

Red House and Asia: A House and its Heritage

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Red House at Bexleyheath, in Kent, a ‘miniature Camelot’¹ built by Philip Webb for William Morris in 1859–60 and where William and Janey spent their early married life, has been owned by many different people since Morris sold it in 1865. Originally built as a private family house in a medievalist style evolved by architect and patron together, its indelible association with Morris has also made it a public place, and with its purchase by the National Trust in 2003, that function has now virtually replaced its intended use as a home. Although its primary associations with Morris and Webb have drawn visitors to the house since at least 1889, under its present stewardship of the National Trust it has now become a formal part of the British heritage industry, a place to be preserved and visited.

Any historic building is liable to periodic redecoration and also to reinterpretation, as Edward Hollamby’s annotated bibliography in his account of Red House clearly indicates.² At this transitional moment in the history of Red House, surprising new evidence has emerged which suggests that, if Morris and Webb’s vision of Red House can be understood as a ‘mnemonic’ of aspects of the European Middle Ages, Charles Holme (1848–1923) added a very different set of cultural references and ‘memories’ to it.³ This article looks at its temporary transformation by Holme into a building that referenced Asia as much as, indeed more than, the European past and examines his role in its progressive transformation into a site for modern heritage rituals.

Owners and Occupiers of Red House

	OWNER	OCCUPIER
1859–1866	William Morris	William Morris
1866–1877	James Arnold Heathcote	James Arnold Heathcote
1877–1889	Edmund Charlesworth	Edmund Charlesworth
1889–1903	Charles Holme	Charles Holme
1903–1919	Henry Muff	Henry Muff ⁴
1919–1924	Arthur Sherwell	Arthur Sherwell
1924–1927	Walter S Godfrey	Walter S. Godfrey
1927–1935	Dr Alfred Horsfall	Dr Alfred Horsfall
1935–1950	Thoams Curtis Hills	Thomas Curtis Hills
1952–1957	Dick Toms	National Assistance Board Dick & Mary Toms Ted & Doris Hollamby 1954–1965 David Gregory-Jones
1957–1964	Jean & David Macdonald with Hollambys purchasing their half by instalments	Macdonald/Hollamby/ David Gregory-Jones (When the Macdonalds moved out in April 1964, David Gregory-Jones's par- ents moved into their part of the house but stayed only a year. (David Gregory-Jones left around the same time)
1965–2003	Edward (Ted) & Doris Hollamby	Hollamby (with various lodgers over the years)
2003		National Trust

THE 'SACRALISATION' OF RED HOUSE

In order to establish a 'heritage', a certain tradition has to be 'invented' predicating the process of adding cultural values. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger this is, 'essentially a process of formalisation and ritualisation, characterised by reference to the past'.⁵ The anthropologist James Clifford has suggested that this process gives symbolic coherence to shared historical experience: 'Since the mid-nineteenth century, ideas of culture have gathered up those elements that seem to give continuity and depth to collective existence, seeing it whole rather than disputed, torn, intertextual, or syncretic'.⁶ In the financially driven terms of modern political bureaucracy, there is another aspect to 'heritage', its value as leisure capital, defined here by the House of Commons National Heritage Committee in a way which would surely have irked Morris:

Preservation of our national heritage for its own sake is extremely important, but it is important also to tourism ... With tourism making so large a contribution to the economy, it is essential that the UK's attraction as a tourist destination be maintained and that the factors to which its popularity can be attributed be strengthened and improved.⁷

Dean MacCannell's approach to the concept of 'heritage', outlined in his book *The Tourist* (1976), suggested the cultural process through which heritage sites obtain cultural meaning and thus value as leisure capital. He proposed a model of 'site sacralisation' in five stages: the naming phase (the site is marked off from similar objects as worthy of preservation), the framing and elevation phase (it is on display), enshrinement (the site is on display under special effects or surrounded by archival documents), mechanical reproduction (models of the objects are made, valued and displayed), and social reproduction (becoming a part of the region's identity).⁸ If one roughly follows this framework with regard to the development of Red House as a special site, the earliest steps for such sacralisation were arguably taken by its fourth owner Charles Holme, the founder of *The Studio* and a founding member of the Japan Society, who lived in the house from 1889 to 1903.

A series of photographs made during Holme's occupancy of Red House have recently come to light. They show a very different style of

decoration from that envisaged and begun by the Morrises and Webb. While some of these photographs were clearly intended as family souvenirs, others seem to have been made as deliberate memorials of the house. Photographs of the exterior and interior of the house, recording how the house was used and furnished in Holme's time, were put into an album, marking the house as worthy of preservation and memory. Some of these photographs were subsequently used in the prospectus made for the sale of Red House when Holme moved to Upton Grey, Hampshire in 1903.⁹ 'Display value' was also added during Holme's occupancy of Red House. People began to visit the house both because it was Morris's former home, and because he invited a great variety of visitors to it. From Holme's time, visitors began to inscribe their names on the glazed doors that he probably introduced; the first dated signature is from 1890. He was thus conscious of the historical (or heritage) value of the house and was keen to let people share and co-build that history.

