

*Work with Joy -  
Rawnsley, Ruskin and the Keswick School of Industrial Arts*

**1. Image of KSIA motto on screen (photo Chris Starkey)**

“The Loving Eye and Patient Hand shall Work with Joy and Bless the Land” Those words are inscribed on the frieze underneath the Spinning Gallery of the Arts & Crafts building at Greta Bridge, purpose-built for the Keswick School of Industrial Arts, a couplet which must have been composed by Hardwicke Rawnsley himself, to reflect his understanding of John Ruskin's philosophy.

The theme for this year at Brantwood, I am told, is an examination and exploration of John Ruskin's influence on our ideas of work and human labour, and in this connection, I would like to consider this evening how his ideas were reflected in the work of the Keswick School of Industrial Arts, the KSIA, which was founded in 1884 by my great-grandparents Hardwicke and Edith Rawnsley.

To put their enterprise in context, it might be useful to remind ourselves of the setting.

The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the founding of many organisations concerned with protecting various aspects of the environment, such as open spaces for recreation, historic buildings, and scenic countryside, under threat from industrialisation, rural poverty and the consequential flight from the land. The Commons Preservation Society, the Kyrle Society, the Lake District Defence Society, the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, are just a few examples. They were in many cases founded as a reaction to what Ruskin, referring to the accompanying atmospheric pollution, anathematised as 'the Storm-Cloud' of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**2. Storm-Cloud image (Ruskin watercolour, Brantwood)**

Running parallel with this concern for the conservation of the external environment threatened by the forces of industrialisation, was an increasing awareness that many traditional skills and ways of life

were being swept away by those same forces. With the advent of steam-driven mass-production and the mechanisation of labour in factories; individualism and hand craftsmanship; which for centuries had been the normal means of production; were no longer needed.

The wealth generated by the causes of that 'Storm-Cloud' gave rise to a new, affluent middle-class, with the means, and the time to spare, to develop a social conscience. Perhaps to atone for 'grinding the faces of the poor' to acquire that wealth? In addition to building churches, as did **my** coal-and-canal ancestors, many socially-minded individuals banded together in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to found philanthropic organisations. Among them for example were the Home Arts and Industries Association, the Guild of School and Handicraft, and the Keswick School of Industrial Arts (the KSIA).

Ruskin led the field with his Guild of St. George, with its somewhat Luddite philosophy of simple living close to the land, with the minimum use of modern technology. His influential ideas and philosophy underpinned many other initiatives to bring back what some saw, through rose-tinted spectacles, as the 'good old ways of the good old days,' which had been destroyed by the industrial revolution.

Concern for the preservation of the environment, and concern for protecting its varied ways of life are of course inter-related. The Keswick School of Industrial Arts for example did not come into being in isolation. It was part of a reaction to the passion for modernism, felt across a wide spectrum of British society, which had an impact upon the country at large. Lakeland while only a part, albeit a very fragile and vulnerable part of that country, may be taken as a microcosm. I would like to return to that topic in a moment.

Many saw the rapid expansion of the railway network as a threat to the 'unspoilt' in inverted commas, environment of the Lake District. - Inverted commas since the Lake District had of course been the scene of industrial activity since time immemorial, with copper mining, charcoal production, slate quarrying, ship-building and so forth, since prehistoric times. However, the railway, and the steam locomotive, Ruskin's 'steam dragon', were seen as the particular bogeyman.

### **3. Image of Steam locomotive (the Steam Dragon')**

William Wordsworth was among the first to object to the introduction of railways to Lakeland, not only because of the despoliation of his beloved landscape which would inevitably follow, but also because he feared their impact on the age-old way of life of the Indigenous people of the Lakes, for whom he felt a genuine affection.

### **4. Image of Wordsworth (portrait)**

John Ruskin, although not himself a native of Lakeland, shared Wordsworth's passionate love of this unique landscape; a landscape which had as he wrote, profoundly moved him from his earliest years. Ruskin likewise shared Wordsworth's love and respect for Lakeland people. He foresaw that their traditional pastoral way of life was in imminent danger of being destroyed by the Mammon of steam, and the hordes of day trippers from the cities who would, inevitably, follow in the train!

