

The Sgraffito of Heywood Sumner (1853 – 1940)

Volume 1



Malcolm Knight

**The Sgraffito of Heywood Sumner
(1853 – 1940)**

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requirements of the University of Liverpool for
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Volume 1

Cover image: Shepherds and angels, St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (Ruiz Alonso)

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Abstract

George Heywood Maunoir Sumner (1853-1940) was the leading English exponent in the nineteenth century revival of sgraffito, an ancient form of incised plaster decoration used to adorn buildings. A prominent founding member of the Arts and Crafts movement, he was talented in a range of media, but especially sgraffito, developing a style that escaped the classical forms used by other artists of his period.

This account of Sumner's sgraffito is based on a study of the technique's history, an architectural survey of his works and an archival study of his family background, friends and influences. Sumner's working methods, plaster mixes, and organisation are reviewed. This culminates in an account of the author's attempt to replicate sgraffito panels, based on one of Sumner's schemes, in order to explore whether it is a technique suitable for contemporary use in the UK.

Concluding chapters examine other sgraffito artists; the durability of external sgraffito and its absence in England after the First World War; its continuing use in Europe and Sumner's influence there, as well as renewed recent interest in Sumner, the need to conserve what survives of his sgraffito and whether some of his lost work could be reinstated.

Volume 1 is the dissertation; Volume 2 is an up-to-date catalogue of his work.

Impact of the Covid pandemic

The 'Research Disruption & Mitigation Log: COVID-19 pandemic 2020/21' was completed and added to my academic record in early March 2021. Other impacts are recorded in the notes as they arose.

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Introduction

'Sumner developed the technique of sgraffito...each one of his achievements is a master work.'

Rafael Ruiz Alonso¹

The discovery of a previously unknown artist, building or form of decoration, that lifts the spirits and taps into one's interests, is always a joy. To find all three together is more unusual, but such was the case with George Heywood Maunoir Sumner, St Mary the Virgin at Llanfair Kilgeddin in South Wales, and sgraffito. I am an architect fascinated by colour and decoration, which has put me at odds with modernism. For many years I have been looking for attractive, economic, and durable means of ornamenting buildings, so with hindsight it does not seem surprising that I would encounter this ancient form of incised plaster decoration. and, despite its relative scarcity in the UK, that I would discover the work of Heywood Sumner, its leading practitioner in England at the end of the nineteenth century.

I was entranced by Sumner's charming decoration at St Mary's, because it was designed for a particular location, to foster an emotional memory and reflected the artist's attitudes and ideas. Its delicate integration into the fabric of the building and remarkable combination of colour and line added to its appeal. It chimed with my own exploration of and desire for decorative options, to provide *'intentional visual interest'*² for buildings or neighbourhoods through specific historical, literary or colour connections with surrounding areas. This is a personal preference and is not to say that decorative effects without *'symbolic communication,'* which have been notable in prominent buildings over the last couple of decades, do not have a place; all are efforts to enliven the environment, to provide identity and a sense of place.³

What I did not expect was that sgraffito and Sumner's work would become an obsession. It became important to find out more about him, his other works and the technique generally, so these three strands of enquiry have shaped this study. Discovery of sgraffito while I was in architectural practice prompted a fourth

objective, to try and reproduce a detail of one of Sumner's designs through practical experiments, with the thought that here was a technique ripe for reuse in the UK. This idea was reinforced by the discovery of the living European tradition of sgraffito. The Continent is full of examples, from Spain to Israel, Poland to Italy; indeed, English sgraffito should be seen as a nineteenth century branch of this history.

Sgraffito is a simple technique. One lays a coat of dark coloured plaster onto a wall, applies a contrasting light-coloured coat on top, marks out a design on this and then scratches or cuts through to reveal the darker colour beneath. This short description belies the sophistication and variety of methods, number of coats, colours and designs that have evolved through the history of sgraffito. For this reason, the study takes a catholic approach to sgraffito methods, as well as examining related but different decorative techniques.

The resulting brief for my thesis was therefore an exploration of possible contemporary use of sgraffito by way of research into the history of the method and an appreciation of Sumner's work. In summary, this set the following trajectory:

- 1 Sgraffito was unknown to me: the specific appeal of Sumner's work.
Appreciation of the first church decorated by him that I went to see.
His use of line and colour.
Decoration fitted to its setting.
A handicraft informed by art, the artist as craftsman.
Appeal in its non-elitist execution.
- 2 What is its history?
 - In Europe.
 - Late nineteenth century revival in England.
- 3 Who was Sumner? What influenced his choice of sgraffito as an artistic medium, among the wide range of art techniques in use in late nineteenth century England
Influence of family and friends.
Early artistic career.
Cultural milieu – Ruskin, Morris, the Arts & Crafts movement.
Did he see sgraffito during travels in Europe?

- 4 Appraisal of Sumner's sgraffito schemes:
 - Developing his style – early schemes, 1885 – 1890.
 - Mature work, 1890 – 1910.
- 5 How did he execute sgraffito? What were his working methods, plaster mixes, and design approach?
- 6 Is his technique suitable for modern use? Research experiments.
- 7 Why is sgraffito still in use in Europe but not in the UK?
- 8 Is there a future for it in the UK and what is the status of Sumner's surviving work?

Four motives from this are of particular relevance, underpinning my view that decoration of buildings is important, offering opportunities to fix buildings to their setting and aid definition of their functions.⁴ These derive from the specifics of Sumner, his work and life to wider questions of how and whether to use sgraffito today and matters of applied decoration on buildings generally:

1 Discovering Sumner and sgraffito

Sumner himself is elusive; more or less forgotten, despite having been a prominent member of the Arts and Crafts movement. When he is remembered it is for his prints, illustrations, the Book of Gorley and his later archaeological work but not for his sgraffito or stained glass, which is a shame and a surprise given his proficiency with both of them.

Sgraffito too is absent from most histories of architecture in English. Accounts of the technique itself are also scarce, but from what does exist another history began to emerge; where sgraffito was applied widely to cheaper materials to give the impression of better quality, as in the creation of a masonry pattern on a plain rendered wall, or to tell a story, or explain the purpose of a building, or where an artist just applies decoration that is *'flamboyantly unrelated to the structure of the building, its syntax or sections.'*⁵

2 An emotional connection with Sumner's work

One can relate easily to his sgraffito and, in what would otherwise be plain interiors, it provides a magnificent backdrop to the functions of the

churches within which he mostly worked. There is a directness '*...which an inmate of the nursery can read...*'⁶ but which has richness and complexity in its detail and demonstrates immense skill in its design, organisation and execution. Sumner's use of colour is sophisticated. It lends a hint of the Italian quattrocento or Byzantine to his scenes, yet the figurative and graphic style is of the late nineteenth century.

3 Examination of the craft aspect of sgraffito

The integration of the work of the artist's mind and hand with his materials is appealing; Sumner says of this, '*Sgraffito..... compels the work to be executed in situ. The studio must be exchanged for the scaffold, and the result should justify the inconvenience.*'⁷ This is in keeping with the aims of the Arts and Crafts movement and has a socio-political backdrop. The evaluation of crafts; needlework, joinery, plastering, pottery among others, being as equally worthy of attention as the high arts of painting and sculpture, became major issues in the late nineteenth century. This went along with according the executors of such work due regard and crediting those who carried out the designs of others; and shadowed the political issues of the period, particularly women's' suffrage and the rise of the labour movement.

4 The possibility of a sgraffito revival in the UK

The influence of Sumner on architecture and decoration after his death is almost nil, especially in Britain. Its prevalence across Europe leads me to believe however that sgraffito has a future as a technique, in other words a sgraffito revival is possible and my experiments were done in part to see how plausible this was. If that revival were to occur, we would see Sumner in a fresh light, as someone who continued and developed a craft process that is centuries old and might otherwise have perished in this country. Sgraffito frequently survived on church walls: it has yet to move fully from religious works to the secular world as painting has done and sgraffito in Europe did. If it does Sumner's significance will have to be reassessed.⁸

The Study

A first volume explores the history of sgraffito and Sumner's work in the medium, describes the author's sgraffito experiments and reflects on the significance and conservation of Sumner's work; concern over this and the loss of some examples led to the second volume, a catalogue of all Sumner's known sgraffito work.

There had to be a starting point, so for reasons already explained, volume one begins with an appreciation of the sgraffito at the church of St Mary the Virgin in South Wales; the nature of the technique and its connection to the Arts and Crafts movement, subject matter, Sumner's thoughts on the use of line, the fate of some of his work and his relative obscurity today.

Chapter 2 is in two parts, a shorter first section covers the history of sgraffito from ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century. It discusses definitions of sgraffito, work of one and two coats; debate over its origins; and its absence from histories of architecture.

The second part examines how Gottfried Semper and his contemporaries began to reuse sgraffito in early nineteenth century Europe, and its rediscovery by artists in mid-Victorian England, to provide context for later detailed analysis of Sumner's work. Numerous examples are reviewed, especially those carried out in the eighteen seventies, just before Sumner adopted the technique. Work in techniques similar to but different from sgraffito are discussed.

From this foundation chapters 3 and 4 explore Sumner's family background, his friendships, immersion in the artistic and cultural life of the period from 1880 to 1910 and his founding role in the formation of both the Art Workers' Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. The absence of his papers is addressed, and material located during this research reviewed. Interleaved in this is critical appraisal of his sgraffito; firstly, an attempt to understand how and why he adopted it and developed his approach in the 1880s and secondly of the major works of the next twenty years.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss technical aspects of sgraffito. This begins with Ruskin, whose writings about the relationships of designers and workers is important to understanding how Sumner carried out his schemes, his aspirations

for it and way of working. There follows careful examination of his plaster mixes, their application and his account of how to cut sgraffito. Chapter 6 details how Sumner's instructions were applied to contemporary sgraffito tests, replicating details from his designs to prove their practicality and understand more fully the difficulties and requirements of the method. The process of preparing a new design was undertaken to see how limitations of the technique impact on this.

Concluding chapters 7 and 8 examine other artists using sgraffito around 1900, the question of durability externally in the English climate and why sgraffito lapsed as a decorative technique in England, while it continued to be used in Europe. I examine recent installations in Spain, Poland and Germany as well other twentieth century examples. I also consider Sumner's last work, his influence in Europe and place in the Arts and Crafts movement. Rare post World War 2 works in England are noted, and the revival of interest in Sumner's sgraffito is chronicled. The urgent need to conserve what survives of his work is discussed and whether some of the lost pieces could be reinstated.

