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# Morris & Co.

*Inspired by Nature*



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STANDEN HOUSE AND GARDEN  
1 JUNE 2019 TO 10 NOVEMBER 2019

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THE ORIGINAL  
**MORRIS & Co**  
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ABOVE: THE GARDEN

© National Trust/Andrew Butler

BELOW: DRAWING ROOM

© National Trust Images/James Dobson



BELOW: NORTH BEDROOM

© National Trust Images/James Dobson



## Inspired by Nature

*I must have unmistakable suggestions of gardens and fields, and strange trees, boughs, and tendrils, or I can't do with your pattern.* William Morris

*Morris & Co. Inspired by Nature* celebrates Standen's extensive collection of Morris & Co. patterns and reveals the inspiration behind their design and creation.

William Morris (1834–1896), the creative force behind Morris & Co., possessed a deep understanding and love of nature. Morris & Co. designed a wide range of products for the home including wallpapers, textiles, ceramics, furniture and stained glass. Today the firm is best known for its repeat patterns, inspired by the joys of the British countryside. Thrushes feast on plump berries in *Strawberry Thief* and wild roses clamber through the wooden lattice in *Trellis*.

The programme extends across the property. In the house an animation in the Billiard Room is followed by a pattern trail throughout the rooms. A living artist's studio complements an exhibition of Morris & Co. designs and products. The final room in the house is a recreation of a Morris & Co. showroom.

In the Arts & Crafts garden, plants featured in Morris & Co. designs form part of the planting scheme. A tree trail walk inspired by William Morris's poem *Tapestry Trees* leads you through the garden overlooking the Sussex Weald.

With the writings of William Morris as our guide, this booklet highlights each part of the *Morris & Co. Inspired by Nature* programme at Standen.

## Morris & Co. – a design collective

*If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.*

William Morris

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In 1861, with a group of like-minded friends, William Morris founded Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., the interior design business often referred to as ‘the Firm’. They promoted themselves as ‘Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Furniture, Carving and the Metals’. In 1875 the business became known as Morris & Co.

Morris was ambitious, wanting to change British taste and bring art into the everyday. The Firm reassured their clients that ‘good decoration, involving rather the luxury of taste than the luxury of costliness, will be found to be much less expensive than is generally supposed’. Morris & Co. products became highly fashionable and much in demand, profoundly influencing interior decoration throughout the Victorian period and beyond.

In 1883 William Morris wrote:

*We found that all the minor arts were in a state of complete degradation ... with the conceited courage of a young man, I set myself to reforming all that ...*

## William Morris

*My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another.*

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William Morris wrote these words at the age of 22. He became one of Britain’s most celebrated designers, a poet, socialist, conservationist and a leading figure in the Arts and Crafts movement.

As a child growing up in the Essex countryside, he learned to name many plants, flowers and birds. Morris’s love of nature was one of his ruling passions. Trees, flowers, birds, and rivers were a source of inspiration and a well-spring for his work. In his designs he often chose to use field and hedgerow plants such as honeysuckle and jasmine, with the curving branches of oak and willow, and acanthus leaves. He also took inspiration from historic textiles from around the world and medieval illuminated manuscripts.

William Morris wanted to improve the general standards of decorative design in Britain and the conditions of manufacture. To this end he advised pattern designers to abstract from nature rather than copying literally.

In 1876, the year that William Morris designed *Pimpernel* and *Snakeshead*, he wrote to his friend Aglaia Coronio:

*I am drawing patterns so fast that last night I dreamed I had to draw a sausage, somehow I had to eat it first which made me anxious about my digestion.*