### **5. Image of Ruskin at Brantwood 1885**

So much then for the historical background. Now to the players! As 'the child is father to the man' I think it is fruitful to sketch in Hardwicke Rawnsley's family background and upbringing, particularly as this will have pre-disposed him to become a disciple of John Ruskin in adult life.

Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley and his twin sister Frances were born in 1851 in Shiplake-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, where their father was the parish priest.

### **6. Image of HDR 1862**

When Hardwicke was ten years old, his grandfather, Thomas Hardwicke Rawnsley, Rector of Halton Holgate, a very rural parish in Lincolnshire, died, and the cure of souls passed to his son Drummond Rawnsley, Hardwicke's father. Hardwicke, who seems to have used this poetic medium as a convenient means of expressing his feelings and recording his thoughts throughout his life, vividly sets the scene

in this sonnet, written in his 20<sup>th</sup> year:

### **7. Image of Halton Holgate – watercolour by Catherine Rawnsley**

Upon a slope that heard the primal seas  
And now when skies are clear may sight a sail  
A trim lawn flourished; girt from every gale  
by linden; chesnut, and acacia trees;  
Therein such flowers blossomed that the bees  
Dreamed that their scented food could never fail.  
Hard by – across a bridge with rustic rail -  
The gardener pulled green kitchen niceties;  
No waters sighed those ferny banks among  
But harvest-laden waggons girded harsh;  
And cattle changing pasture from the marsh,  
Or dusty droves with bleating passed along;  
Oft from that bridge the village pastor smiled  
Or flung a rose to please the loitering child.

*Halton Holgate 1872*

From Halton Holgate Hardwicke was sent to Uppingham School under the enlightened tutelage of its famous headmaster Edward Thring, an admirer of John Ruskin, and a friend of Hardwicke's father, who had invited him to stand godfather to his son.

### **8. Image of Edward Thring**

Edward Thring was to be a seminal influence in Hardwicke's life, introducing him to the Lake District, where his family had a holiday house at Grasmere, and to the works of his favourite poet, William Wordsworth, who was in turn also to become Hardwicke's muse.

### **9. Image of HDR 1872**

From Uppingham Hardwicke went up to Balliol, where he very quickly fell under the spell of John Ruskin, who the previous year had been appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University. John

Ruskin, whose ideas would already have been familiar to him from his schooldays, was to become Rawnsley's tutelary genius and guiding influence for the remainder of his life.

## **10. Image of John Ruskin at Balliol**

In later years Hardwicke was vividly to recall Ruskin's lectures:

Who can forget those lectures in the Museum?—the crowd of expectant students drawn by one magnet from such different pursuits and various lines of study and interest... He won all our hearts, not only by his unconventionality and undonnish ways, but because he took such infinite pains for us, and of all men I ever met he was the best listener. (REF. 36)

Rawnsley was among the group of undergraduates who Ruskin persuaded to take part in his famous (or notorious, depending upon your point of view) and much written-about social experiment – the repairing of the road at Hinksey village.

## **11. Hinksey Road image**

(Hardwicke is the one leaning on the spade, second from the left).

After an undistinguished University career, where he seems to have spent more time in sporting activities than academic pursuits, Hardwicke volunteered as a lay chaplain to help out at a slum Mission in Soho, where he stuck it out for just six months before suffering a nervous breakdown and retreating to the Lake District to recuperate with the Fletcher family at Ambleside.

Thereafter, and by now ordained deacon in the Church of England, he spent a couple of years running an even more poverty-stricken Mission organised by Clifton College in the squalid and fever-ridden slums of Bristol.

In 1877 the direction of his life changed completely when he was offered the living of St. Margaret's at Wray-on-Windermere by his

cousin Preston Rawnsley, who had recently inherited the grandiose Wray Castle, and with it the living of the adjacent church.

## 12. Image of Wray Castle by Rupert Potter

Ordained priest at Carlisle Cathedral on 23rd December 1877, Hardwicke wasted no time in offering his hand to Edith Fletcher, elder daughter of the family with whom he had recuperated from his breakdown. The marriage took place at Brathay Church at the end of January the following year and the newly-weds moved into the Vicarage at Wray.

It is at Wray then that our story really begins.