A short final chapter suggests further research areas that have emerged from this study. There is a limited amount of sgraffito known in the UK, but apart from examples by named designers there are thought to be a lot of vernacular pieces to be found, as well as more to be discovered about particular areas, such as sgraffito in Devon churches.

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- 1 Rafael Ruiz Alonso, 'Fenomenos de Difusión y Asimilación del Esgrafiado en la Arquitectura Medieval, Moderna y Contemporánea,' in *Ciudad y Artes Visuales*, ed. Miguel Ángel Chavez Martín (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Grupo de Investigación Arte, Arquitectura y Comunicación en la Ciudad Contemporánea, 2016), 29. 'Sumner desarrolló la técnica del esgrafiado...Cada una de sus realizaciones es una obra maestra.'
 - 2 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the historical explanation of pictures.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, 41. I have used his heading to chapter II as shorthand for the idea behind establishing character and reference points within a design to generate identity and assist way finding.
 - 3 Gulru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne, 'Introduction,' in *Histories of Ornament from global to local*, ed. Gulru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne (Princeton

University Press, 2016), 1-2. They cite work by Herzog and De Meuron for example, but decoration of buildings for effect only with no thematic connection to them has a long pedigree, as will become apparent in this study.

- 4 Decoration (or ornament; I use the terms interchangeably, though I am aware of debate about what each should refer to) may not always be required or appropriate, but it should remain as a tool at the designer's disposal.
- 5 Alina Payne, 'Wrapped in Fabric: Florentine Facades, Mediterranean Textiles and A-Tectonic Ornament in the Renaissance,' in *Histories of Ornament from global to local*, ed. Gulru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne (Princeton University Press, 2016), 274-275.
- 6 Joseph Gleeson White, 'The Work of Heywood Sumner – 1. Sgraffito Decorations', *The Studio*, no. 61, April 1898, 159.
- 7 Heywood Sumner, 'Of Sgraffito Work', *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society Catalogue of the Second Exhibition MDCCCLXXXIX* (London: Chiswick Press, 1989), 36.
- 8 Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*, 58-62. Baxandall explains that influence works in two directions; he gives the example of Picasso being influenced by Cezanne, and in consequence we see Cezanne differently. A revival of sgraffito in the UK in the twenty-first century would similarly affect our view of Sumner.

Chapter 1

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin

Heywood Sumner began sgraffito decoration at the church of St Mary the Virgin in Llanfair Kilgeddin in spring 1888.¹ This was the first of a cycle of large schemes in churches across the south of England, with one each in Wales and Ireland and one late northern outlier in Manchester, produced over almost 20 years, to 1906. During his sgraffito career he completed seventeen schemes in eleven churches and four houses, of which ten still exist and fragments of a further two remain.² They were all internal except for the sheltered tympanum to the west doorway of the former All Saints Church in Ennismore Gardens, Kensington in London; to a covered outside staircase at Hill House in Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire, and to a garden room at 'Doveleys', a country house in Staffordshire. His work was the culmination of a fitful revival of this ancient technique that occurred in England during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Sumner had tested sgraffito in small designs before St Mary's, in his parents' home in Winchester, in a chapel attached to Wells Cathedral and at Hill House noted above, but now he increased the scale, producing '*an artwork that has no parallel in Wales*' for the vicar, the Revd. William John Coussmaker Lindsay, as a memorial to his wife who had died in 1885.³ This is a work of church decoration on a par with that of the late medieval and Byzantine periods. The whole interior is decorated and even awkward corners around the altar contain a figure or two.

St Mary's is a small, remote church in a shady graveyard reached from the heel of a sharp bend on a country lane, then along a path worn in the grass (fig. 1). The west gable is crowned by twin bells in a raised open stonework tower and the building is simple, a nave and, slightly angled on plan, a chancel of lesser width beyond. There is a north transept hiding the vestry behind the organ, but this is not visible from the south-westerly approach. It looks medieval but was largely rebuilt by architect John Dando Sedding (1838 – 1891) between 1873 and 1876.



Fig. 1: St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin, Monmouthshire (1888). Largely rebuilt by John Dando Sedding in the 1870s. View from the gate at the road.

Sgraffito derives from the Italian ‘sgraffiare,’ which means ‘to scratch,’ and as incised decoration, it is effectively relief in reverse. Take a sharpened stick and cut or scratch a pattern into a surface that has not fully set. This might be a single layer of plaster or render but the most usual definition is:

Decoration by cutting away parts of a surface layer (as of plaster or clay) to expose a different colored ground.⁴

Sumner created his by cutting into a top plaster layer to reveal colours that had been laid in abutting sections onto a rough base coat covering the masonry walls of the church. It is a laborious process, requiring careful organisation of time and materials, but also precision and an ability to work quickly without hesitation each day against the clock through an area of new white plaster as it dries beyond workability. It requires dedication, accepting it as a process, slowly revealing what the plaster hides.

Sumner took the ‘Benedicite,’⁵ a canticle used in the Anglican service of matins with text taken from the Apocrypha, as his starting point, each line

anchoring his interpretations of people, landscape, animals, birds and faith to enliven and lighten the interior and the beliefs associated with a church. Shorn of his panels the building would remain a skilful recreation cum restoration of an old country church with some fine Arts and Crafts detail and medieval stained glass. Plastered, it is raised to the status of monument, and worthy of pilgrimage. It is a place to contemplate a generous act of remembrance and slip back to a time when they did things differently.⁶

The panels in St Mary's display a very English, pastoral approach to religion, something that a later rector of the church, the Revd. C. K. Smith, comments on:

*...what is treated of, is originally done, and not copied from elsewhere, nor are the figures merely conventional or ecclesiastical in type and design.*⁷

Faith is embedded in the riches of the world around us, the joys of seasonal colour and animals as vibrant spirits taking their own alien pleasure in the environment. There is nothing dogmatic, overstressed or dismal about the scenes; they are uplifting, guiltless and surround a small space with joyous material for quiet reflection.

The vigorous graphic style and carefully controlled tones of colour, defined by white plaster lines, convey space and depth; there is an affinity with wood cuts here. The apparent simplicity repays detail study though; squint slightly and one can read the eroding sandstone faces of the cliffs behind the whale and walrus in the panel '*O ye whales and all that move in the waters...*' (fig. 2) or note the indication of rain to the right of the rainbow in the '*O ye mountains...*' panel. There is figurative realism too in the foliage, thistle heads and contours of tree bark seen in the north-west panel '*O all ye green things upon the earth...*' which, while contrasting with the necessarily simplified landscapes, sits comfortably within the overall composition of the decorative scheme.

Among these idyllic scenes are figurative depictions of the seasons or elements, along with their archetypes, snow, thriving crops, rain and wind, which are very appealing, a direct expression of the interaction of humanity and nature



Fig. 2: *St Mary the Virgin* (1888), by Heywood Sumner. South-west corner of the nave, 'O ye Whales & all that move in the waters...' Detail.

(fig. 3), and a common device in illustrative artwork until the second world war.⁸

Pre-Raphaelite influence on the figures in the seasons and winds panel is evident but other scenes depicting people show a diverse character. In the nave, the 'O ye children of men...' (fig. 4) scene shows 'the life of man from the cradle to the grave,'⁹ which the Revd. Smith describes as 'perhaps the best of all the pictures and the least obvious.' To modern eyes this is an odd composition with figures facing in different directions, although their disposition frames the 'voice from

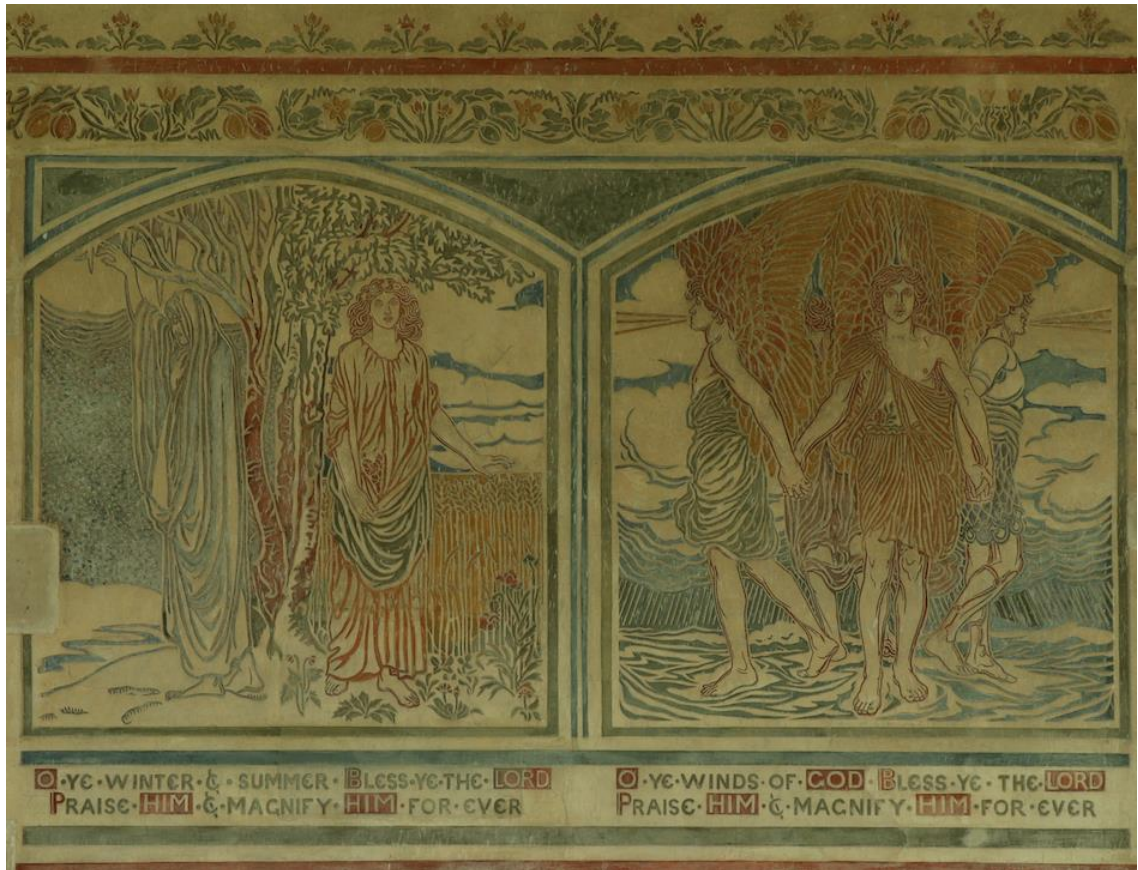


Fig. 3: St Mary the Virgin (1888). North wall of the nave, 'O ye winter & Summer....,' and 'O ye winds of God....'