Using these photographs and other recently available evidence from the Holme archives bought by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2003, this article explores how Red House was represented by Charles Holme, and how he effectively added value to the house through his deliberate recording of it and efforts to display it to visitors, and by his conscious linking of the house with Asia. A hallmark of his occupancy was the display of Asian artefacts in the house and his use of the house as a locus for interaction with visitors from Japan.

HOLME'S 'TRANSFORMATION' OF RED HOUSE

Holme's Asian connections were largely established before he moved to Red House. Born in Derby where his father was a silk merchant, in 1871 Holme became independent and moved to Bradford where he dealt high in quality woollen goods. From around 1874 he started to trade with India, and set up agencies in China and Turkestan, exporting Bradford woollen fabrics and importing carpets, embroideries, shawls and silks. The trade expanded to include furniture and ceramics. In 1879, his Central Asia Trading Company was dissolved; Holme moved to London and went into partnership with Christopher Dresser with the Dresser and Holme company on Farringdon Road in



Fig. 1. Image of the Furniture Exhibition, which originally appeared in the *Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher*, 23 April 1883. Original caption read: 'Guide to the Furniture Exhibition. Some Japanese Cabinets, Tables, and Oiterty, exhibited in the Oriental Court, Berners Hall, by Messrs. Holme & Co., of London and Yokohama'.

the City of London. The goods they imported from abroad were traded within Britain, and major furnishing companies such as Gillows and Maples were among their customers.¹⁰ This business had two agencies in Japan, in Kobe and Yokohama. Although Dresser had visited Japan in 1876, and had previously been associated with another Anglo-Japanese trading company, Londos and Company, in Japan the new company was known as 'Holme and Co.', even though the Kobe branch was opened by Dresser's sons, Louis and Christopher. By 1882, ill health had obliged Dresser to give up many commitments, including his partnership with Holme; the London branch too became simply 'Holme and Company' and advertised itself as 'Japan, China and East India Merchants'. It was well represented in the Oriental Court at the Furniture Exhibition held in London in 1883 (Fig. 1).

On moving to Red House, Holme shifted his activities into the worlds of art and publishing, becoming an active leader of the *fin-de-*

siècle British art scene as the founder-editor of *The Studio* magazine from 1893. He associated with other editors such as John Lane, founder of *The Yellow Book*, and Lewis Hind of *The Art Journal*. Holme's recent visit to Japan deepened his interest in the country and its culture and he became actively involved in the establishment of the London Japan Society, an organisation aimed at the promotion of Anglo-Japanese relationships. This broadened his network to include key political figures in the Britain-Japan nexus. The extent of his artistic contacts is indicated by a letter from the secretary of the Society, Arthur Diósy, congratulating Holme on the efforts he had made for the Society and asking if he could also persuade a number of artists to join, among them, 'J. McNeill Whistler, Harry Furniss, Walter Crane, W. A. Simpson (*Illustrated London News*), Fripp, Varley, Geo. Simmonds (sculptor)'.¹¹

The range of Holme's interests was also reflected in the furnishing of Red House, which he bought in 1889 for £2,900. The photographs now in the possession of the National Trust suggest that Holme's decoration of the house was in many ways typically Victorian, with an accumulation of many pieces of furniture in every room and curtains on every window and door; this was very different from the relative simplicity of style achieved by its original owner who professed 'simplicity of life begetting simplicity of taste ... simplicity everywhere, in the palace as well as the cottage'.¹² The substance of Holme's 'clutter', however, was not 'High Victorian' in inspiration and origin, but oriental. He furnished Red House with goods from different parts of Asia, which co-existed alongside the remaining pieces associated with Morris. A chest by Phillip Webb was placed next to an Indian chair, set against a wall on which a Japanese woodblock print and some ceramics were displayed. One photograph shows the end of the ground floor corridor: a screen at the back is panelled with sample wallpapers, and there are many items of china and oriental furniture. The cabinet shown on the left, with gold-inlaid lacquer panels and very likely made in Japan, survives today in a private collection. Above the chest are displayed two Japanese swords (Fig. 2).

Thus Red House became something of a showroom both for the oriental trading company founded by Holme and for his own eclectic tastes. Records of his later home, the Manor House at Upton Gray in Hampshire, indicate that he continued to favour the kind of interior



Fig. 2. The interior of Red House in Holme's time. Courtesy, the National Trust.

decoration featured in the Red House photographs.¹³ Yet he always respected the Morris connection, and recognised its value to the property. The 1903 sales prospectus for Red House emphasised the 'medieval' air of the place enhanced by Burne-Jones' tempera wall

paintings.¹⁴ Holme himself went in for 'oriental' medievalism, as Asia, especially pre-industrialised Japan, was then considered very 'medieval' in character with its feudal system and handicraft tradition still intact.