Rawnsley had seen at first hand in London and in Bristol, the deleterious effect of alcohol on the poor who lived, and worked, if they had a job at all, in depressing and unhealthy surroundings. These unfortunate individuals, he realised, had nothing whatever to do with any spare time except to go to the pub and drown their misery in the Lethe of liquor. At the Mission in Bristol, he had therefore, almost single-handedly, set about organising alternative activities for the leisure hours of his poor parishioners, setting up a lending library and reading room, organising Penny Reading entertainments, and arranging leisure classes of various kinds.

Now in the quite different setting of Wray Hardwicke and Edith, both already ardent disciples of John Ruskin, immediately set to work to ameliorate the lives of their new parishioners.

At this point, and before discussing the initiatives at Wray and later at the KSIA, it might be appropriate to try and summarise Ruskin's philosophy of labour, as the Rawnsleys understood it.

Ruskin, in his influential work, *The Stones of Venice*, through a close study of the architecture of that city, made it clear that, to him, the secret of its incomparable beauty lies in the hand-work which lovingly created it – the balconies, in which each element, taking inspiration from nature, was individually wrought by a master craftsman; with the hand-cut stones and hand-made bricks which comprise the buildings

and palaces. No two are identical, but all bear what Ruskin described as a 'family likeness'. He pointed out that objects, when hand-made, fit for purpose, and without any superfluous embellishment, have a charm and attraction of their own which no mass-produced item, however well-made, could ever reproduce.

### **13. Image - Windows of the Third and Fourth Order, Venice (Ruskin)**

All Ruskin's thoughts and reflections on this subject, as he himself remarked in a letter to his disciple Albert Fleming in 1873, were distilled and synthesised in the eight volumes of *Fors Clavigera*. These essays were in the form of 'open letters' addressed to the 'Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain' (though one might be forgiven for wondering how many of them had the leisure or inclination to read them).

### **14. Image of frontispiece to *Fors Clavigera***

These letters appeared on an almost monthly basis from 1871 until Christmas 1884, and together they afforded Ruskin a device for a philosophical exploration of various aspects of work and its conditions in England. In the series he contemplated the role of machinery in labour; Man's fundamental need to work; the role of women in society; and Man's need to return to nature for inspiration.

As Clive Wilmer in his Commentary on *Fors* remarks, the letters are indeed concerned with work, but work seen in the perspective of human destiny, the *Fors*, or 'Fortune' of the title, being she who holds the key to the future of mankind. All forms of labour are seen as rooted in nature and having a common purpose – that of promoting the wealth that is life, rather than simple existence from day to day, from hand to mouth. 'There is no wealth but life', as Ruskin proclaimed in *Ad Valorem*, the fourth of his essays on Political Economy in *Unto This Last*, a reference to Christ's parable of the workers in the vineyard.

Happiness', in Ruskin's model. a model incidentally shared by his good friend Thomas Carlyle. does NOT depend upon making as much

money as possible in as short a time as possible. Money *per se*, should not be an end in itself, and payment should be geared to need, rather than to desert.

As Ruskin's biographer, John Batchelor makes clear, in an ideal world there would be no place for competition; no market forces; no laws of supply-and-demand; no industrial capitalism. This was an idealistic philosophy, one diametrically opposed to the ideas of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill (Ruskin's particular *bête-noir*), for whom the sole purpose of labour was the generation of wealth, which in turn, it was to be assumed, would increase the overall happiness of nations.

England in the third quarter of the 19th century, through the efforts of the newly-enriched and powerful entrepreneurs, had become the richest and most powerful nation on earth, and the first to become an urban rather than an agrarian society. Yet at the same time, for much of the population, the norm was a life of poverty, starvation and injustice.

This was a paradox not lost on Ruskin. He laid the responsibility for this state of affairs squarely at the door of the industrial revolution – men were no longer directly in touch with the land and with nature; They no longer gained inner satisfaction from working with their hands to create beautiful or functional objects, from the design to the finished product. Instead, the vast majority had become mere cogs in the wheels of industry – mechanical 'hands' on a production line, and had ceased to be individuals, happy in the joy of creation.

In his writings, addressed to those newly-rich middle-class entrepreneurs who, realising that with money came responsibility, and who were anxious for guidance, Ruskin urged them to put the clock back, by restoring the urban wastelands which they themselves had created.

Perhaps the new-rich individual with a social conscience would be in a position to put into practice Ruskin's exhortations, but for the urban man-in-the-street this must have seemed a vain hope and an idealistic philosophy, impossible to put into practice. Those who do not have enough to eat have neither the time, leisure nor inclination to engage



in philosophical reflection.