Fig. 4: St Mary the Virgin (1888). South wall of the nave, 'O ye Children of Men...'

*Heaven proclaiming the hope of the Resurrection.*¹⁰ It all looks rather strange, until one registers the procession of the stages of life, from birth and childhood in the right foreground to adulthood on the left-hand side with old age visible through the child's hoop, and so back to the covered corpse on the funeral bier.

This panel shows a key feature of Sumner's sgraffito that he will develop and refine over subsequent projects; mastery of the depiction of clothed figures and the fall of fabric; and noticeable in the other more formally grouped panel, '*O ye servants of the Lord...*' which ranges characters from the '*Old Dispensation*' around the '*sacrificial fire of the Old Testament*.¹¹ Here Sumner has enjoyed himself, showing his ability to suggest animal hide, thin fabric with a fringe and heavy robes but also a facility with hair and beards (fig. 5).



Fig. 5: St Mary the Virgin (1888). South wall of chancel, 'Oh ye servants of the Lord...'

The figures in these two latter groups are different to those of the seasons and winds, more recognisable as everyday types,¹² but in the rest of the chancel Sumner groups the evangelists with their symbols and Saints Peter and Paul. These have a different character again; there is a hint of the formulaic about them subsumed under the slogan '*O ye holy and humble men of heart,*' they lack the grace and finish of other panels in the Church – perhaps they were his first essays

at the suite of panels for the building. That said, they do convey a sense of the ancient, as if they are far older, perhaps Romanesque leftovers, that have lived in their corner through hundreds of years. The symbols below the evangelists are however fine examples of pattern work design with white plaster over limited colour. St John's eagle in the north-east corner is a bravura piece of cutting, and intriguing; at first glance there appears to have been no coloured plaster under



Fig. 6: St Mary the Virgin (1888). North-east corner of chancel, Eagle below the figure of St John. The other evangelists' symbols are a golden ground.

layer but closer inspection shows traces of umber at the top and blue below, as if the colour has been intentionally erased (fig. 6).

It is possible to get close to Sumner's sgraffito panels at St Mary's and touch the undulating surface: the top plaster coat varies considerably in thickness, from 2.0 to 6.5 mm (from less than an eighth of an inch to more than a quarter of an



Fig. 7: *St Mary the Virgin (1888)*. South wall of the nave, 'O ye Children of Men...' panel seen obliquely.

inch). Sumner, in an article in the catalogue for the second show by the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, about sgraffito and his technique, suggests $\frac{1}{12}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (between 2 and 3 mm), perhaps reflecting work by others who used these thinner coats and the fact that greater thickness does make cutting more difficult.¹³ The effect of viewing the surfaces at St Mary's obliquely and close to, though, is to get a hint of movement and a different, more vibrant, perception of pattern, depth and recession into the scene as if it is set within a box receding into the wall (fig. 7).

The cutting techniques in the 'O ye beasts & cattle...' panel convey a wonderful feeling of living things; the dynamic combination of jagged lines across

willowy trees in the blowing wind, with radiating stripes of tilled soil on the fields and swirling eddies in the stream (fig. 8). Sumner's abstracting shorthand conveys things very economically. His birds, swooping and hovering, convey the joy of flight in the panel with sea life and in the spandrels to the arch of the south door. Sumner's consideration of the '*special aptitudes and limitations*' of sgraffito are revealing:

Sgraffito work may claim a special aptitude for design whose centre of aim is line. It has no beauty of material like glass, no mystery of surface like mosaic, no pre-eminence of subtly-woven tone and colour like tapestry; yet it gives freer play to line than any of these mentioned fields of design, and a cartoon for sgraffito can be executed in facsimile, undeviated by warp and woof, and unchecked by angular tesserae or lead lines. True, hardness of design may easily result from this aptitude, indeed is to a certain extent inherent to the method under examination, but in overcoming this danger and in making the most of this aptitude is the artist discovered.¹⁴

The second sentence combines careful preparation and use of material with reliance on the hand and eye of the artist working through the setting plaster, which seems to have been a feature of Sumner's method. It reflects the Arts and Crafts ethos of the artist in tune with both his work and the materials and techniques applied with them.

He also is clear about what he is producing. It may be figurative but is not realistic:

Line means limitation and a certain abstraction of manner. In this quality is its strength, and the ideal imaginings of an artist may appeal more directly to the spectator's mind if his work is plainly removed from realistic tests.¹⁵

This combination of line, colour and figurative illustration is very powerful and attractive. Sumner creates something sculptural that merges his work with the architecture it adorns; it has, as he himself wrote, something '*organic*' about it, as if he merely revealed it.¹⁶ His frequent use of text as part of the designs seems



Fig. 8: St Mary the Virgin (1888). South wall of the nave, 'O ye beasts & cattle...'

perfectly at one with this, as do the decorative foliage borders, both of which sit in a long tradition of inscriptions, dedications or quotations as parts of works of art.

The panels appear refined and are cleverly designed but look closely at the surface and one can see the rusticity of the process. The marks of cleaning up from cutting through the white plaster remain in the coloured layers. There is no disguise or refinement at this detail level but the overall impact when standing back to view the completed panels is one of grace and clarity. Sumner's execution reflects the Arts and Crafts ethos, of being true to one's materials and showing the method of construction.

It is surprising to learn, that as recently as the 1980s, there was talk of demolition; structural problems were cited, which were fortunately overcome.¹⁷ Demolition, painting over; these seem to have been the fate of numerous of

Sumner's decorative schemes. His last major project at St John the Evangelist in Miles Platting, Manchester, finished in 1906, was demolished in 1973. There was a protracted and sad process that led to the loss of both St John's and another church, St Luke's. The secretary of St Luke's PCC took leave to doubt the brutalist appeal of the proposed replacement, suggesting tartly that its acceptance in the future might be measured locally by *'how many brides actually chose to be married there.'*¹⁸

This remarkable man, relatively unknown to us today, was in his time a leading light of the Arts and Crafts movement. Good photographs of Sumner are scarce, but two are shown below. One posed as a young man in a Sumner and Benson family group; Heywood is the young man lying down in the right foreground (fig. 9). The other is taken from later life, with full white beard and an eager look, as if snapped just as he was about to say something (fig. 10); here one sees a hint of the dash and exuberance that one imagines of the young man, thirty-five or so, who created the panels at St Mary's, working swiftly on the area plastered that day, cutting back to reveal the coloured forms. He would leave faces until last, believing that he worked on these best when under pressure to beat the hardening top white coating; this was the Arts and Crafts artist fully engaged with the materials of his art.

Where and how Sumner discovered sgraffito and acquired such mastery of it are difficult to unpick from the records that survive, but there are clues here and there. A number of eminent and lesser known architects of the mid-nineteenth century experimented with sgraffito before him, after the technique was 'rediscovered' by Gottfried Semper and his German contemporaries in the early nineteenth century. This revival and its ancient antecedents will be addressed in the next chapter.



Fig. 9: This photograph of a Benson and Sumner family tennis party c1877 includes Sumner, third from right in the front row in a dark jacket.

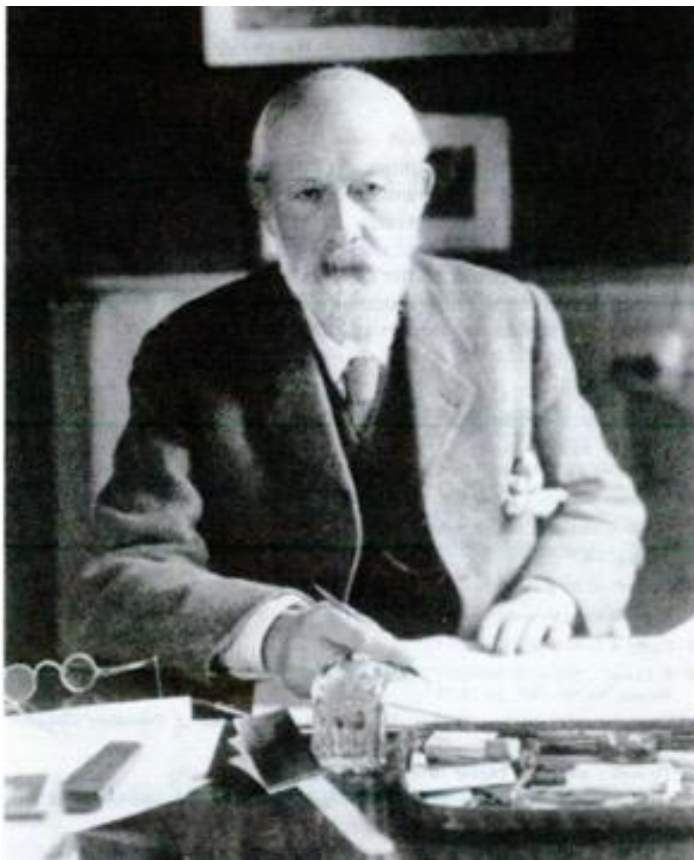


Fig. 10: Heywood Sumner, apparently in his study.

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- 1 Letters from Heywood Sumner to Julia Ady (néé Cartwright), 8 April and 1 June 1888, Northampton County Archives, Cartwright (Edgcote) Collection, CE121/11, 1 and CE121/13, 3 respectively, which set the date range that year for work at the church. ‘Llanfair’ it is worth noting means St Mary’s Church.
 - 2 The counting of Sumner’s executed work and what survives complete or in part is not straightforward as he carried out more than one scheme in some buildings, but the catalogue gives the most up-to-date list.
 - 3 Matthew Saunders, *Saving Churches: Friends of Friendless Churches: The First 50 Years* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2010), 60-61.
 - 4 Angela Weyer gives this as the last of thirteen definitions, starting with Vasari in the mid-sixteenth century, in ‘Gekratzte Bilder: Einführung in die Hildesheimer Tagung “Sgraffito im Wandel”,’ in *Sgraffito im Wandel- Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds. Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 24. The complex origins of the word are discussed further in the glossary.
 - 5 The Catalogue gives the verses that Sumner chose to illustrate and background information on the source. The design logic is discussed in chapter 3.
 - 6 The reference to L. P. Hartley’s opening to *The Go-Between* is intentional; studying Sumner has revealed a mindset that is difficult to appreciate now. One cannot readily imagine such a tribute to a departed spouse today; this work seems to sit in a tradition that at the very grandest scale includes the Albert Memorial and the Taj Mahal.
 - 7 Revd. C. K. Smith, *The Sgraffito Work of Heywood Sumner* (RCAHMW, Accession Number NA/MM/90/1e, Catalogue Number C433359, undated but thought to be a guide to the church from the 1930s, 4. The ‘modern’ portrayal of figures, with a hint of the Pre-Raphaelite about them, rather than stock neoclassical imagery and figures, sets Sumner apart among late nineteenth century practitioners of sgraffito.
 - 8 Visible in another example, shown below, from the other end of the country, in Douglas Strachan’s window of the *Good Shepherd* in the north nave wall of St Colmen’s Church, Colmonell in south Ayrshire from as late as 1926. Here the four seasons sit with their attributes beneath the figure of Christ.