HOLME, ASIA AND LIBERTY

One of the names scratched into the glass door in the corridor at Red House is that of Arthur Lasenby Liberty, who was the prosperous and influential owner of a series of shops on Regent Street specialising in textiles and other oriental goods. Liberty and Holme became business associates and close friends. By the time Liberty opened his first shop in 1875, Holme had already established trade with Central Asia and India. The London warehouse he subsequently opened with Dresser was in many respects a wholesale version of Liberty's shop, which they also supplied, and Liberty was a principal shareholder in their business.

Lasenby and Emma Liberty and Charles and Clara Holme made many bold and enjoyable journeys together, which combined pleasure with cultural contacts and business opportunities and endless acquisition and negotiation. Their joint destinations included Constantinople and North Africa and their travels were recorded in various diaries. Charles and Clara Holme and their family were often guests at the Liberty house in Buckinghamshire, and the Libertys would also visit them. Holme actually bought Red House just before embarking on a 'world tour' with Liberty and his wife Emma, and their mutual friend the artist Alfred East; the journey marked his 'retirement' from business. In 1888–89, they spent eight months visiting Egypt, Ceylon, Hong Kong and Japan, returning overland across the United States and Canada; East remained in Japan to complete the series of paintings commissioned by Marcus Huish of the Fine Art Society in London. On his return Holme founded *The Studio* and thus Red House in part became a base for the continued discussion and promotion of both Arts and Crafts values and the arts of Asia, besides contemporary European fine art. Liberty contributed to the magazine and also advertised his business in it.

Both Liberty and Holme had particular interests in Japan. Japanese

artefacts, first seen in London at the 1862 Exhibition, where Morris and Co. first showed their wares, had a formative influence on the young Liberty and came to form a substantial part of both his trade and Holme's. Dresser's semi-official tour of Japan, described in his book, *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures*, provided important contacts and information for the Liberty-Holme party on their visit. Their own tour of Japan ended in Tokyo, where Liberty made a speech on 'Japanese Art Industries'. The paper was also given to the Society of Arts in London in 1890, and published in the Society's *Journal*, so Morris, like Liberty an active member of the Society, may well have been aware of Liberty's deep ambivalence about western influences on Japan at a moment when western culture was itself perceived to be in crisis by aesthetically-minded people.¹⁵ Even the kimono, Liberty lamented, was being replaced by the 'iron cruelties of the corset and ... tight lacing'.¹⁶

On their return to England, both Liberty and Holme became active founder members of the Japan Society, based in London but with an international membership. In a sense, their mutual enthusiasm for and experience of Japan may be said to have had a defining influence on the appearance of Red House under Holme's ownership, much as the visits to northern France made by Morris with Fulford, Burne-Jones and Webb more than thirty years earlier had influenced, far more profoundly, the original conception of the house. One might also note the difference between Morris as an artist and 'co-author' of the house itself and Holme as a collector whose enthusiasm for Asia made only a transient impact on it.

In Asia, Liberty found a supply of hand-made goods apparently untainted by industrial production, those pure values sought by the Arts and Crafts movement. Some of these goods were undoubtedly sourced by Holme's agents 'in the field' in the Punjab, Kashmir and other parts of India and Central Asia. Letters to Holme from shawl manufacturers in the Punjab thanked him for his efforts in getting 'some superior shawls selected by us' exhibited at the 1878 Paris exhibition: attention was drawn to their fine workmanship, texture and quality and they were awarded a medal.¹⁷ Yet the Indian exhibits at this same exhibition caused a good deal of recrimination and soul-searching in Britain and in Morris circles in particular. Liberty's reflections on Japanese material culture ten years later in some ways echoed the

letter signed by Morris and fifty contemporaries deploring 'the rapid deterioration that has befallen the great historical arts of India'. The letter was provoked by the display of the gifts given by Indian Princes to the Prince of Wales and displayed at the Paris Exhibition.¹⁸ In it, Morris and his co-signators lamented the corruption of indigenous artefacts by contact and trade with the west, not to mention the influence of colonial rulers. Despite his anxieties on the subject, Liberty, like Holme, was in many ways complicit in this process, since trade with the west, supplying a burgeoning mass market, inevitably began to degrade these indigenous goods. Burne-Jones was to complain bitterly to Liberty about the inferior colouring of a Japanese kimono he bought at his shop and to insist on the responsibility of traders to maintain their quality and not to succumb to the temptation of either the demand for cheapness or 'our own lower standard of beauty'; to Burne-Jones, as to Morris, colouring was critical.¹⁹ Attitudes to Japanese art varied in the Morris circle: while Burne-Jones and Morris did not apparently appreciate it, despite the latter's later influence in Japan,²⁰ Rossetti was a pioneer of Japonisme in Britain, even posing Janey Morris against a Japanese screen for some of the famous photographs taken of her by John Parsons.²¹