It was in reaction to this situation, and drawing on Hardwicke's experiences in Mission work, that he and his wife, herself a talented artist and craftswoman, decided to put into practice some of Ruskin's ideas about the dignity of labour.

Ruskin believed that for work to be enjoyable the worker must learn new skills, and at the same time have some autonomy, and control over the task in hand. This notion was of course completely at odds with the modern and more cost-effective factory system where each man carried out just one repetitive task on a production line.

In *Ruskin and the English Lakes* Rawnsley vividly recalled what Ruskin had said to his students at Oxford:

*“One of the many rememberable talks with the Professor in old Oxford and Hinksey digging days, turned on the question of how to add happiness to the country labourer's lot. His eyes flashed and his voice rose with its earnest sing-song as he urged that it was the simple duty of every squire and every clergyman to see that idle hands should have something found for them to do, by other than the Devil, and that it was a scandal that the church had neither rest homes or recreation rooms nor public houses where the poor might find cheer and solace without the necessity of drink on the long winter evenings...”*

*“Why don't the bishops admonish their clergy to see to it that side by side with parish church and parish mission room there shall be a parish workshop; where the blacksmith and the village carpenter shall of a winter evening teach all the children who will be diligent and will learn, the nature of iron and wood, and the use of their eyes and hands. I would have the decoration of metal and wood brought in later... but always they shall be taught the use of the pencil, and the delight of close observation of flower in the field and bird in the hedgerow and animal in the wild wood. We must bring joy, the joy of eye and hand-skill to our cottage homes.”*

Hardwicke recognised that while there was perhaps no abject poverty among his new parishioners at Wray, they were for the most part unskilled manual workers on the land. During the winter months therefore, with little work to do, the men would have had a lot of spare time on their hands, time which could be usefully and profitably employed in learning a new skill. Surprisingly, in view of the already thriving Langdale Linen Industry, the Rawnsleys did not consider training spinners, to earn a little extra money at home, as had been a Lakeland tradition in the past. As Hardwicke recalled,

*“The old spinning-wheel days were spoken of tenderly by the village grandmothers, but the thought of reviving that industry never occurred to one as possible.”*

### **15. Image of Pepper Family (Ruskin Museum)**

Perhaps the pendulum of progress could be induced to swing in the opposite direction?

A revival of the art of wood-carving, likewise a dying tradition in Lakeland was, the Rawnsleys thought, possible, and since they had friends at Grasmere and at Ambleside who were keen to learn that skill, they set about organising classes. A teacher was engaged from the Albert School of Woodcarving,

*“to come down from South Kensington to give a course of lessons in the three villages; and our humble home industry in the lake district was set on foot.”*

### **16. Image of carved spinning chair (Ruskin Museum)**

During the winter of 1882, the last the Rawnsleys were to spend at Wray, Edith decided to experiment with metal repoussé work, thinking that this might be a useful skill to add to the village classes. Using just a hammer and a French nail (whatever that is!) she created her first dish, which Hardwicke still had hanging in his study in 1902 when writing his account of Ruskin in the English Lakes.

## 17. Image of repoussé plate (Ian Bruce Image 22)

(This is not the actual plate, but an example of similar work later undertaken at the KSIA.)

1883 proved to be a momentous year for the Craft revival in the Lake District.

Albert Fleming, a London solicitor, already for many years a correspondent and keen disciple of John Ruskin, moved to the Lakes that year, taking the lease of Neaum Crag, Ambleside. Here he found among the furnishings an old and decrepit spinning-wheel. This chance discovery gave him the idea of trying to revive that ancient art, which the Rawnsleys had not thought possible. He began by encouraging his housekeeper Marian Twelves to familiarise herself with the technique, for which she appeared to have a natural aptitude, her first piece of hand spun, hand-woven, unbleached linen cloth was successfully produced later that year, and the Langdale Linen Industry was established, with Miss Twelves as the leading luminary.

While the short-lived woodcarving and metalwork classes at Wray did not set in motion a widespread revival of arts and crafts in the Lakes – the classes seem to have fizzled out with the Rawnsleys' departure - they nonetheless laid the foundations, as Sara Haslam points out in her account of *John Ruskin and the Lakeland Arts Revival*, for all the Rawnsleys' subsequent art and craft work through the Keswick School of Industrial Arts.