## Furnishing a home: Morris & Co. at Standen

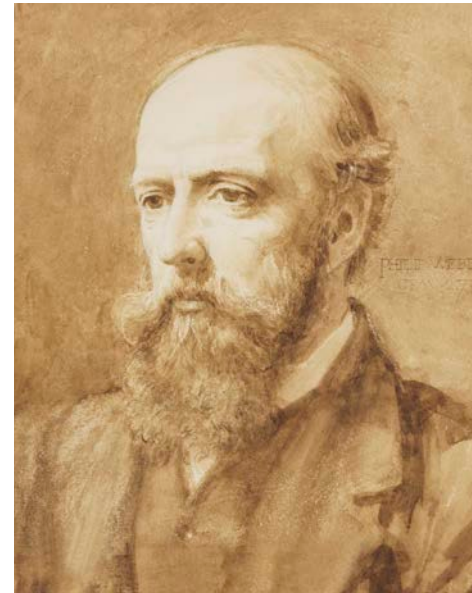
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Standen exemplifies a creative masterpiece, a collaboration between Philip Webb, Morris & Co. and the Beales. The home of James Samuel Beale and his wife Margaret, Standen was designed by Philip Webb, one of the leading architects of the Arts and Crafts movement and a founding partner of the Firm.

Built 1892–1894, the main house and its associated outbuildings are particularly important, as they are the most complete surviving example of a Philip Webb country house. Morris & Co. were involved from the start in the principal fitting-out of the interior, although the decorative schemes reflect Margaret Beale's taste. The products of Morris & Co. laid the foundations for Margaret's decoration, undoubtedly encouraged by Philip Webb's connections to Morris & Co.

In the spring of 1894, a representative from Morris & Co. called at Standen to provide an estimate for blinds, carpets, floor coverings and curtain poles. These were fitted at the end of May by which time another list of textiles and wallpaper had been chosen from Morris & Co.'s extensive range.

In the rooms at Standen, you can see Morris & Co. patterns used just as intended, furnishing a home. Many of the curtains, upholstery, cushions, embroidered hangings and other soft furnishings on display are made from printed and woven textiles produced to Morris & Co.'s designs and are original to the house.



ABOVE: Philip Webb © National Portrait Gallery

BELOW: STAIRCASE HALL © National Trust Images/  
James Dobson



ABOVE: The Beale family in the Conservatory

BELOW: THE HALL OUTSIDE THE DINING ROOM  
© National Trust Images/James Dobson



## Bringing nature inside: Morris & Co. patterns on display

*In each room you will find a printed guide highlighting key Morris & Co. patterns on display. Our volunteer room guides will also be happy to provide you with further information.*

### Hall

The Beale family welcomed visitors in the 'living hall', based on the idea of the medieval hall as a centralised social space. All guests were asked to sign the Visitors' Book, which is still kept here today.

William Morris's design **Wey** (c. 1883) is named after a tributary of the Thames. The river provided the setting for his leisure time spent angling and boating, the inspiration for his designs and writing, and the ideal water conditions for the manufacture of his textiles. Other patterns to see in this room include **Willow** and **Acanthus**.

### Billiard Room

Animation inspired by the patterns of Morris & Co. by Greenaway and Greenaway.



HALL: **Wey** Printed velveteen fabric © National Trust Images/Gary Cosham



CONSERVATORY CORRIDOR: Sydney Beale seated against **Trellis** wallpaper

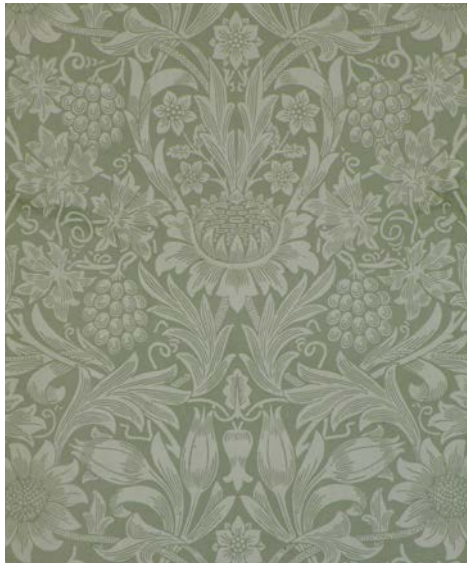
### Conservatory Corridor

Margaret Beale chose **Trellis** wallpaper from Morris & Co. in 1894. Inspired by his garden at Red House, William Morris designed the pattern and Philip Webb drew the birds in 1862.