Although more pragmatic than Morris in business terms, and accepting the inevitability (and profitability) of mass production, Liberty was a genuine admirer of Morris and paid homage to the efforts of 'one of our great poet-artists' in recovering textiles from the effects of industrialised production.²² In different ways both men established an extraordinary reputation for textiles. Their separate efforts to produce new types of subtly coloured fabrics were both enabled by Thomas Wardle of Leek and his knowledge of Indian silks and of traditional dyeing and printing processes. Morris followed Liberty to Merton, where by 1881 they had neighbouring textile printing works dedicated to the kind of hand production still common in parts of Asia today. Morris, like Liberty, had a keen interest in oriental carpets and admired photographs sent to him by George Howard of some 'Persian' carpets bought from Liberty & Co.: 'They are very beautiful carpets and the designs will be very useful to me', he wrote to Howard.²³ Liberty's collaboration with Alexander Morton's Irish carpet venture in the late 1890s was very similar to Morris's attempts to make orientally-inspired carpets by hand in England. Liberty's silk

buyer, John Lewellyn, built himself a house in Buckinghamshire, near the Libertys, which echoed Morris's historicism: it was made from materials reclaimed from a sixteenth-century monastic building at Blois in France, and this may have influenced the idea for the Liberty 'Tudor' building on Great Marlborough Street in central London. In Paris, Siegfried Bing, key dealer in Japanese art and artefacts and a member of the London Japan Society, was a great admirer of Morris. He brought Liberty and Morris goods together in the showrooms of his *Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, presenting them in a modern context to a wider European public. Thus although the conversation between Liberty and Morris that one longs to have overheard remains inaudible and unrecorded, there is a sense of continual reference to Morris throughout Liberty's career, which must certainly have continued in the newly orientalist surroundings of Morris's Red House. For these reasons, Liberty's signature scratched into the glass remains a post-script to this 'silent' relationship and surely acknowledges his desire to become a part of the memorial fabric of that important house.

HOLME AND JAPANESE TRADING CONNECTIONS

Holme's continued links with Japan enriched and variegated his life at Red House: his oriental business and travel to Japan almost made his home a museum, and both these experiences and his involvement in the Japan Society brought new visitors to Red House.

The catalogue of Holme and Co. printed in Japan shows the extent of the company's trade in Japanese art manufactures: the goods ranged from fans, small utility boxes and decorative ceramics to large lacquered cabinets, lanterns and Japanese archery equipment (Fig 3). Some of Holme's great collection of ceramics and furniture at Red House can be seen in the photographs and many of the pieces were similar to the goods illustrated in the company's Japanese catalogue. As already mentioned, in Kobe, Dresser and Holme's business was run by Dresser's sons: Christopher remained in Japan and married a Japanese woman, and Louis subsequently returned to London to work for Liberty. Besides them, and some Japanese staff, there were also some British employees.

George Sale, whose name is also inscribed on the glazed door of Red

House, joined Holme and Co. in Japan in 1881. Many members of the Sale family subsequently worked for the company, including, in 1882, Charles V. Sale (probably George's son) who became a leading member of the Yokohama Chamber of Commerce for foreign traders and also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. In 1886 F. H. Mawe succeeded Holme, and the company became known as Mawe and Co., which continued to maintain many agencies and branches in Asia. In Japan, the change was only nominal, as the same employees were kept on, including the two Sales.

Holme continued to be deeply involved however, and when he visited Japan met 'Mr. Sale' and his family who accompanied and helped him on part of his journey. Sale frequently appeared in Holme's detailed travel diary with many illustrations of his own.²⁴ Holme also met significant people, including the architect Josiah Conder, a member of the Japan Society who worked for the Japanese government as a foreign expert in architecture and contributed much to the realisation of a westernised or modernised Japan, undertaking many official buildings including the Rokumeikan, a socialising hall, and a symbol of the period of 'pseudo-Westernisation'. Holme visited this hall, mentioned in his diary as 'the club', several times at Conder's invitation.

Holme visited most of the classic tourist sites with Liberty, the painter Alfred East and others. He was especially excited by his visit with Liberty to the government papermaking factory in Tokyo, where he looked at the manufacture of Japanese leather paper (*kinkarakawakami*). This was first introduced in Britain when Sir Rutherford Alcock, who was in charge of the Japanese exhibits at the second International Exhibition in London (1862), selected 'many imitation leathers' to be among them because he considered that 'our upholsterers might consult with advantage to themselves and their customers'.²⁵ After the event, many Japanese exhibits were bought by Burges, William Godwin, Dresser, Frederick Leighton, and others attracted to aestheticism, as well as by Farmer and Rogers of Regent Street, where Liberty first encountered and sold oriental goods. The 'imitation leather'²⁶ was sold at Liberty's 'oriental warehouse' and Godwin applied it to his famous Anglo-Japanese cabinet. Holme carefully sketched the process of its production in his diary and may have applied the design to one of the drawing room walls at Red House; one photograph shows that the wallpaper used for the drawing room on