The initiative at Wray was not an isolated experiment, as Hardwicke made clear in an extended article, '*Our Industrial Art Experiment in Keswick*' in *Murray's Magazine* in 1887. In this article he points out that wood-carving at least was a flourishing cottage craft, with classes being given at Grasmere, Burneside near Kendal; Milnthorpe and Penrith, and at Kirby Lonsdale, where drawing, embroidery and leather work were also taught. These initiatives were in addition of course to the Langdale Linen Industry,

*“All this,”* Rawnsley continued, *“points one way. There is a spirit abroad that has already found out that machine-made England is not a happy England after all.”*

In 1883 after just five years at Wray, Hardwicke was offered the living of St. Kentigern at Crosthwaite and the Rawnsleys moved 'over the Raise' to Keswick. As he recalled in *Ruskin & The English Lakes*, *“We left behind the wood-carvers in Westmorland, but not the sense of brightness in their cottage homes which the interest of this simple handicraft had added.”*

The woodcarvers in Westmorland were indeed left behind, but not the initiative to run classes for the leisure hours of working men.

At Crosthwaite during their first winter in 1883-4 and no doubt actively encouraged by Ruskin, the Rawnsleys recruited a committee to begin classes in metal-work and woodcarving at the Crosthwaite Parish Room. The project was financed by local ladies who paid to attend classes in the afternoons, thus enabling the evening classes for working men to be given free of charge. J.W. Oddie an artist and designer from Lyzzick Hall taught wood-carving and Edith Rawnsley supervised the repoussé metal-work, aided by John Birkett, a local jeweller. Edith herself provided some of the designs. And so, the Keswick School of Industrial Arts was born.

### **18. Image of repoussé being made (Bruce p.12)**

Ruskin had many times expounded his firmly held ideas about the nobility of labour. He emphasised in his writings the intrinsic reward to the maker of hand-wrought goods where the craftsman, completing the work from start to finish, thereby gains an understanding, both of the material he is using, and of its nature. He derives fulfilment and happiness from the use of hand and eye and the exercise of a craftsman's skill, and this can only be to the good of the country as a whole. *“That country is the richest,”* Ruskin wrote in *Unto This Last*, *“which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings.”*

As early as 1853 in *The Stones of Venice*, he had written,

*“We have much studied and much perfected of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the man.”*

The achievement of happiness by the working man was a subject close to Ruskin's heart, and he never ceased to emphasise the need for self-fulfilment as a means to that end. For a man to be happy in his work, he must 'own' it; he must be involved in the design and creation of the artefact from the drawing board to the finished product, and, by hand rather than by machine work, to gain a deeper understanding of his materials and the processes of creation. Machine-made decoration was anathema to Ruskin, and in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* he set out his fundamental belief that, *“the right question to ask, respecting ornament, is simply this: was it done with enjoyment – was the carver happy while he was about it?”*

This philosophy of Ruskin's was enshrined in the objectives of the nascent KSIA. Eleanor Rawnsley, Hardwicke's second wife, set out these objectives in her biography of her husband, which appeared shortly after his death. They were, firstly,

*To counteract the pernicious effect of turning men into machines without possibility of love of their work;*

Secondly,

*To make it felt that hand-work really did allow the expression of a man's soul and self, and so was worth doing for its own sake, and worth purchasing even at some cost to the buyer;*

And thirdly,

*To try to displace by hand-work the crude metal and wood ornaments that are now produced by steel dies and hydraulic presses.*

Ruskin had often stressed the importance of a close observation of

nature for inspiration, and this aspect of his teaching was likewise at the heart of the work of the KSIA.

### **19. Image of fire screen with fruits etc. (private collection)**

Folios of art works in foreign museums were obtained, together with photographs and drawings of the detail of work in Venice, Rome, Florence and Cairo, velvet brocades, gilded gesso work and tapestries. Edith herself on tours abroad made sketches of design details and sent them back to the School. All these were used as teaching aids to inspire the students to create and execute their own designs, in accordance with Ruskin's exhortations. She also negotiated the loan from the Keswick Museum of a series of casts including lilies, roses, convolvulus, leaf scrolls, chestnut leaves, pomegranates, apples and plums.

