

Dear Club Member,

William Morris was a Victorian designer who was part of the Medievalist and Pre-Raphaelite and Neo Gothic movement. He was a founding member of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which rebelled against mass manufacture, and tried to keep ancient crafts alive in an era of increasing commercialization.

His most famous quote sums up his attitude towards design

“Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful”

Morris is most famous for his Wallpaper and Fabric designs, many of which are now being re-printed today. The blocks for the printing process are hand carved, and then inlaid with metal, many of the designs require a huge number of blocks, one for each of the colours, each has to be lined up precisely for the printing process to work.

I spent most of my childhood living in Leek, Thomas Wardle based his fabric dyeing business there, and it was to him that William Morris turned to help create many of his famous textile designs. Together they developed recipes for natural dyes, and processes of applying them that mimicked those found on medieval textiles, and also took inspiration from Indian Textiles. Morris favoured natural dyes over the modern annaline, chemical dyes as he thought the the colours softer, and he also enjoyed how they faded over time. Leek and the surrounding area was famous for it's silk spinning and weaving, as well as the dye works. The River Churnet had very pure water which made the dyeing process easier, and allowed purer, repeatable colours. Thomas Wardle carried on printing the early designs they developed together even after Morris used the expertise he gained from Wardle to set up his own printworks closer to his home in London.

My colour for this month draws upon the richness of Morris's textiles, I took direct inspiration from the famous Strawberry Thief print, this uses the Indigo Discharge method he developed with Wardle, and then adds Madder and Weld to produce a stunning range of colours.

Happy Spinning,

Katie