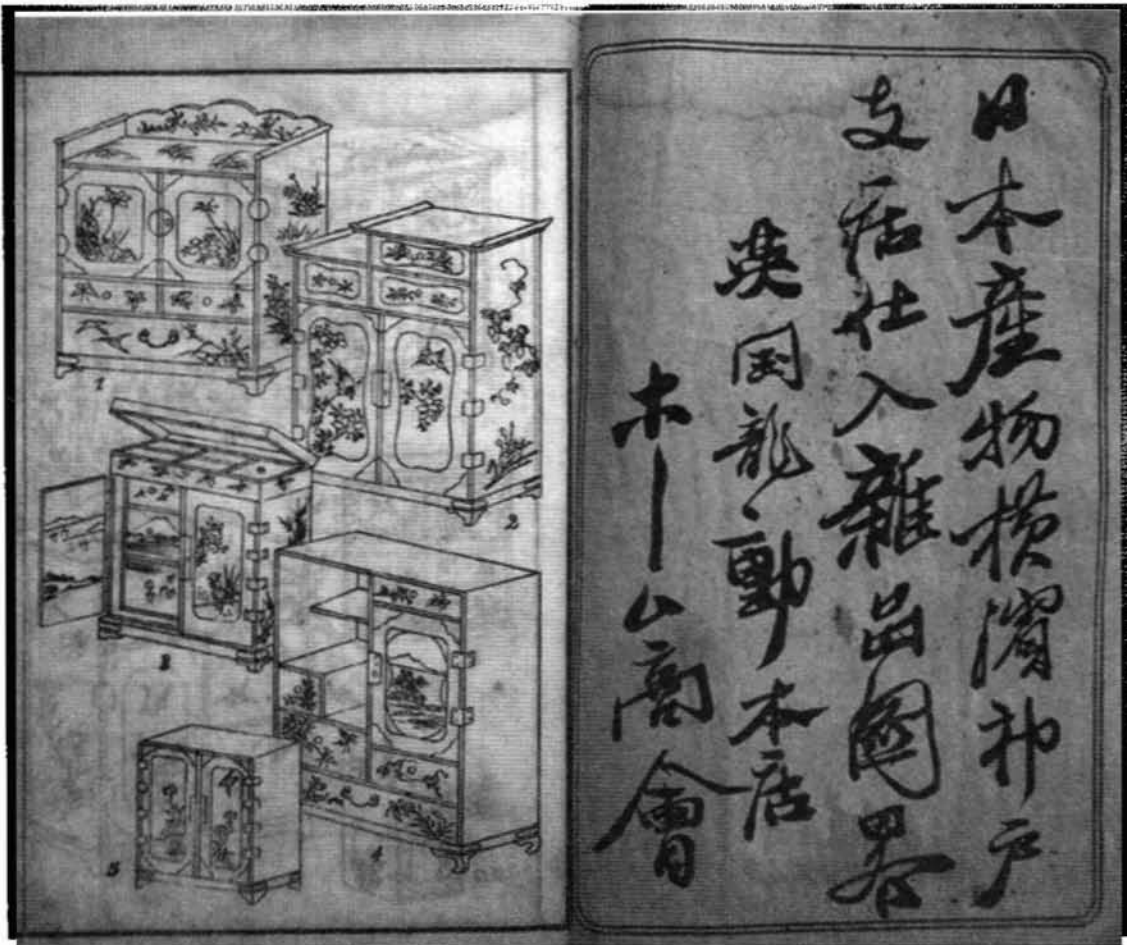


Fig 3. Holme and Co.'s Japanese catalogue. Image courtesy of Kobe City Museum, Japan.

the first floor was heavily embossed, probably with Japanese leather paper. The association of Morris with this paper continued into the early twentieth century, as Morris and Company sold some 'Japanese leather' wallpaper made in Japan with a Morris design (Fig. 4).²⁷

Although Holme retired from the forefront of the business, he remained active in the trade, and the accumulation of his trading experience is materially visible in his Red House photographs. In Japan, Holme talked about business matters with Sale on several occasions, and he also bought some Japanese paintings on behalf of Mawe and Company from the firm of Yamanaka. These may have been shown at the 1890 Edinburgh Exhibition where Mawe exhibited goods 'worth some thousands of pounds' and was praised for understanding 'the commercial advantages offered by these international exhibitions'.²⁸ By 1892, the Japanese branch of Mawe changed its name into Sale and

Co., and acted as agents for a number of companies abroad, including the Farringdon Road branch of Mawe and Co., Geo. Holme in Derby (possibly Holme's father's company) and for I. Marians and Co, (later Priest, Marians and Co.) from 1893 to 1897. This ownership succession reveals an interesting aspect of the retailing of Japanese artefacts. While many foreign-based companies in Japan went bankrupt within a couple of years, the agents for Holme and Co, although never a large company, survived until the next century, changing names over the years and practically overlapping human and material resources. Such a horizontal network supported the infrastructure of the wide retailing of Japanese goods and the consumption of Japonisme in Britain, and indirectly sustained Holme's life at Red House.