Here are some examples of early repoussé work, from the 1890's.

### **20. Image – Plate 12 Ian Bruce p. 19**

and a copper candlestick from a private collection.

### **21. Image of candlestick and underside (private collection)**

Designs inspired by Iznik plates from the Ottoman Empire; from Persia and from Japan were popular, with trays featuring decorative flower centres becoming a trademark of the school.

A good example is this sizeable (63cm in diameter) embossed and repoussé silver tea tray with the wired rope edge which became a trademark of the KSIA. The tray was presented to Hardwicke when he was ousted from the Cumberland County Council in 1895. Here we see depicted the stylised Japanese peony decoration.

### **22. Image of large silver tray**

The tray is inscribed:

*Presented to the Revd. Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, Hon.*

*Canon of Carlisle as a token of esteem and gratitude for the ability and devotion with which he served the interests of Keswick and District during his six years of office 1889 to 1895 in the Cumberland County Council. May 10<sup>th</sup> 1895.*

Certainly a handsome leaving present! The tray is hallmarked in Birmingham in 1887/8, but remaining unsold, must have been purchased by the subscribers from KSIA stock, rather than being specially commissioned for the occasion.

### **23. Image Bruce Plate 70, p.89**

Norse and Celtic designs were also used for inspiration, as in the cigarette box on the right of the image. Swirling fish and seaweed are featured on the large plate, and leaves spiral off a raised centre in the smaller plate, a design attributed to Harold Stabler.

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As Ian Bruce pointed out in his well-researched and lavishly illustrated volume, *The Loving Eye and Skilful Hand*, to which I am indebted for many of this evening's illustrations; a range of standard designs were evolved at the School, and applied to different articles, and, for the majority, the identity of the original designer remains uncertain. Their inspiration, however, was in the design influences brought to the School by the Rawnsleys. On their travels in Europe Edith copied many ideas from the works of Renaissance masters and details of carvings on vernacular buildings, and items seen in museums, and her drawings were used to inspire the KSIA students and craftsmen.

Hardwicke, in addition to running his new parish, was already engaged in various conservation activities, he and Albert Fleming becoming joint Hon. Secretaries of the newly-formed Lake District Defence Society, of which John Ruskin became a member. Rawnsley would therefore not have had much time to devote to the new craftwork initiative, and it was therefore his wife Edith who took over the day-to-day organisation and management of what was to become the Keswick School of Industrial Arts.

In accordance with Ruskin's principles as she understood them, Edith was never, unlike her husband, a self-publicist. Nonetheless, in addition to her role in the teaching of wood-carving and metalwork, she became, in the background, the dynamic *de facto* driving force in the management of the school along Ruskinian principles. Hardwicke with his talent for oratory and his skill at public relations networking, was to be the public face of the KSIA, ensuring through every means at his disposal that its work received national as well as local attention, and Ruskinian disciple that he was, he never forgot his debt to 'the Master'. On every possible occasion he was to point out that it was thanks to John Ruskin that the KSIA, and all his other initiatives, including in later years the foundation of the National Trust, owed their very existence.

While there are countless images of Hardwicke at different stages of his life, in line with her self-effacing personality, this is almost the only extant image of Edith.

#### 24. Image of Edith Rawnsley

Ruskin, although there appears to be no record of his having visited the KSIA in person, was frequently consulted in connection with the day-to-day running of the School, which even in its earliest years, was extraordinarily successful. Sara Haslam, in her published thesis *John Ruskin & the Lakeland Arts Revival*, attributes this success not only to the satisfactory application of Ruskin's teachings in a particularly receptive climate, and to the role of Ruskin as a near presence, but also to the dedication of both Hardwicke and Edith in ensuring that Ruskin's teachings were carried out according to his **personal** instructions.

Rawnsley and Albert Fleming shared a great interest in the Norse past of the Lake District, and both believed that the Vikings had first introduced the craft of woodcarving to the region. Later, in the sixteenth century, metalworking had been introduced by the colony of German miners, who in their spare time turned their hand to creating decorative items in copper. Hardwicke, in the spirit of Ruskin's teachings, liked to think that the KSIA was a part of that continuum of



artistic and creative endeavour, with the past illuminating and 'grounding' the present.

