelegant smears ... his fingerprints are still visible! The speaker then turned to details of the composition, pointing out the cartoons' unusual bottle shapes – strange because BJ excelled at fitting his designs into the most awkward tracery spaces. As it transpired, the cartoon's original buyer had cut 6" strips off the tops and pasted them to the backs of the frames; luckily, however, they could be compared with photos taken by Frederick Hollyer at Merton Abbey and now at the Huntington Library in California, which showed how the cartoons originally looked. These photos also showed that each cartoon had been the centre light between two lancets: St Stephen between standing figures of Peter and Paul, and Daniel between standing figures of Isaiah and Ezekiel. In order to keep them on the same scale as the standing figures, BJ had made them kneel and sit respectively – a lesson he learnt from a King David composition that William Morris had designed 10 years previously.

The speaker then described the subsequent history of these cartoons. In the *Account Books*, they were the very first entry; the £8 fee recorded for each design seems tiny ... but it is actually the equivalent of £3700 today – not a bad return for a spot of after-dinner work! *The Cartoon Book* sale records that, in July 1901,

the Daniel and St Stephen cartoons were purchased by Laurence Hodson of Compton Hall, near Wightwick, at Wolverhampton (where in 1895–6 Morris & Co. had decorated the interior). Hodson was owner of the Springfield Brewery, a founder member of the Kelmscott Fellowship (precursor of the WM Society) and an SPAB member. An avid collector of art, books and manuscripts, he had bought a total of 18 cartoons in *The Cartoon Book* sale; unfortunately his appetite for such works exceeded his resources and he went bankrupt in 1906. The BJ stained glass cartoons plus his other art works were then sold at Christie's on 25 June 1906; whereas BJ had received £8 each for the pair in 1873, Hodson paid £25 for the pair in 1901, but received only £5.

In 1983, Dr Schoenherr had the chance to buy another BJ cartoon: an 1875 'Trinity' cartoon: one of a series of predellas situated below the famous 'Evangelists and Sibyls' windows in a transept of Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge. This was drawn in graphite over traces of charcoal underdrawing and its basic composition (i.e. God the Father and God the Son, along with their papal tiaras, the cloak which envelopes and unites them, book and orb) BJ based on Didron's 1843 *Iconographie chrétienne: Histoire de Dieu*. However, he was evidently unclear which figure in Didron's book was which, as he made the figure with the orb on the right the Son, with a youthful clean-shaven face and a crown of thorns over his papal tiara. As Christ always sits on the right hand of God the Father he was actually the figure on the left in Didron's text. Although the clergy at the College would certainly have known that Christ should be on the other side, and the cartoon could have been flipped to correct BJ's error, in the finished window the arrangement was left as BJ had drawn it.

Beneath the Erythraean Sibyl in this series is an Ascension that in the *Account Books* BJ described as 'Disgraceful!'. It is unclear why, except he was trying to suggest movement in a restricted space where it was hard to get much elevation. His ingenious solution was to set the diagonal figure of the rising Christ (in white in the window) against a row of perpendicular angels (in streaky ruby).

Dr Schoenherr's last BJ cartoon came from Rachel Moss in 1996: St Michael and Dragon, a tracery cinquefoil for the Episcopal Church of St Michael, Geneseo, NY. This was BJ's first glass cartoon commissioned specially for the USA. The *Cartoon Book* records that in 1902 it was bought by New York bookseller Alexander Denham & Co., which had a branch in Haymarket, for £15, along with some 40 others for a total of over £1000.

The talk moved on to consider other early cartoon collectors, some of whom are listed in the *Cartoon Book* under the heading 'Advise when Cartoons are arranged'. The names include the Earl of Carlisle, Laurence Hodson (above), Dr Brinckmann of Hamburg and Sergei Shchukin of Moscow. Brinckmann had founded the Museum of Decorative Art in Hamburg. Sergei Shchukin was a major force in the Russian textile business, who around 1900 collected many French avant-garde masterpieces including Monet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso. In his dining room hung 16 Gauguins floor to ceiling on the long wall, with three large and very radical Matisse on one short wall; at the other end of the dining room was Burne-Jones's wall-filling Adoration of the Magi tapestry – now one of the glories of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. Another collector was Yves Saint Laurent, who in 1972 had bought BJ's 1875–80 'Paradise with the Worship of the Lamb' where it hung in his Grand Salon. This design for All Hallows, Allerton, is listed in the *Account Books* in April 1875 ... amazingly the very next cartoon after the Jesus College Trinity! Yet other BJ cartoons were owned by Harvard Professor Charles Eliot Norton, who had received as gifts from BJ many important cartoons (including Timothy and Samuel from Oxford's Vyner Memorial window and the Delphic Sybil from Jesus College), Adelaide businessman George Brookman, and E. H. Van Ingen of the large NY importing house of the same name who, when the *Cartoon Book* sale opened, immediately bought 30 cartoons for £728. A number of Rachel Moss's cartoons came from Van Ingen, including the stupendous 'Hopton Resurrection' (1881), which Dr Schoenherr acquired for the NGC, and which appears on the front and back covers of the Burne-Jones issue of the *Journal*. BJ himself called this design a 'sublime c[on]ception!'