- 9 Joseph Gleeson White, 'The Work of Heywood Sumner – 1. Sgraffito Decorations', *The Studio*, no. 61 (April 1898), 159.
- 10 Smith, *The Sgraffito Work of Heywood Sumner*, 5.
- 11 Smith, *The Sgraffito Work of Heywood Sumner*, 7. The Old Dispensation relates to God's compact with his chosen people in the Old Testament.
- 12 In 'Reports on Architectural Visits – December/January 1985,' made to the church in preparation for the 1986 exhibition about Sumner held in Winchester, Elizabeth Lewis and Margo Coatts record that '*It is said that the villagers (of Llanfair Kilgeddin) were the models for some of Sumner's figures (B.E to M.C 6/12/84).*' B. E. is identified by Alan Crawford, another of the exhibition organisers, as the venerable Barrie Evans, archdeacon from Newport [Cathedral].
- 13 Heywood Sumner, 'II. Of Sgraffito work,' In *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Second Exhibition, MDCCCLXXXIX*, 34. London: Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, 1889. The article, slightly amended, appeared in 1892 in *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 50, and again the following year in *Arts and Crafts Essays*, by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society with a preface by William Morris (London: Rivington, Percival & Co., 1893), 166. The author's experiments in replicating Sumner's method confirmed the point about thickness of the top plaster layer.
- 14 Heywood Sumner, 'The Way Sgraffito Work is Executed,' *The British Architect*, (10 Jan 1890): Vol. 33, 23.
- 15 Heywood Sumner, 'Of Line and Wall Decoration,' *The Hobby Horse* (Century Guild, 1890): 59.

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- 16 Heywood Sumner, 'Of Sgraffito Work,' 168.
- 17 See: 'A Victorian Society Report, Llanfair Kilgeddin and the Problem of Redundant Churches in Wales', undated but 1985 or 1986. The report details the problems of the Church and the absence of a Welsh redundant churches' organisation; and Matthew Saunder's article at note 2, which describes the successful saving of the Church and its vesting with Friends of Friendless Churches. The Church is now Grade I listed.
- 18 Richard I. McEwan, *None will Remain: Five Lost Churches of Manchester* (London: Anglo-Catholic History Society, 2014), Vol. 1, 52-56.

Chapter 2

A short history of sgraffito

Origins

Sgraffito has a long continuous history, not everywhere, but scattered across many parts of Europe and north Africa. Modern beginnings lie in medieval times and, amid arguments about when Renaissance artists began to use it, we can unravel strands that remained into the late eighteenth century, waiting for travellers to pick it up again in the nineteenth. Sumner had a view about its origins:

Tracing its history, Sumner would say that sgraffito had been invented by the Romans and had then lapsed; it was rediscovered in Renaissance Italy and revived, but then lapsed again. In the nineteenth century it was revived for a second time, first by Gottfried Semper in Hamburg in the 1840s, and then, perhaps through Semper's influence, by Henry Cole and his circle at South Kensington.¹

This summary of the history of sgraffito retains a broad truth but subsequent archaeological excavations and recent academic interest have revealed a more complicated history and much earlier origin. Sgraffito probably emerged at the dawn of settled communities when dwellings were first coated with render or plaster. George Bankart, in his 1908 book on the art of the plasterer, observed that *'Scatched decoration is the most ancient mode of surface decoration employed by man.'*² Sumner evidently thought the same:

Now, it would be a curious and an interesting piece of research to trace this simple form of craft, from the rude but graphic scratchings of primitive man, down to the present custom of scratching mock stone joints on stuccoed walls...³

Hans Urbach, writing twenty years after Bankart, saw echoes of the technique in rune carvings and cuneiform writing, although this might more plausibly have led to incised work on pottery first.⁴ Sgraffito can be traced back at least to ancient Egypt; the funerary complex of Senusert III, Abydos, Egypt, from



Fig. 1: The funerary complex of Senusert III, Abydos, Egypt (c1850BCE).

about 1850 BCE, shows an early example of tan coloured boats emerging through a white coating, ostensibly an example of sgraffito carried out in two coats of plaster (fig 1).⁵

Evidence of sgraffito has been found in Roman remains. Rafael Ruiz Alonso observes that:

*many wall coverings that, from the 7th century BC until the end of antiquity, were used by the Greek and Roman civilisations to imitate ashlar walls, should be included in the field of sgraffito.*⁶

He notes examples on Delos, Cyprus and especially at Pompeii. Using sgraffito to imitate masonry to disguise the true construction of a building, and to enliven a plain rendered façade, apparently started early and recurs regularly throughout its history.

Ruiz Alonso also tracks sgraffito on the Iberian Peninsula from hints in Roman remains, during the Visigoth kingdom, and on castles, mosques and towers throughout the Islamic period. This latter tradition persisted beyond the completion of the Christian takeover in the fifteenth century and is particularly notable around Segovia. Evidence thus exists in Spain for sgraffito usage in some form for much of

the period from the Roman occupation into late medieval times. Much of this work has a distinctive character employing matching repetitive patterns of differing sizes within the same decoration, arising it seems from use of sgraffito to protect vulnerable materials as well as a decorative treatment.⁷ The effects can be striking as two fifteenth century buildings in Segovia illustrate; the Torre de los Arias Davila displays a common, flower petal design, while the Alcazar is covered in an inter-laced repeating pattern giving the effect of chain mail (figs. 2 – 4).



Fig. 2: Torre de los Arias Davila, Segovia, Spain (mid- fifteenth century).

Fig. 3: Torre de los Arias Davila. Detail of complex flower pattern.



Fig. 4: Tower of the Alcázar, Segovia, Spain (early fifteenth century).

Sgraffito in Renaissance Italy is described by Giorgio Vasari in his book *‘On Technique’* of 1550 and his later work about the lives of the artists. In his account of the lives of Morto da Feltro (c1490 – 1527)⁸ and Andrea di Cosimo Feltrini (1477 – 1548) he describes how the latter:

*introduced the practice of covering the façades of houses and palaces with an intonaco of lime mixed with the black of ground charcoal, or rather, burnt straw, on which intonaco, when still fresh, he spread a layer of white plaster. Then, having drawn the grotesques, with such divisions as he desired, on some cartoons, he dusted them over the intonaco, and proceeded to scratch it with an iron tool.*⁹

Sgraffito schemes, featuring grotesques, were carried out by Feltrini in the sixteenth century but Vasari’s assertion ignores the fact that sgraffito was already in wide use in fifteenth century Italy, especially Florence, long before Feltrini was born. Vasari was being selective in his account, choosing an arbitrary starting point for the rediscovery of sgraffito, which has been repeated by many later writers.¹⁰ Alina Payne, in an article from 2016, draws attention to earlier examples, such as the Palazzo Lapi, *‘after 1452, Florence’* and from *‘Palazzo Spinelli, ca 1460 – 70, Florence.’*¹¹ The former building again shows the common use of sgraffito for creating the impression of stonework with cheaper materials (fig. 5).

A more extensive undercutting of Vasari is the comprehensive record of the development of sgraffito in Renaissance Italy by Gunther and Christel Thiem in the 1960s, in which they documented sgraffito in Tuscany, and Florence in particular (fig. 6). The

*oldest documented examples in Florence are at the Casa Davanzati near Porta Rossa and at the Castellani chapel of S. Croce dated to the second half of the fourteenth century.*¹²

Andreas Huth in a paper in 2017 succinctly puts Vasari in his place.

*By the time Giorgio Vasari wrote his chapter on the Italian sgraffito technique.... in 1550, approximately 250 years had already passed since its invention by Florentine plaster workers.*¹³



Fig. 5: Palazzo Lapi, Florence, Italy (after 1452). The impression of stonework created in sgraffito.

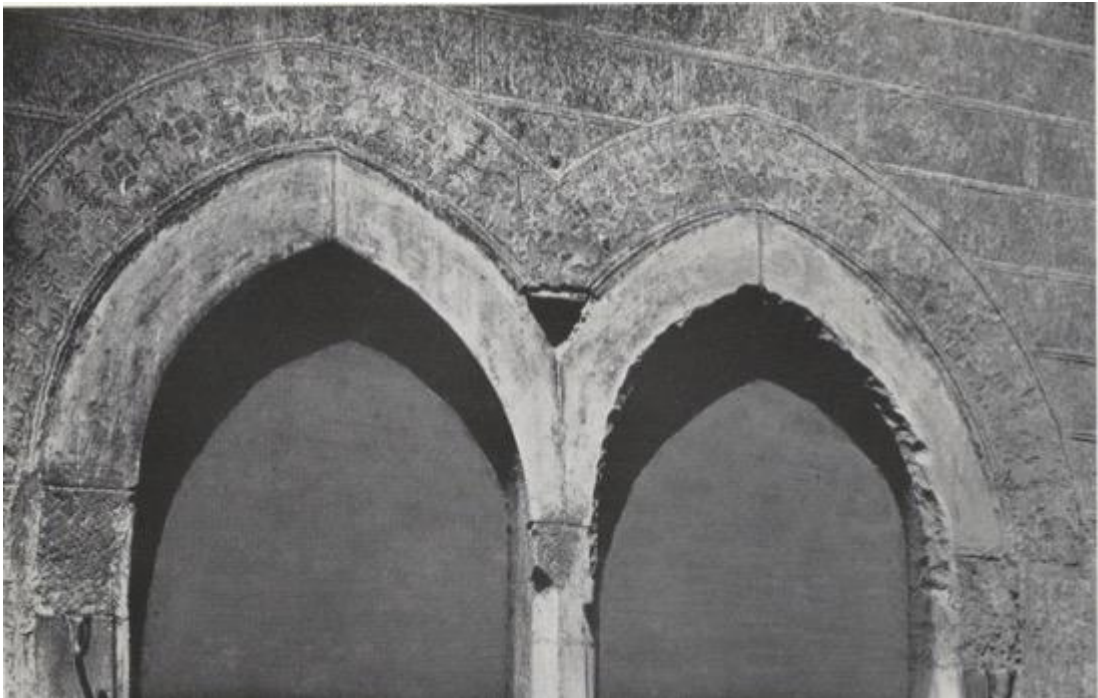


Fig. 6: Casa Davanzati, Florence, Italy, 3rd quarter of 14th century (i.e., 1350 - 1375). The impression of stonework at a very early date.