In his article *Our Industrial Art Experiment in Keswick* in *Murray's Magazine* to which I referred earlier, Hardwicke writes:

### **25. Image - 'Our Industrial Art Experiment in Keswick'**

*It is a sight that does one's heart good... The workers are so intent, so critical, so cheery. A finished bit of work comes in. It is a tea tray in brass, or an offertory dish in gilding metal; perhaps it is a candle-sconce of copper, with a design from the Vatican upon it; or a post-box with a bit of Donatello's frieze adapted to its ornamentation; or a door-plate with an acanthus-footed design from "the Scuola San Marco:" It may be a little silver menu-holder, whose design has come from the Venetian binding of a of a middle-century book. Whatever it is, the hammers cease going, and one by one the men crowd up and examine it, and every one has something to say about it except the worker; and he just listens and smiles, and goes on with the work in front of him.*

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### **26. Image Post Box (Mary Williamson)**

The School of metalwork continued in the parish room for eight winters, with the benches and tools having to be cleared away after each evening's work. This was of course a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs, severely limiting what could be achieved by the students, and in 1891 therefore Edith arranged for an 'iron room' to be constructed at her own expense adjacent to the parish room. This annexe was fitted out with a concrete floor, blow pipe, anvil and vices, and served to expand the work and technical accomplishment of the School. Two gifted pupils of the School, Tom Spark and Jeremiah Richardson were engaged to teach.

### **27. Image of Jeremiah Richardson in the tin-room (Ian Bruce)**

Even so, the School rapidly outgrew its stop-gap premises, and in 1893 funds were secured for the construction of a new building on a site on the banks of the River Greta.

The building, with workshops on the ground floor and the showroom upstairs,

### **28. KSIA Showroom image (Bruce p.74)**

was designed in a traditional Lakeland vernacular, of which no doubt Ruskin would have approved, and the spirit of Wordsworth was invoked with the tall round chimneys which he had so much appreciated.

### **29. Image of KSIA round chimney (Bruce P.35)**

Clearly demonstrating the influence of the Arts & Crafts movement in its decorative design, the building was constructed using locally sourced different types of native slate, with Borrowdale Volcanic forming the roof and gables on slatestone walls, and a distinctive gallery, in the manner of the traditional spinning-galleries of Lakeland barns and farmhouses. This gallery, with its four arched bays, was designed to evoke the revived craft of hand-spinning and weaving which was now being taught at the school, in addition to wood-carving and metalcraft.

### **30. Image of the KSIA building in 1902 (Bruce p.37)**

Behind all this initiative, a far cry from the *ad hoc* classes which had been organised at Wray, was, as Hardwicke acknowledged in *Ruskin and the English Lakes*, “*the spirit that had made the whole venture possible, the spirit of him whose face hangs now upon its walls, the spirit of John Ruskin.*” (p.124)

### **31. Image of the KSIA building in 1907 (advert) (Bruce p.91)**

Unfortunately, as by this time Ruskin was seriously unwell, it is unlikely that he ever saw for himself this splendid embodiment of his ideas.

**32a. Image of John Ruskin at 63 - HDR book frontispiece**  
**32b. Image of John Ruskin & Henry Acland at Brantwood in 1893**

Marion Twelves, who following a disagreement over the way the Langdale Linen Industry was being run at Elterwater – as a devout Ruskinian she apparently felt that the industry was no longer being run according to the economic principles of the Master – had joined the KSIA to teach spinning and lace and linen work in the premises of an old woollen mill at St. Kentigern.

**33. Image of loom at St. Kentigern (Bruce, p.31)**

The new department proved to be remarkably successful, and within a year was running at a profit.

**34. Image of Ruskin Linen and Embroidery (Ruskin Museum)**

Miss Twelves was also a talented embroiderer, and after she left the KSIA to start her own Linen Industry in 1894, which with Ruskin's permission she named the Ruskin Linen Industry, she worked on the funeral palls for Alfred Lord Tennyson and later for John Ruskin himself, both to designs by Edith Rawnsley.

**35. Image of Tennyson and Ruskin palls**

The miniature spinning wheel, conserved in the Keswick Museum, is believed by them to have been part of the KSIA history display, and may possibly have belonged to Miss Twelves.