JAPANESE VISITORS TO RED HOUSE

After Holme returned from Japan, he became an important bridge for Anglo-Japanese relations. His continuing contact encouraged him to publish many Japan-related articles as in *The Studio*. He also invited Japanese visitors to his home. While the house became an expression of his oriental taste, which was a private function, he recognised its public function and architectural and historical importance.

Among the many names of visitors on the glazed door, both British and foreign, some are Japanese. The Japan Society provided good opportunities for these encounters. Goh Daigoro, chancellor of the Imperial Japanese Consulate-General in London, who helped establish the Japan Society and became the honorary secretary from 1892, was one notable visitor.²⁹

Holme also received some visitors from the Japanese Imperial Navy, reflecting an important material relationship between the two countries. It was at the time when Japan looked to Britain's shipbuilding industry and placed major orders for the construction of battle-ships in Britain; naval officers were sent out to navigate the completed ships back to Japan, via the Suez canal, and some of these men visited

Fig 4 (opposite). Morris & Co.'s Japanese Leather Paper. Image taken from *Morris & Co. Decorators*: undated pamphlet issued by Morris & Co., p. 32. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, Pasadena, USA.



Red House. In May 1897, Viscount Saito Makoto (who later became Japanese Naval Minister, Prime Minister, and Minister of Home Affairs) and Iwamoto Kosaku, then both Imperial Navy commanders, visited the house. They were to navigate back the most up-to-date battleship *Fuji*, manufactured by Thames Iron Works, and both had been in London for some time; Makoto was once invited to the Lord Mayor's dinner. Among other engagements, both men attended the Queen's Jubilee celebration and the sixth annual dinner of the Japan Society, where around 200 people gathered, including Holme, Liberty and East.³⁰ Commander Iwamoto sat next to Holme and Commander Saito made a speech on this occasion on behalf of his sick captain, and expressed sincere thanks for 'all the kindness we sailors of Japan have received in this friendly country'.³¹

The name of another naval officer is also engraved on the glass at Red House. Sano Tsuneha, a pioneer of the introduction of the British boy-scout movement into Japan, was the third son of Viscount Sano Tsunetami, founder of the Japan Red Cross, whose collection of Japanese porcelain shown at Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 became one of the most important Japanese collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum.³² When Holme was in Japan, he was entertained on several occasions by Sano Tsunetami who later made him an honorary member of the Japan Red Cross. It is difficult to date exactly when Tsuneha visited Red House, but from the title he inscribed before his name, it was probably between December 1897 and July 1904.

Apart from naval men, there were also artistic visitors. Shugyo (Shugio) Hiromichi, a member of the Japan Society and Art Advisor to the Meiji Emperor, was one such visitor. Shugio lived mainly in the United States and was in charge of selecting objects for many international exhibitions including Paris 1900, St. Louis 1904 and the British-Japanese Exhibition of 1910. Shugio and Holme knew each other from the 1890s, as in 1894 Holme asked Shugio to mediate between him and Shugio's American acquaintance for an article on Japanese potteries for *The Studio*.³³ It is assumed that he visited Red House in 1910 when he came over for the British-Japanese Exhibition. By this date, Holme had already left Red House, and Henry Muff had moved in. Like Holme, Muff had been a textile dealer in Bradford, so it is likely that they knew each other well and that Shugio was introduced to him by

Holme. They also had a mutual acquaintance, Hayashi Tadamasa, an art dealer who was the head of the Japanese administration at the 1900 Paris Exhibition, whom Holme had met in Japan and who must have known Shugio through international exhibitions.

This interconnected web of recent evidence has shown us that Charles Holme established significant liaisons between Red House and Japan. Holme initiated a tradition of Japanese visitors to Red House, although we do not yet know whether there were any Japanese visitors before this. The first person to introduce Red House to a Japanese readership in 1912 was the potter Tomimoto Kenkichi who may have personally visited there around 1909.³⁴ Unfortunately, these artistic liaisons did not directly encourage visits to Red House in pre-war Japan partly due to its growing political instability (Saito was murdered in a military coup d'état), and also because Japan was determinedly in pursuit of every aspect of 'modernity', rather than sustaining nineteenth-century legacies.