The technique seems in fact to emerge in Italy in the late Middle Ages, the Thiems tracing its origins back to thirteenth century work in a single coat with a lime enriched finish, whether achieved by working the surface or applying distemper is unclear. This approach relied for colour on the difference between the



Fig. 7: 'La Fedelta', Palazzo Montalvo, Florence, Italy (1573), by Bernardino Pocetti. Right-hand side of central axis on ground floor elevation, figure surrounded by grotesques within an architectural frame.

surface and the underlying material of a single layer of plaster. They see this as part of early Renaissance artistic activity that led eventually to the use of two coat sgraffito, where the contrast between two differently coloured layers offered greater scope for pattern and depiction of figures, development in shading and tinting and, by the sixteenth century, use of more than two colours, of which traces remain on some buildings.¹⁴

Both Payne and the Thiems trace stylistic changes in sgraffito in Florence over three centuries, from the representation of architectural elements such as



Fig. 8: Palazzo Montalvo, Florence, Italy (1573), by Berardino Pocetti. Frieze of grotesques above ground floor windows.

squared masonry to floral and lacey patterns to complex ornamental designs involving grotesques and the occasional beautifully rendered figure (fig. 7). The matter of grotesques is important as it is possible that it is the discovery of the emperor Nero's incomplete 'Domus Aurea', or Golden House, at the end of the fifteenth century, which featured this type of decoration, that is confused in later accounts as marking the advent of Italian sgraffito use on buildings.

The unearthing of intact Roman decoration revealed a remarkable scheme of *'light and fantastic paintings, soon dubbed grotesques,'* condemned in their own time by Vitruvius, but which were to have a profound impact on decoration of Renaissance and neo-Renaissance buildings over the next four hundred years, notably after imitative decoration at the Vatican by Raphael in the early 1600s. The discovery revealed designs for monsters, animals, birds, foliage, paired mirrored figures with bodies sprouting from plants *'that cause delight rather than appealing to judgement'* (fig. 8).¹⁵

Vasari describes two-layer plaster sgraffito, but it is incising a pattern into a single coat of plaster that is likely to have been the earliest incarnation of sgraffito decoration to have emerged. Chroniclers of sgraffito diverge on this point. In one history of the technique in England such *'incised decoration'* is specifically separated from, as it were, true sgraffito;¹⁶ yet single coat decoration fell under the umbrella of the first International Conference on Sgraffito held in 2017. It can be used to striking effect as figure 9 shows.¹⁷



Art-technical exercise: the medieval graffiti of Magdeburg Cathedral. Cutting the contours, scratching the background, smoothing the cut edges of the contours. By eliminating the carbonating smoothed plaster surface and exposing the rougher sandy inerts in this way, one creates a clearly perceivable difference in color. The use of color might be regarded in this way as optional. Leonhard John / Kathrin Witteler. Photos: HfBK 2015

Fig. 9: Creative possibilities with single layer sgraffito.

Echoing the Thiems' analysis of sgraffito development from one to two layers, Thomas Danzl and Carola Möwald observe that single layer sgraffito use elsewhere in Europe also has a long history, noting a tradition that goes back to at least the late Middle Ages, and probably farther, possibly the period between Roman use of two coat work and its re-emergence in the Renaissance more than a thousand years later. The earliest example of scratched, single coat, plaster they give dates from around 1235 in Klösterlein Zelle, near Aue in central eastern Germany.¹⁸ The slightly later sgraffito at Magdeburg Cathedral featuring King Otto the Great and his two wives is dated to about 1255; figure 10 gives some idea of the complexity of depiction achieved at this early date.¹⁹

Danzl and Möwald go on to explain the apparent absence of two-layer sgraffito north of the Alps between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries:

By tracing the import of the Central Italian two layered sgraffito in the first half of the sixteenth century through Switzerland, South Germany, Austria and Bohemia/Moravia to Saxony and Poland, one can observe for a certain time the coexistence of the unpainted, plaster colored one-layered graffito with the two-layer



Fig. 10: Magdeburg Cathedral, Germany. Putzritzung (lit. plaster scratches) in the cloister (13th century).

sgraffito colored in the first layer with charcoal or later with pigments (nineteenth and twentieth century) until the latter finally predominates.²⁰

Use of sgraffito has been widespread historically and although a preponderance of single coat work might be expected due to its simplicity of application, two coat sgraffito seems to have dominated from the Renaissance to the present. From a simple base, variations of mix and coats have proliferated, into three- and multi-layer sgraffito, shading with applied paints, combination with fresco and the use of highlighting materials such as tesserae and mother-of-pearl. Kerstin Klein in her paper at the 2017 Sgraffito conference listed twenty-three historical plaster mixes and layer combinations, dating from Vasari in 1550 up to the present and all are of two or more layers.²¹ A third coat was often also used merely as a levelling base to irregular masonry, thus further complicating definition of the method adopted by a particular artist. The illustration below shows this clearly in layers one to three (fig. 11).²²

Some writers consider it likely that sgraffito crossed from China to Byzantium and thence into Europe in the late medieval period. Jane Lamb writes of similarities in colour and '*ceramic techniques*' between Byzantine pottery and

Chinese Tang period ware from the period between 618 and 908CE. She posits an origin through this channel from the placing of 'coloured sgraffitoware into the masonry on the exterior facades of churches for their decorative effect...', as eastern Roman Empire pottery was apparently popular in Greece and Italy between the ninth and fifteenth centuries.²³ The cross over from pottery, where incising through a glazed coat to reveal the ground beneath offers a clear parallel with two layer sgraffito and the contrast of colours may have a bearing on the gradual decline of single coat work.



- 1) *Rinzaffo* – A first rendering coat applied to cover and fill the joints in the rough masonry or bricks.
- 2) *Arriciato* – A dark base plaster coat made by adding black pigment into slaked lime and sand.
- 3) *Intonaco* – The light finish layer, to contrast with the black, made from a white pulverized travertine usually mixed with a fine sand.
- 4) A design is transferred onto the surface, often pounced through a perforated cartoon.
- 5) While still soft, the design is cut through the *intonaco*, and the incised top layer is scraped back with metal tools to reveal the darker layer beneath.

Fig. 11: Diagram of sgraffito in two or more layers, which gives the Italian terms for the base, first and second coats of render, 'Rinzaffo', 'Arriciato' and 'Intonaco' respectively. These terms are still used in conservation discussion about sgraffito.

It appears though that there have been native traditions of forms of sgraffito in Europe and the near east since ancient times. The precise lineage and interaction of these is complicated and quite possibly included oriental influences. Alina Payne makes a valiant attempt to frame this by means of the trade and political connections around the Mediterranean. She takes the various strands of these origin theories and makes them somehow one, finding parallels in sgraffito decoration with, among other things, fabric patterns in high quality silks coming to Florence, through trade links that tied together such far flung locations as Croatia, Portugal, Valencia, Palermo and China.²⁴ She argues powerfully for crossover of decorative techniques and patterns from one medium to another making a simple history and single source of the explosion of the use of sgraffito in the sixteenth century unlikely.²⁵ Payne notes too that many Italian artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were skilled in a variety of arts and crafts; indeed she observes that Feltrini, cited by Vasari as the rediscoverer of sgraffito:

*...belonged officially to the category of pictores operarum draporum (painters of cloth) as defined by the statu[t]es of the guild of Arte di Por Santa Maria (also known as Arte della Seta, the silk-makers' guild).*²⁶

The work of the Thiems has been noted; their black and white photographs of Florentine examples catalogued in *'Toskanische Fassaden-Dekoration'* in 1964 show that the fabric connection in the designs is convincing. The example in figure 12 from Palazzo Spinelli dated to 1460 – 1470 delicately reflects fine lace or embroidery in plaster and refers to the trade and source of riches of the building's occupants. Payne's thesis is that this transfer of a fabric like design to the wall was part of a wider feature of quattrocento society where statement of personal position and importance extended from clothes to furnishings to buildings and, at small scale, to portable items, reliquaries and the like. It displayed a preference for all over decoration.

Payne also compares Alberti's Palazzo Rucellai in Florence from 1446 – 1451, a flat façade of rusticated masonry, with the contemporary Palazzo Geroni covered in a linear representation of masonry. She observes:



Fig. 12: Palazzo Spinelli, Florence, Italy (1460 – 70), artist unknown. Decoration over first floor windows. The delicate lace like pattern is connected to the source of wealth of its occupants.

The Rucellai façade seems poised between two approaches to façade treatments. On the one hand, the graphic line-web that covers the façade like a web has sharp razorlike edges and recalls more a cut crystal than a soft fabric/tapestry; on the other hand.... it is also an ornamental grid, not unlike a drawing. There is no hierarchy, all stones and all orders have the same joint depth and hence shadow line, all entirely flat, a grid of intersecting lines that is ultimately highly decorative – neither is treated as more important than the other and the result achieved is one of an incised pattern, of an incised drawing on the plane of the wall of the palace.²⁷

Nikolaus Pevsner in contrast, in his 'An Outline of European Architecture,' stresses the three-dimensional elements of the palace, string courses, capitals and

cornices, and the static compositional effect of everything having its place and that no element could be removed without damage. He is comparing this quality with the dynamic, changeable nature of Gothic architecture.²⁸ Pevsner also makes no reference to sgraffito, although its use was widespread, indeed preferred, in Florence to the architectonic, muscular designs of Alberti and Michelangelo. This apparent divergence is well summed up by Payne:

A Sgraffito façade is profoundly a-tectonic, completely surface dependent, and in many cases flamboyantly unrelated to the structure of the building, its syntax or sections.... Instead it is lacy, a seemingly transparent veil, and light, a complete opposite to the heavy either rusticated or carved façade of the Renaissance palace. At best it could be read as a drawing, that is as a linear representation of ornament applied to the skin of the building. Apparently something of an anomaly, it does not fit comfortably in the evolutionary model developed for Renaissance architecture, and evidently for this reason it has been ignored, even eliminated from our histories. Yet the sgraffito façade was neither as rare nor as insignificant as accounts make it seem today.²⁹

The adoption of neo-classical styles for buildings across Europe in the seventeenth century under the influence of the Renaissance does seem to coincide with the disappearance of sgraffito from wide use. Urbach commented on it, as does Ruiz Alonso.³⁰ Dr Christina Krawczyk summarises the more recent history, the dispersal of the two-coat technique, thus:

The procedure has been known in Italy since the 14th century, in Austria, South Germany. Bohemia, Moravia, Pomerania as well as Silesia since the 16th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries, however, this technique could only be found in Spain and in the Alpine region until it was “rediscovered” in the 19th century in Germany. In the 20th century it spread across Europe.³¹



Fig. 13: Padrun House, Andeer, Switzerland (1501). ‘...flamboyantly unrelated to the structure of the building...,’ although not entirely so. Close inspection shows one band of circular pattern marking edges and floor levels and framing a second lozenge one; but the effect is dazzling.