### Conservatory

Creating a link between the house and garden, the south-facing Conservatory provided indoor garden space where Margaret Beale could grow the unusual tender and exotic plants she collected.

For this programme a display of plants that inspired William Morris, together with the accompanying patterns he created are on display including pomegranate, rose, honeysuckle and jasmine.



DRAWING ROOM: *Sunflower* wallpaper  
© National Trust

DRAWING ROOM: *Vine* hanging, embroidered by Margaret Beale (1920–26) © National Trust Images/James Dobson

STAIRCASE: *Bachelor's Button* wallpaper  
© National Trust Images/James Dobson

THE WESTBOURNE ROOM: *Willow Bough* wallpaper  
© National Trust/Jane Mucklow

## Drawing Room

*All rooms ought to look as if they were lived in, and to have, so to say, a friendly welcome ready for the incomer.* William Morris

The decorative theme of this room is centred on the sunflower, one of the most popular motifs of the Aesthetic Movement. Sunflowers were among Morris's favourite plants, appearing in both his designs and writing. *Sunflower* wallpaper was designed by William Morris (1877–8) in a mirrored vertical repeat. A sunflower also appears on the base of the small table designed by George Jack for Morris & Co. and the wall sconces for lights designed by Philip Webb.

## Staircase

Margaret Beale chose *Bachelor's Button* wallpaper, designed by William Morris in 1892, to sit in harmony with the rich tones of the woodwork. It was varnished in 1912 to withstand wear. Unfortunately the varnish has discoloured the orange tones.

## Westbourne Room

*Willow Bough* wallpaper (1887) is a more naturalistic version of William Morris's earlier *Willow* design (1874), a simple stylised representation of willow branches. The willow was one of Morris's favourite motifs and he used it in several of his designs for wallpaper and textiles.

May Morris wrote in 1936: *We were walking one day by our little stream that runs into the Thames, and my father pointed*



NORTH BEDROOM: *Artichoke* embroidery  
© National Trust/Jane Mucklow

NORTH DRESSING ROOM AND BEDROOM: *Powdered*  
wallpaper and *Lodden* fabric on chair  
© National Trust Images/Andreas von Einsiedel

*out the detail and variety in the leaf forms, and soon afterwards this paper was done, a keenly-observed rendering of our willows that has embowered many a London living-room*

## North Dressing Room and Bedroom

In both rooms Morris & Co. *Powdered* wallpaper is used, designed by William Morris in 1874. *Powdered* is one of several mid-1870s designs featuring willow foliage, a motif which Morris drew with endless inventiveness. Colourful meadow flower sprigs are layered on top.

The *Artichoke* hanging is one of a pair which originally hung in the Drawing Room, embroidered by Margaret and her three eldest daughters around 1896. Its accompanying hanging can be found on display downstairs alongside its design by William Morris (c. 1877).



LARKSPUR BEDROOM: Amy Beale in the Morning Room (c. 1895–1901) seated against original fabric wall coverings

LARKSPUR BEDROOM: *Larkspur* wallpaper  
© Morris & Co.

## Larkspur Bedroom

*Whatever you have in your rooms think first of the walls; for they are that which make your house a home ...*

William Morris

Philip Webb designed this bedroom for the Beale's eldest child Amy. She embroidered the bedspread and her daughter Elizabeth later worked the *Larkspur* cushion.

In *Larkspur* wallpaper a meandering vertical stem carries curving branches of foliage. A single-colour version was first issued in 1872. This multi-coloured version designed by William Morris was first issued in about 1875. One of the original woodblocks for the wallpaper is on display in the exhibition downstairs.





CROXLEY BEDROOM: *Acanthus* embroidery bedspread  
©National Trust Images/James Dobson

SOUTH SPARE ROOMS: *Poppy* wallpaper © National  
Trust Images/Jane Mucklow

## Croxley Bedroom

The *Acanthus* bedspread was embroidered in the Morris & Co. workshop in about 1896, possibly under May Morris's supervision. The design combines a background of thick foliage interspersed with intricate flower work.