**36. Image of miniature spinning wheel (Keswick Museum)**

For the KSIA to expand and run efficiently it quickly became apparent that the business could not be run entirely as a not-for-profit School. The KSIA would have to pay its way, and to do so, needed to make a profit on its sales. This unfortunate economic necessity highlighted of course the uneasy relationship between Ruskinian idealism and the realities of commercial survival. As the American sociologists Vicky and Fredrik Albritton point out in their *Green Victorians – the Simple*

*Life in John Ruskin's Lake District*, the Rawnsleys were caught in a paradox of their own making, by trying to turn Ruskin's model of industry into a thriving business.

By 1898 the School had one hundred pupils attending classes, and several full-time craftsmen on the staff, executing designs by Harold Stabler. Stabler had inherited an interest in plants from his father, who was a respected botanist, so the Ruskinian precept of drawing inspiration from nature was one very close to his heart. As Ian Bruce notes, among the KSIA stock designs which can be firmly attributed to Harold Stabler are those featuring stylised natural forms, in which flowers and leaves spiral off a continuous circle, a Celtic-inspired symbol of eternity.

### **37. Image of Stabler plaque (Bruce, p.48)**

Commissions began to be accepted, often for ecclesiastical use, including candlesticks, offertory plates, chalices and so on. One of the most important of these commissions was for the very striking reredos in St. Kentigern's Church, Crosthwaite, designed by Edith Rawnsley and executed by her with the aid of various craftsmen at the KSIA, including John Birkett. No doubt Hardwicke, as Vicar, had something to do with the KSIA being offered the commission! Edith also designed the elegant copper pendant electroliers which light the nave of the church.

### **38. Image of Crosthwaite reredos (RR)**

John Ruskin died in 1900, and so fortunately did not live to see the inevitable dilution of his principles, on which the KSIA had been founded.

### **39. Image of Ruskin's coffin in Coniston Church**

Hardwicke, who had always best at expressed his feelings in sonnet form, bid the Master 'Farewell':

*The Master at Rest:* Brantwood, Sunday January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1900

*The rose of morning fades, and ghostly pale,  
The mountains seem to move into the rain;  
The leafless hedges sigh, the water-plain  
Sobs, and a sound of tears is in the Vale;  
For he whose spirit-voice shall never fail,  
Whose soul's arm ne'er shall lifted be in vain  
God's knight; at rest beyond the touch of pain,  
Lies clad in death's impenetrable mail.*

*And all the men whose helmets ever wore  
The wild red-rose St. George for sign has given  
Stand round; and bow the head and feel their swords,  
And swear by him who taught them deeds not words;  
To fight for Love, till, as in days of yore  
Labour have joy; and earth be filled with Heaven.*

Economic necessity had dictated that goods made by the KSIA had to be sold at a profit for it to survive, and for that profit to be achieved, some processes had to be simplified and undertaken by machine. It was ironic then that this fundamental abandonment of Ruskin's ideal of hand work from start to finish was in the end to sound the death knell for the Keswick School of Industrial Arts. The School managed (just) to survive two World Wars, but to the dismay of the people of Keswick, finally closed its doors in 1984, a few weeks before its centenary.

In a symbolic coincidence the cedar of Lebanon, grown from a cone brought back by Hardwicke from the Holy Land which had been planted in Crosthwaite churchyard by Bishop Goodwin of Carlisle, was felled by a gale in that centenary year. The wind of change had finally blown away the Rawnsleys' brave embodiment of Ruskin's philosophy of labour.

#### **40. Image of KSIA building today**

The wonderful KSIA building, which for some time housed an Italian restaurant, now stands empty. Could the wheel not be turned full circle, and an Appeal be launched for it to be saved by the National Trust, and returned to its original educational use – perhaps to train

apprentices in some appropriate discipline?

What an appropriate way that would have been to mark not only the bi-centenary of John Ruskin's birth in 2019 but also the centenary of Canon Rawnsley's death, which fell in 2020.

*“There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, of admiration. That man is the richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.”*

Those words from *Ad Valorem*, and the motto which still graces the KSIA Spinning Gallery, “*The Loving Eye and Patient Hand shall work with Joy and bless the land*” together sum up, to my mind, the Rawnsleys' understanding of Ruskin's philosophy of work: Love for the task in hand, joy in its accomplishment, and the admiration which that accomplishment attracts from those for whom the work has been created.

41. **Image Ruskin cross model (Collingwood)**

ENDS

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