Fig. 14: Palazzo Vitelli alla Cannoniera, Citta di Castello, Perugia, Italy (1534), by Cristofano Gherardi Garden front.

Sgraffito, filmy, surface based decoration that often disregards the structure and materials of a building, such as that applied to the Padrun House in Switzerland (fig. 13) or to the Palazzo Vitelli alla Cannoniera in Citta di Castello (fig. 14), was both widespread across many countries and absent from histories of architecture, perhaps in part due to a steep decline in its use between 1600 and 1830. It is though worth noting Krawczyk's exceptions, for fine examples occur in Spain during the eighteenth century, such as that in the Chapel of Santa Barbara in the Church of San Juan del Hospital in Valencia from about 1700 in figure 15; but It is the thread of 'rediscovery' that Krawczyk mentions that we must follow.



Fig. 15: Chapel of Santa Barbara in the Church of San Juan del Hospital, Valencia (from around 1700). Sgraffito on dome, arch soffits and wall panels.

Nineteenth century revival

The re-emergence of sgraffito in the first half of the nineteenth century starts with Gottfried Semper (1803 – 1879) and his contemporaries in Germany. Their research, writings, use of sgraffito and Semper's stay in England, were influential and herald English experiments that foreshadow Sumner's work.

Gottfried Semper trained as a mathematician before turning to architecture and became in time the '*greatest Central-European representative of the neo-Renaissance.*' Pevsner notes, '*He does not seem to have been a happy man,*' citing the judgement of his contemporaries, one of whom refers to him as peevish.³² Semper also wrote the best-known article of the mid-nineteenth century on how to carry out sgraffito. '*Die Sgraffito – Dekoration*' was published in '*Beiblatt zur Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*' (*Supplement to Journal of Fine Art*) on 10th January 1868. In it Semper, noting renewed interest in this ancient method of decoration among architects and decorators, maintains that he had:

*.... already brought it [sgraffito] back to life in Germany more than 20 years ago for the first time since the Renaissance; firstly, on the decorative features of the upper wall surfaces of the Royal Hoftheater in Dresden and then soon after the decoration of the facade of a house in Hamburg.*³³

The article was written shortly after Semper's later sgraffito work on the Zurich Polytechnikum (now ETH – Zurich), between 1858 and 1863, and on the drum of the dome to the Polytechnikum Observatory from 1862 to 1864 (figs. 16 and 17). Semper's sgraffito usually carried thematic connections to the building which it adorned, thus at the Polytechnikum, sgraffito was carried out in a neo-Renaissance manner:

*...on the upper two stories of the north...side of the complex, which depicts through allegories, the aim of the school to forge a union of the arts and sciences. A row of sgraffito medallions across the lower frieze presents an honor roll of famed artists and scientists, from Homer to Michelangelo, Newton to Laplace.*³⁴



Fig. 16: Polytechnikum, Zürich, Switzerland (1858 – 1863), by Gottfried Semper, This shows the didactic and pictorial effect of Semper's sgraffito.



Fig. 17: Dome of the Observatory, Polytechnikum, Zürich, Switzerland (1862 – 1864), by Gottfried Semper. A decorative scheme in the Renaissance grotesque tradition.

Semper began using sgraffito on buildings in the mid 1830s, not long after he had visited Florence, where he spent three weeks, and Rome.³⁵ Sgraffito in the former was extensive and certainly influenced other later visitors. His first use of sgraffito seems to have been a scheme for an infirmary in 1835, before the two projects he mentions in his article.³⁶

Andreas Huth attributes this interest in sgraffito to renewed appreciation of Italian facades, specifically to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century books of engravings of the country's art and architecture, in particular those by Carlo Lasinio, *'Ornati presi da graffiti, e pitture antiche, esistente a Firenze'* of 1789; and August-Victoire Grandjean de Montigny and Auguste Famin, *'Architecture toscane, ou palais ou autres édifices de la Toscane, mesurés et dessinés'* of 1806 and 1815. The latter *'shows various Florentine sgraffito facades and explains the technology based on Vasari's description.'*³⁷ One imagines Semper, favouring the neo-Renaissance, seeing these works during his time in Paris in the 1820s with their references to sgraffito and then inspecting the real thing on his travels.

Despite Semper's claim to the rediscovery of sgraffito others were interested in it. Urbach observed that *'Three men stand intimately linked to the revival of the technique, Minutoli, Lohde und Semper.'*³⁸ The other two figures of the trio are relevant, in part to counter the idea that Semper was the single-handed reviver of sgraffito in Europe, but also because their route to the technique seems to lie amid examples surviving in their own country, Germany.

Alexander von Minutoli (1806 – 1887) studied law and economics and was a Prussian government official, but he became a major collector, *'he was able to complement his official duties by setting up a collection of works of industry and various items of handicraft...'*³⁹ His father and two brothers were archaeologists and art collectors, which was perhaps influential in his own collecting ventures, which are reported as being of sufficient size for Frederick William IV of Prussia to permit Minutoli in 1845 to store them in a wing of Liegnitz Castle.

He was also exploring sgraffito in the 1840s just as Semper was beginning to use it. Urbach says that he was collecting drawings of this type of work with a view to publication in the 1840s. An article of 1853 records that:

During the 1841 demolition of one of the houses adjacent to gate 1, the senior civil servant A. von Minutoli found significant remains of walls clad in sgraffito. His efforts to convince the owner to conserve them were however fruitless. However, he managed to convince the

*owner to leave the old plaster under the new surface and to leave the life size figures of the apostles Peter and Paul visible.*⁴⁰

Max Lohde (1845 – 1868) was a painter who became interested in sgraffito during a student trip to Lusatia and Silesia which straddle the border between Germany and Poland. It was local work here that inspired him and not the neo-Renaissance examples that influenced Semper and others; Urbach cites studies Lohde made at Burg Tschocha in Lusatia of rustic figures in outline in a variety of scenes (fig.18).⁴¹ He went on to develop techniques for its use and in 1867 decorated part of the Sophie Gymnasium in Berlin with a sgraffito frieze below the parapet of this four-storey brick building. The style is a curious mix of grotesque characters and folk narrative and bears the influence of his regional studies (fig. 19).

This trio were not alone. In 1867, the year before Semper's article, two other architects, Emil Lange (1841-1926) and Josef Bühlmann (1844 – 1921) published a short book about how to carry out sgraffito, including a drawing of the scraping tools to be used and a number of illustrations of Italian examples, probably after a trip to Florence and northern Italy (fig. 20).⁴²

The late eighteen-sixties witnessed numerous sgraffito publications and experiments but Semper seems to have been particularly influential; partly due to his prominence as an architect but also to dissemination of his article. Ernst Berger in a 1911 book notes that '*...Semper's instructions are in almost all later craftwork books....*'⁴³ His importance in the spread of sgraffito is confirmed in other European publications:

*Sgraffito benefited from the drive of one of the principal architects and theoreticians of the 19th century: Gottfried Semper.*⁴⁴

Manfred Koller describes sgraffito by a number of Semper's contemporaries on university buildings in central Europe, Munich, Vienna, but also on town houses in Prague, Berlin and Budapest. Sgraffito use on the continent increased in the three decades before the first World War;⁴⁵ one off shoot of this was emergence of the technique in England. Ruiz Alonso however traces the eventual huge upsurge in