## South Spare Rooms

Morris & Co. *Poppy* wallpaper was designed by William Morris in 1880. The original design is on display downstairs alongside a printing block.

### *Downstairs continued*



DINING ROOM: Margaret Beale by Frederick  
Hollyer (1893/4)



DINING ROOM: *Peacock and Dragon* woven fabric  
© National Trust/Jane Mucklow

## Dining Room

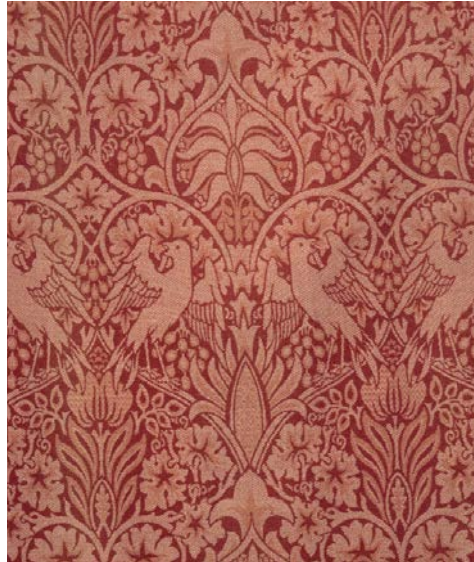
*A perfect hanging for a medieval castle or mansion.*

William Morris

*Peacock and Dragon* (designed by William Morris in 1878) woven woollen fabric was chosen by Margaret Beale in 1897 for the curtains and chair covers.

Of all the textile techniques that William Morris taught himself, he left weaving until last. Morris believed that designers should understand how an object was made before designing for it. He practised what he preached, teaching himself to embroider and weave, and encouraging others to do the same.

The formal pairing of birds and dragons was partly inspired by 16th and 17th century Italian silks, though the colour scheme also echoes Islamic art.



MORNING ROOM: Maggie Beale in Morning Room (c. 1895–1901) standing against original fabric wall coverings

STUDY: *Bird and Vine* woven fabric © National Trust/Jane Mucklow

## Morning Room

The photograph above shows the original Morris & Co. *Daffodil* fabric, a larger and bolder design than the current reprint. A Morris & Co. invoice February 8th 1894 shows that Margaret Beale purchased '48 yards of Daffodil chintz pattern No. 8777'. The room's scheme follows William Morris's suggestion to use fabrics as wall-hangings.

## Study

*I am studying birds now to see if I can't get some of them into my next design.*

Writing to his friend and associate Thomas Wardle, William Morris designed a succession of bird designs in the late 1870s. Drawing



DOG LEG CORRIDOR: *Trellis* wallpaper © National Trust Images/Jonathan Gibson

on historical research and natural observations he designed *Bird and Vine* in 1879, seen here on the curtain fabric purchased in 1894.

*Poppy* wallpaper is hung on the walls; William Morris's original drawing for the design is on display in the exhibition.

## Dog leg corridor

*Trellis* wallpaper (designed 1862, produced 1864) adorns the walls. William Morris designed his first wallpaper because he couldn't find any that he liked well enough to use in his own home, Red House. Wallpaper was one of the earliest forms of decoration supplied by the Firm.

## Servants' staircase

*Mallow* wallpaper, designed by Kate Faulkner (1841–1898) in 1879 for Morris & Co. She designed fabrics, wallpapers and ceramic tiles for the Firm.

## An Artist's Studio

Be inspired and create your own pattern on the interactive design table. Draw inspiration from the design for *Trellis* displayed on the artist's easel.

## Morris & Co. Inspiration and Creation exhibition

The exhibition highlights the inspiration behind Morris & Co. designs, the creation of their products and how they were retailed.

### Inspiration

William Morris hoped his patterns would bring nature into the home, *clothing our daily and domestic walls with ornament that reminds us of the outward face of the earth, of the innocent love of animals.*

Philip Webb's drawing *The Hare* (1886) demonstrates his knowledge of natural history, depicting wild tulip and daisies. *Design for Daffodil for printed cotton* (c. 1891) by John Henry Dearle (1860–1932) depicts a floral pattern appearing between vertical stripes. By 1890, Dearle was Head Designer and responsible for handling the Firm's commissions for decorative schemes.