CONCLUSION

Charles Holme, the promoter of a wide spectrum of commercial and cultural activities in *fin de-siècle* Britain, developed Red House as a forum for eclectic encounters of tastes and cultures, while encouraging people to experience and appreciate the intrinsic qualities and history of Red House which had drawn him there in the first place. Yet he was not daunted by the Morris legacy, and confidently displayed his own collection of non-western artefacts in the house, which remained primarily a home for himself and his family. In this sense, much as Morris enjoyed the house as a nostalgic, neo-medieval 'doll's house' or plaything,³⁵ Holme enjoyed it in a particular and personal way. Indeed, he lived up to the words of the late chair of the William Morris Society, Ray Watkinson, who described Red House as 'a house not only to live in, but to live with'.³⁶

Despite Jan Marsh's recent suggestion that Holme somewhat belittled Morris in the pages of *The Studio* magazine, his very choice of Red House as his home, his frequent invitations to visitors to appreciate its architectural and cultural values, his low level of intervention in the fabric of the house, all suggest that this was not actually the case, and

that he was acutely aware of its architectural and cultural value.³⁷ No doubt his new enterprise as writer and editor encouraged him to reflect and consolidate these values. In his biography of Morris published in 1897, during Holme's occupancy of Red House, Aymer Vallance noted that the Burne-Jones murals in the large drawing room, 'are in a bad position for light but they are in good hands and well cared for, having been covered with glass to insure their thorough preservation'.³⁸ Whether the glass was installed by Holme is not recorded, but evidently he was taking a conservationist if not reverent approach to the original fabric.

In the Holme Archive there is an undated typescript article on the subject of 'Shams', a sermon against 'dishonesty of purpose and bad work'.³⁹ It is tempting to deduce that Holme's thoughts may have been inspired by his time in the house that Morris built:

The ornamentation and designs of our furniture, perhaps above all calls out for the most radical change ... we want to get rid of that false feeling of wanting to seem more than we are ... we are surrounded by the shoddy element ... We are so much occupied with the race for life that we do not spare that time and attention which it is our duty to spare on our surroundings.⁴⁰

In any case, the tradition of thoughtful habitation of the house continued after Holme's occupation of it, and continued to enhance its 'cultural value'. In the inter-war period, when planning and architecture were led by modernist values, and despite the specific link made by Pevsner between Morris and modernism, Red House was in danger of being destroyed in reconstruction plans for the Bexley area. This, however, only encouraged Morris's admirers and the National Trust to campaign for the preservation of the house, which marked the phase of 'enshrinement' in MacCannell's term, and the outcome was the establishment of the Red House Trust in 1935.⁴¹ After World War II, it was evident that Red House constituted a significant part of the region's identity, or the phase of 'social reproduction' began: the Bexley Council placed a building preservation order on the house under the Town and Country Planning Act.⁴² The sacralisation of Red House was quietly in process, and Edward Hollamby himself recalled that when he first entered the house he felt that he was treading into a 'mysterious' space.⁴³ From the 1960s Edward and Doris Hollamby added

both 'Morris' and modernist details: they 'never hesitated' to introduce modern furniture including pieces from Heals.⁴⁴ Increasingly it became a place to be visited as they allowed the general public limited access to the house. The National Trust's eventual decision to buy the house has confirmed that the tradition of visitors to Red House will be the central function of the place well into the future. The Trust has acknowledged that it, 'owes so much to Morris's example as a conservationist'.⁴⁵

Although its specific cultural function today is not yet fully and critically defined, it seems likely that, in keeping with contemporary sensibilities, Red House 'will tell a complex story of evolving tastes and layers of occupation'.⁴⁶ Thus part of the house's evolving narrative will be that interlude where Charles Holme introduced a set of aesthetic values that were superficially alien to those of Morris and Webb's idea of Red House, but at another level sought to display and promote parallel examples of craftsmanship and pre-industrial values. These also widened the cultural meanings of the house and eventually sustained its significance as a heritage and (today) tourist site.

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented at the Fiftieth Anniversary Conference of the William Morris Society, *Morris in the 21st Century*, July 2005, Egham, UK.

- 1 Sir Hugh Casson, 'Red House: The Home of William Morris', *The Listener*, 1 October 1953, and broadcast on the BBC Home Service.
- 2 Edward Hollamby, *Red House, Bexleyheath 1859* (London: Architecture Design and Technology Press, 1991). Hollamby suggests that Red House's appeal to young modernist architects in the 1930s lay in its 'reaction against pretension and overweening exhibitionism; a reaction against industrial ugliness; and a reaction against industrial inhumanity ... These values have a renewed attraction for the inhabitants of the tense, frenetic and often dehumanised world of the late 20th century' (no page numbers in book).

- 3 See Peter Blundell Jones, 'Architecture as Mnemonic: The Accumulation of Memories Around Morris's Red House', *Nineteenth Century Contexts* 21 (2000), pp. 513–40.
- 4 Muff's son, Edward Branton Muff (later Sir) changed his name to Maufe in 1909; he became a respected architect showing Arts and Crafts and Swedish influences, and was the designer of Guildford Cathedral (1932).
- 5 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 4.
- 6 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 232.
- 7 'Our Heritage: Preserving it, Prospering from it', House of Commons National Heritage Committee, Third Report, Vol. 1, Report and Minutes of Proceedings; Session 1993–93 (London: HMSO, 1994) p. vi.
- 8 Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (California: University of California Press, 1999), p. 42.
- 9 The photographs have been described by Tessa Wild, National Trust Curator for Thames and Solent, with responsibility for Red House, in Tessa Wild, 'More a Poem than a House', *Apollo*, (April 2006), pp. 32–37.
- 10 Charles Holme Archive, AAD 2003/10/8, V&A Archive of Art and Design, London.
- 11 Charles Holme Archive, Diósy to Holme, 13 February 1892. V&A/AAD 2003/10/46.
- 12 William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts of Life', in William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures, 1878-1881* (London: Ellis and White, 1882), p. 32.
- 13 P. A. de Laszlo, 'The Founder of *The Studio* as I Knew Him', *The Studio* (April 1933), p. 211–12.
- 14 This sales pamphlet is in a private collection.
- 15 Morris, like Liberty, was awarded a silver medal by the Society.
- 16 *Japan Weekly Mail* 23: 11 (8 June 1889), pp. 551–52.
- 17 Charles Holme Archive, V&A/AAD/2003/10/ 20.
- 18 George Birdwood, 'Two Letters on the Industrial Arts of India', (London, W. B. Whittingham, 1879).
- 19 Edward Burne Jones, Letter to Liberty and Co., 17 December

1897. City of Westminster Archives, London.
- 20 Morris considered that the Japanese had 'no architectural, and therefore no decorative instinct'. See William Morris, in *Arts and Crafts Essays* by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, (London: Rivington, Percival, 1893) pp. 28–33.
- 21 The photographs are now in an album in the V&A (Ph 1735 to 1752–1939).
- 22 A. L. Liberty, 'On the Progress of Taste in Dress: III. In Relation to Manufacture', *Aglaia* 3 (1893), pp. 27–31.
- 23 Norman Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris: Vol. III, 1888–1892* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 422.
- 24 Charles Holme, *Letters to London*, V&A/AAD/2003/22/30–31. The diary is being prepared for publication by the authors in collaboration with Toni Huberman.
- 25 Rutherford Alcock, *Art and Art Industries in Japan* (London: Virtue & Co., 1878), pp. 229–30.
- 26 In Japanese, metallic foil leather papers are called *Kinkarakawagami* or *Kinkawagami*. Outside Japan, there was no distinction made between this and sheer leather paper, *Gokaku-shi*, literally 'imitation leather paper; all were referred to as Japanese leather paper, or Japanese imitation leather.
- 27 A catalogue issued by Morris & Co. in 1907, *Morris and Company Decorators Limited*, shows a golden embossed Japanese leather paper in a Morris design specially ordered from a Japanese company.
- 28 *Furniture and Decoration*, 2 June 1890, p. 89.
- 29 Daigoro's talks, including 'Family Relations in Japan' (in *Transactions & Proceedings of the Japan Society* vol. 2, London: The Japan Society, 1895, pp. 117–55) and 'A Japanese View of New Japan' (*Nineteenth Century*, no.168, February 1891, pp.267–78) helped to broaden understanding of the country.
- 30 *The Times*, 26 May 1897, p. 7.
- 31 *Saito Makoto Den* (Tokyo: Saito Shishaku Kinen-kai, 1941), vol.1, p. 659.
- 32 Tsunetami was the head of Ryuch-kai, and Vice President of the Vienna International Exhibition.
- 33 Shugio Hiromichi's letter to Charles Morse, 20 September 1894,

- in possession of Shugio Ippai.
- 34 Tomimoto Kenkichi, 'Uiriamu Morisu no Hanashi (The Story of William Morris)', *Bijutsu Shimpo* 11: 4 (1912), p. 124.
- 35 See Amy Bingaman, 'The Business of Brotherhood: Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company and the Pre-Raphaelite Culture of Youth', in *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Laura Morowitz & William Vaughan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp.82–104.
- 36 Ray Watkinson, 'Red House Revisited', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 2: 2 (May 1982), p. 122.
- 37 See Jan Marsh, *William Morris and Red House* (London: National Trust, 2005), pp.110–11.
- 38 Aymer Vallance, *William Morris: His Art His Writings and His Public Life* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1897), p. 52.
- 39 Charles Holme Archive, V&A/AAD/2003/10/10.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 'William Morris's House: Public Interest', *The Times*, 1 May 1935, p. 12.
- 42 'Residence of William Morris: Preservation Order', *The Times*, 21 March 1952, p. 8.
- 43 'Red House', *Period Living & Traditional Homes*, May 1996, p. 14.
- 44 Ibid., p. 16.
- 45 The National Trust, *Red House, Bexleyheath* (London: The National Trust, 2003), p. 3.
- 46 Catherine Croft, 'House Proud', *Crafts* 18 (November–December 2003), pp. 34–40. The National Trust held a symposium to discuss possible futures for Red House in November 2004.