EXHIBITION: *The Hare* (1886) work on paper by Philip Speakman Webb © Wightwick, National Trust/Paul Highnam



EXHIBITION: *Daffodil design for printed cotton* (c. 1891) by John Henry Dearle © William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest

### Creation

William Morris placed great value on the joy of craftsmanship and the natural beauty of materials. This led him to learn and revive traditional skills such as natural dyeing, hand block printing and tapestry weaving. Morris & Co. sought to promote the use of craftsmanship and traditional skills.

## Morris & Co. showroom: creating a home

With the generous support of Morris & Co. we have recreated the feel of the showroom. You can get a taste for how customers selected and purchased their Morris & Co. wallpapers, fabrics and embroideries.



Lilies in the garden at Standen in the 1890s.  
Standen archive

© National Trust Images/Marianne Majerus



Beale family and friends in the garden. August 1898. Left to right: Helen Beale, Grace Kenrick holding baby Tim, Margaret and Maggie Beale (both seated). Both black and white photographs possibly taken by Amy Beale. Standen archive

## Morris & Co. in the garden at Standen

*Large or small, the garden should look both orderly and rich ... It should in fact look like part of a house ... and should be divided and made to look like so many flower-closes in a meadow, or a wood, or amidst the pavement.*

William Morris

There is much to see in the garden at Standen that fits the ideals, inspirations and designs of William Morris and his firm Morris & Co. Surrounded by trees the natural setting and the gradual progression from house to garden, to countryside very much fits his view of a perfect home.

When the house was originally designed by Philip Webb, the same plants grew on the outside walls as were depicted on Morris patterns on the inside. Around the garden we have 52 plants that William Morris wrote about. He was particularly keen on native plants and those with simple flowers. We have highlighted 20 key varieties that each display a label containing a quote from William Morris about that particular species.

James Masters, *Head Gardener*

## Dyeing bed in the Kitchen Garden

The dye bed was originally set up to showcase not just culinary herbs but also those with medicinal, cosmetic and dye properties.

*The important thing I have learnt about natural dyeing is not to approach it from a scientific point of view as the colours are not always reproducible. If you approach natural dyeing with the view that any colour you achieve will be soft and beautiful then you will not be disappointed.*

Carolyn Hibbert, *Kitchen Gardener*

## Tapestry Trees poem trail

A trail inspired by William Morris's poem *Tapestry Trees* highlights 13 trees in the garden overlooking the Sussex Weald. Each tree will be accompanied by Morris's two-line rhyme describing its history or use.

## Events programme

We will be running a full events programme during the course of the exhibition, which can be viewed at:

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen-house-and-garden/whats-on](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/standen-house-and-garden/whats-on)



## Morris & Co. today

As custodians of William Morris's original company, Morris & Co. uphold the aesthetic and ethos of their founder in everything that they do. For today's fabric and wallpaper collections and home accessories ranges they take inspiration from the archive and also from all aspects of Morris's life and work to create new designs that sit alongside the classics, making them relevant for today whilst maintaining all of the artistry, charm and integrity of his originals. All prints and wallpapers are printed in the UK. They can still print to order from the original wooden hand blocks.

Claire Vallis, *Creative Director, Morris & Co.*

## Donation

*We hope you've enjoyed this booklet. If you wish to keep it we suggest a £4 donation. Otherwise please return it at the end of your visit. Thank you.*

## Acknowledgements

Dr Alice Strickland, Curator for Standen. With grateful assistance from Dr Anne Stutchbury, Carien Kremer, Eileen Hall, Josette Craig, Ruth Howard and Stephen Ponder.

Design: NA Creative

Wallpaper in Servants' Wing kindly provided by Morris & Co.

Exhibition paint supplied by Sanderson

*Daisy* and *Leicester* wallpaper in the Servants' Wing kindly installed by Oxted Interiors

INSIDE FRONT & INSIDE BACK COVER: Design for *Trellis* wallpaper (1862) William Morris and Philip Webb © William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest