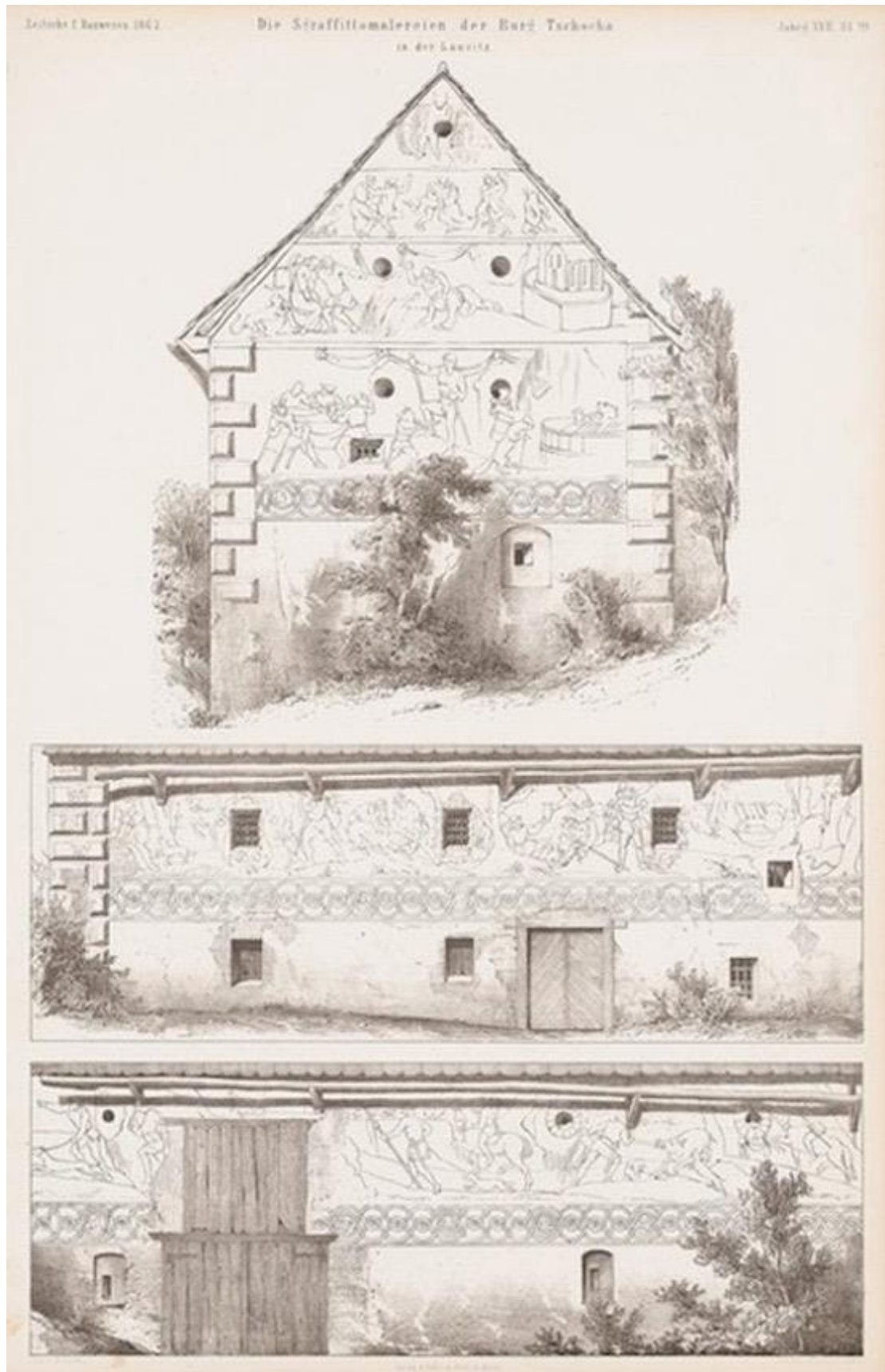


Fig. 18: 'Burg Tschocha in der Lausitz,' Poland (1867), by Max Lodhe. Sgraffito paintings at the castle, described by Urbach as '17. Jahrh' (seventeenth century).⁴⁶



Fig. 19: Direktoratshaus, Sophiengymnasium, Berlin, Germany (1867), by Max Lohde. Frieze.

sgraffito in this period to the stylistic developments of symbolism and art-nouveau in cities such as Prague, Brussels, Vienna, Barcelona, Turin and the Hague, saying:

*.... the sgraffito technique was practiced in much of Europe with a diversity as extraordinary as had never been seen before. Buildings decorated in this way are in the hundreds.*⁴⁷

It is this strand that will be noticeable in Sumner's style in due course, but in England we must start with Sir Henry Cole.

Cole (1808 - 1882), founder and moving spirit of the South Kensington College, later the Victoria and Albert Museum, became interested in sgraffito during visits to Italy and, it seems most likely, from contact with Semper. He saw Semper's Hoftheater in Dresden in 1851 during his first trip, which occurred after Semper had already arrived in London, as a refugee from rebellion in Dresden.⁴⁸ This

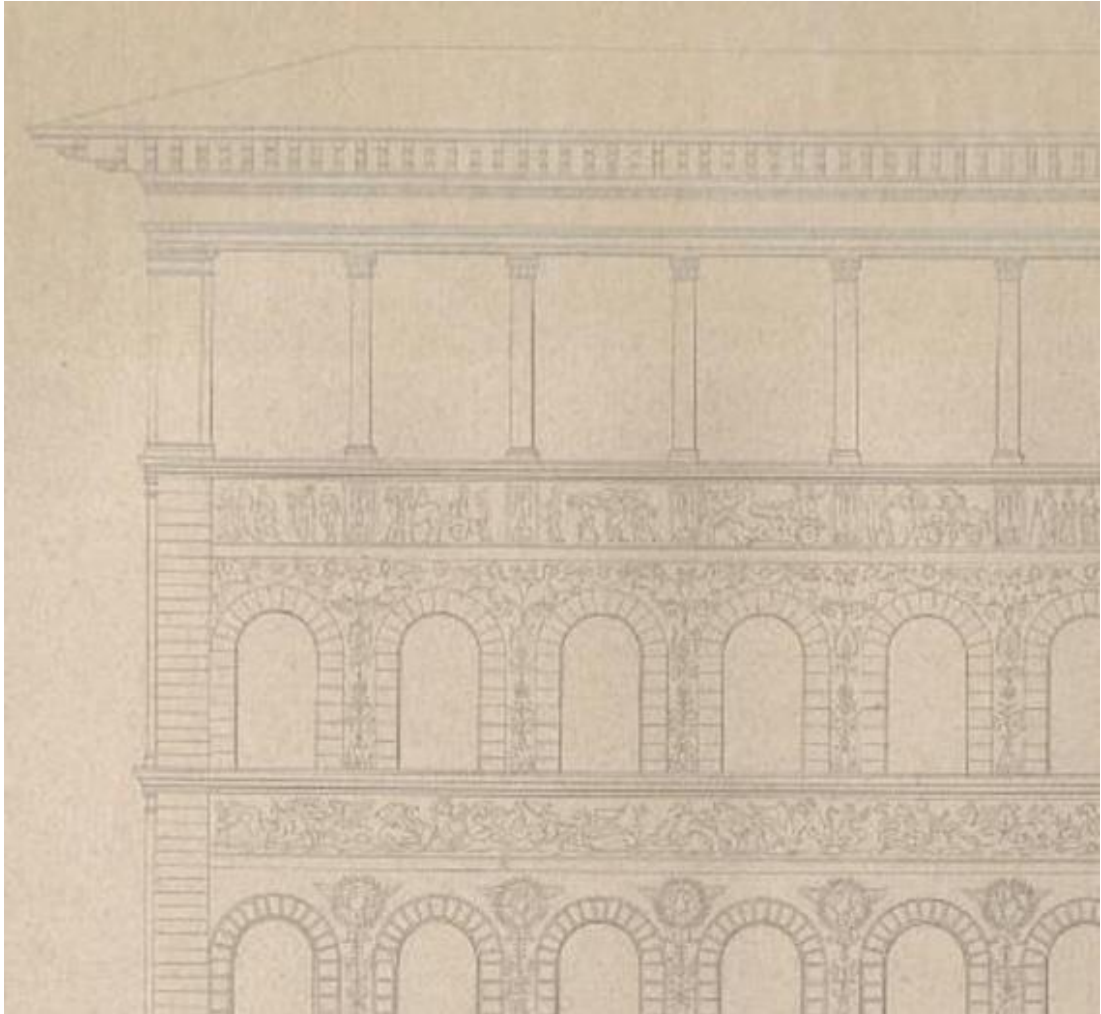


Fig. 20: Palast Guadagni, Florenz, Italy (c1490). Plate from Lange and Buhlmann's 1867 book on sgraffito. This extract from a lightly printed on-line copy of the book seems to echo Lodhe's treatment of the Berlin Sophiengymnasium in figure 19. It had been drawn before by Grandjean de Montigny and Famin.⁴⁹

conjunction of Cole's visit to parts of Europe that included examples of sgraffito and Semper's employment at the South Kensington College may have been formative in its use for decoration on the Sheepshanks Gallery at South Kensington, to which thirteen sgraffito roundels were applied, apparently in early 1858. Lamb provides indirect evidence of a connection through quotation from a contemporary journal, *The Builder*, which refers to the roundels as a:

species of surface decoration approaching to fresco painting and known in Italy by the name of sgraffito work, of which many specimens may be seen in Florence and a modern example by Professor Semper, at Hamburg.⁵⁰

Cole certainly saw merit in the technique as *'an economic way of embellishing the exterior of the (Kensington) museum,'* and *'he had been struck whilst abroad with the felicity of the process...and that sgraffito work might be executed at very a moderate price.'*⁵¹ More than a decade elapsed though before he returned to it. In the meantime, architects in England were using sgraffito:

*During the years between the early sgraffito on the Sheepshanks building in 1858 and the 1872-3 experimental work on the Science Schools, sgraffito was tried out on various types of buildings, from a public museum and residential villas to church interiors, schools and colleges.*⁵²

Lamb records a few of these trials, but much seems to have been demolished or covered over. One example that does survive is dismissed as *'not sgraffito but incised decoration.'*⁵³ The Lodge to Danemore Park Hall in Speldhurst, near Tunbridge Wells in Kent has a stone ground floor and deep srocketed eaves above with sgraffito panels between them under a rosemary tiled partly hipped roof. The sgraffito has a primitive, almost crude character, of abstract shapes in diminishing sized ranks within larger arched surrounds. It is quite different from the neo-classical idiom favoured by Semper and others in England; the work is also apparently single coat work, all of one colour plaster. The architect is not known, but it is suggestive of a technique under exploration in some unusual directions; and it is regrettable that more does not survive from the eighteen-sixties (fig. 21).

One architect experimenting with sgraffito, and of whose work some remains, was Francis Pepys Cockerell (1838 – 1878), whose father, C. R. Cockerell, is recorded as a friend of Semper's during his time in London.⁵⁴ Cockerell reported that:

I tried it myself in a house at Norwood; but my client, when he saw it for the first time in execution, was dissatisfied with the effect, and it was taken down. I then tried it again in 1866 in a house at Ascot. It was executed in a crude, imperfect way. I could not succeed in producing the lines for the shadows, because the thin stuff I used for setting was so gritty that in cutting out the lines little lumps were brought away.'

He also *'did two or three specimens in my back yard,'* but had problems with the mixes and only made progress after meeting Francis Wormleighton, the most talented of Francis Moody's assistants on the sgraffito in progress in South Kensington between 1871 and 1873.⁵⁵ Cockerell at this time was working on Down



Fig. 21: Danemore Park Lodge, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells (c1860), architect unknown.



Fig. 22: Down Hall, Essex (1871 – 1873), by F.P. Cockerell, architect with sgraffito by F. Wormleighton and W. Wise.

Hall in Essex, an experimental house built in mass concrete, but dressed as a neo-classical mansion ornamented with sgraffito in Renaissance grotesque style (fig. 22). Wormleighton and his colleague W. Wise executed these panels, one suspects while working on the South Kensington scheme. The hall still exists, converted to a hotel.⁵⁶

Another architect who crops up regularly as a proponent of sgraffito is George Thomas Robinson (1828 – 1897), who espoused its commercial use in conjunction with Messrs George Trollope and Sons, London based contractors. Robinson himself writes:

*In my own practice as an architect and decorator, I have during the last fifteen or twenty years, used sgraffito somewhat extensively for both external and internal adornment, and most of that which I have done is still in perfect condition, even in grimy London.*⁵⁷

Lamb provides some dates and context:

*Throughout the later 1870s to 1890s Robinson promoted techniques and methods of plasterwork generally, and sgraffito in particular, as advisor to Trollopes. The contracting company wanted to attract a wider clientele, exploiting the current interest in sgraffito.*⁵⁸

Examples of Robinson's sgraffito are elusive and only limited evidence of his designs was located in the course of this research. One, St Mary's Chapel for the Blind in Liverpool, is sadly known only from an account in the Church of Ireland Gazette of 15th October 1887. It describes the decoration of a new chancel:

*.... one division is occupied by a choir of angels executed in sgraffito bearing emblems of our Lord's passion. This sgraffito work is described as cameo cutting in coloured cement – a species of decoration exceedingly durable and greatly in vogue in the 16th century...*⁵⁹

This suggests sgraffito executed in a manner similar to Sumner's, but William Millar in his vast book, *'Plastering Plain and Decorative,'* describes Robinson's method as *'a combination of sgraffito with fresco,'* and cites an example, noted simply as *'Retable at Southport'* as executed in this mixed technique (fig. 23).⁶⁰ It bears an

uncanny similarity to another Last Supper in a different decorative method called niello, used by the firm of Clayton and Bell.⁶¹ Figure 24 is an example carried out by the firm at Christ Church, Appleton-le-Moors in Yorkshire, designed by J. L. Pearson in the early 1860s.⁶² Niello is derived from metalworking, where an incised pattern is filled with a coloured metallic compound, usually black, or as here, red. The church also features a side chapel and pulpit decorated in the same manner. The effect can be mistaken for sgraffito but seems to have been used here and there in England in the 1860s.⁶³



Fig. 23: Retable at Southport (undated), by G. T. Robinson. This was probably a mixture of sgraffito and fresco.



Fig. 24: Altar back, Christ Church, Appleton-le-Moors, North Yorkshire (1868). Church designed by J. L. Pearson, niello by Clayton and Bell.

It is well at this point to note the curious matter of architect Benjamin Ferrey (1810 – 1880) and his work at St Mary's Church, Maulden in Bedfordshire, which illustrates an unusual version of sgraffito. The church web site describes how:

As part of the internal decoration of the church after the 1859 alterations, the architect used a technique new to England to decorate the plasterwork.

In this method, usually called Sgraffito, designs and passages of scripture were incised into the wet plaster, giving a decorative three-dimensional effect. This was further emphasised by painting the designs and texts in colour, again working on wet lime plaster and using special pigments which actually became part of the plaster when the lime dried....⁶⁴

This sounds advanced for the date in England; the only previous sgraffito known was that discussed earlier on the Sheepshanks Gallery in south Kensington from the year before. In 1857 Ferrey had delivered a paper to the Institute of British Architects, in which he recommended a method of stamping or incising stucco surfaces while wet. A description of what he intended was quoted in his obituary:

...the plan now proposed is to impress the common stucco with geometrical and other forms, and applied according to taste If colour be desired, it can be effected by mixing the desired colour with the coat forming the groundwork, then, by laying the stencilled pattern against it, and filling in the solid portions of the design with the ordinary stucco or plaster.⁶⁵

The decorative scheme at Maulden (figs. 25 and 26) consists of biblical quotations that follow the curve of arches and window heads, with roundels bearing religious symbols in the arch spandrels. In one or two places one can touch the cutting, which proves to be deep and even; unusual for sgraffito and, allied to the regularity of repeated letters and patterns, lends weight to the idea that a repetitive stencilled method was used.



Fig. 25: St Mary the Virgin, Maulden (c1859), by Benjamin Ferrey. South aisle and nave sgraffito.



Fig. 26: St Mary the Virgin, Maulden, Bedfordshire (c1859), by Benjamin Ferrey. Dado detail showing infill repainting. This appears to have been carried out using Ferrey's patented stamped sgraffito method.

Another technique that occurs in this period is intarsia, whereby marble sheets, laid onto a blue marble base, are incised and filled with a marble dust mastic. It was introduced from France to England by Baron Henri de Triqueti (1804 – 1874) and the finest examples are in the Albert Memorial Chapel at Windsor Castle,



Fig. 27: Albert Memorial Chapel, Windsor, Castle, Windsor (1865 – 1871), by Baron Henri de Triqueti. Detail of intarsia panel; the surface is smooth to the touch, unlike sgraffito.

where a series of 20 or so large biblical scenes were set into the walls (fig. 27). Each panel is dated showing that the entire scheme took six or seven years to complete. Henry Cole considered the method but dismissed it as too labour intensive, costly, and probably unsuited to external application.⁶⁶

It is in the early 1870s however that sgraffito becomes more prominent, just after Semper's article on sgraffito decoration appeared in Germany amid renewed interest there in the technique, although he was not the only author to provide mixes of ingredients as we have noted. Were Semper's or other articles published in English, especially as there are similarities between his work in Zurich and Moody's in London? Did Semper, for example, send a copy to Cole? The questions are intriguing, and so far, unanswered. Nevertheless, in the period 1871 to 1876, at least thirteen buildings in England were decorated with sgraffito. In rough date order of starting, with architects, executors of sgraffito or key figures in brackets, they are:

- 1871 – 72 Winkleigh Church, Winkleigh, Devon (R. D. Gould, W. T. A. Radford)
- Science Schools (now the Henry Cole wing), Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington, London (F. W. Moody, F. E. Wormleighton, H. W. Foster, O. Gibbons, W. Wise)
- Down Hall, Essex (F. P. Cockerell, F. E. Wormleighton, W. Wise)
- All Saints Church, Calverton, Milton Keynes (E. Swinfen Harris)
- 1873 – 75 Colaton Raleigh Church, Devon (R. Medley Fulford, G. Vickery)
- St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (Sir T. Graham Jackson, F. E. Wormleighton, O. Gibbons)
- 1874 Rattery Church, Devon (R. Medley Fulford?)
- College of Organists, Kensington, London (H. H. Cole, F. W. Moody, O Gibbons)
- Dean's Cloister and Curfew Tower, Windsor Castle (A. Y. Nutt, T. George)
- St Paul's Choir School, London (F. C. Penrose)
- 1875 Cottages, Down St. Mary (W. T. A. Radford)
- c1875 11, Castle Street, Buckingham (E. Swinfen Harris)
- 1876 St Paul's Church, Chudleigh Knighton, Devon (G. G. Scott, W. B. Moffat, J. Medley)

This phenomenon was apparently confined to the south of England but with notable stylistic differences and ideas about decoration of buildings. The best known and largest of these schemes is that at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where a vast elevation several stories high on the back of the then Science Schools (now the Henry Cole wing) was decorated as an experiment by Francis Moody and a team of colleagues and students at the training schools there, under the direction of Sir Henry Cole. Lamb and recent conservators describe the complexities of the achievement here, a combination of varied design to cope with the articulation and scale of the façade, and different mixes across the work.⁶⁷



Fig. 28: Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1871 – 73), by F. W. Moody, F. E. Wormleighton, H. W. Foster, O. Gibbons, W. Wise. Composite elevation of the upper storeys of the Sir Henry Cole wing, formerly the Science Schools.

Figure 28 shows the upper stories, there are a further two floors down to ground level; sgraffito also adorns the bridge connecting to the rest of the museum, just visible at bottom right in the picture. This panorama, from spliced photographs, shows Moody's grand conception of the work. Conservation in 2012 – 2013 stabilised the extensive decay that had set in and restored a set of panels at high level to give a sense of the character the work would have had when first completed (fig. 29). This is a useful corrective to the dirt encrusted and weathered effect in modern colour photographs and echoes the freshness and coherence of the design in the contemporary black and white image in figure 30. The ornamental character of the sgraffito and its debt to Renaissance classical precedent are plain. Grotesques, figures dissolving into arabesques and all manner of shapes and patterns are ordered to fit the grid of windows, string courses and pilasters that frame the elevation.

There is a didactic connection between the decoration and the function of the building, a bold dedicatory inscription runs across beneath one string course, various virtues are listed in small panels high up on the building and rectangular scenes are set prominently mid-way up the elevation, along with roundels containing heads of prominent figures of the day, which include limited use of additional colour. Worthwhile purpose for the building is implied in the serious



Fig. 29: Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1871 – 73), by F. W. Moody and his team. Detail of upper level with restored panels, showing grotesque designs with virtues listed in panels in a line beneath.

classical allusions scattered across the decoration, undermined to a twenty-first century eye by the controlled riot of the surrounding figures and patterns. Fig. 31, with the vertiginous view one has today, shows some of these things. It is also noticeable that Moody and his team used more than just two colours, reds and ochre appearing in certain parts.

This work was significant for two reasons: it was in London and seen by many eminent figures, and was widely publicised, largely through reprinting of a



Fig. 30: Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1871 – 73), by F. W. Moody and his team. Part of the east side of the Science Schools, V & A Museum, South Kensington. A photograph of the 1870s. Compare with the recent photograph of the same section in figure 31.

paper presented to the RIBA by Sir Henry Cole's son, Alan Summerly Cole, on 17th March 1873, shortly after the sgraffito was completed. Cole's opening remarks are revealing about his objective and the purpose behind Moody's sgraffito:

Whilst London contains some of the finest buildings in the world, its miles of shabby brick houses give it a dull air. Coal, smoke and fog do not brighten it up, but make it duller.I venture to think that the experience of past times shows that there are processes by which even the cheapest brick architecture may be elevated by a little decoration produced at a low price; and I hope to prove this on the

present occasion..... Mr. Moody, who has been principally concerned with the experiments at South Kensington, is unavoidably prevented from being present this evening.from the conversations I have had with him, I feel sure they would have been interesting to you, and would no doubt have strengthened the belief which I hope to establish in regard to the utility and easy adoption of sgraffito as a means of decorating modern houses.⁶⁸



Fig. 31: Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1871 – 73), by F. W. Moody and his team. This is same part elevation as figure 30, showing classical scenes (1); roundel of contemporary notable figure (2); panel containing dedicatory text, ‘These experiments in plaster designed by F. W. Moody’ with the date ‘1872’ immediately to the left (3); and writhing classical decorative grotesques and surrounds (4).

The discussion after the paper featured well known architects, including F. P. Cockerell,⁶⁹ who has been mentioned in connection with Down Hall.

Curiously though, with one or two other notable exceptions, sgraffito tended to occur almost anywhere but on houses in the later nineteenth century. And Cole was not the first to talk about how to decorate plain walls. Seven months before, at a meeting of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, the Revd. W. T. A. Radford had given a talk on much the same theme, not with respect to houses, but

churches. Radford's paper and Cole's later address to the RIBA both occur at a time when decorating the interior of churches with colour was widespread and guidance on its application was to be found. The idea of walls being covered appears in a

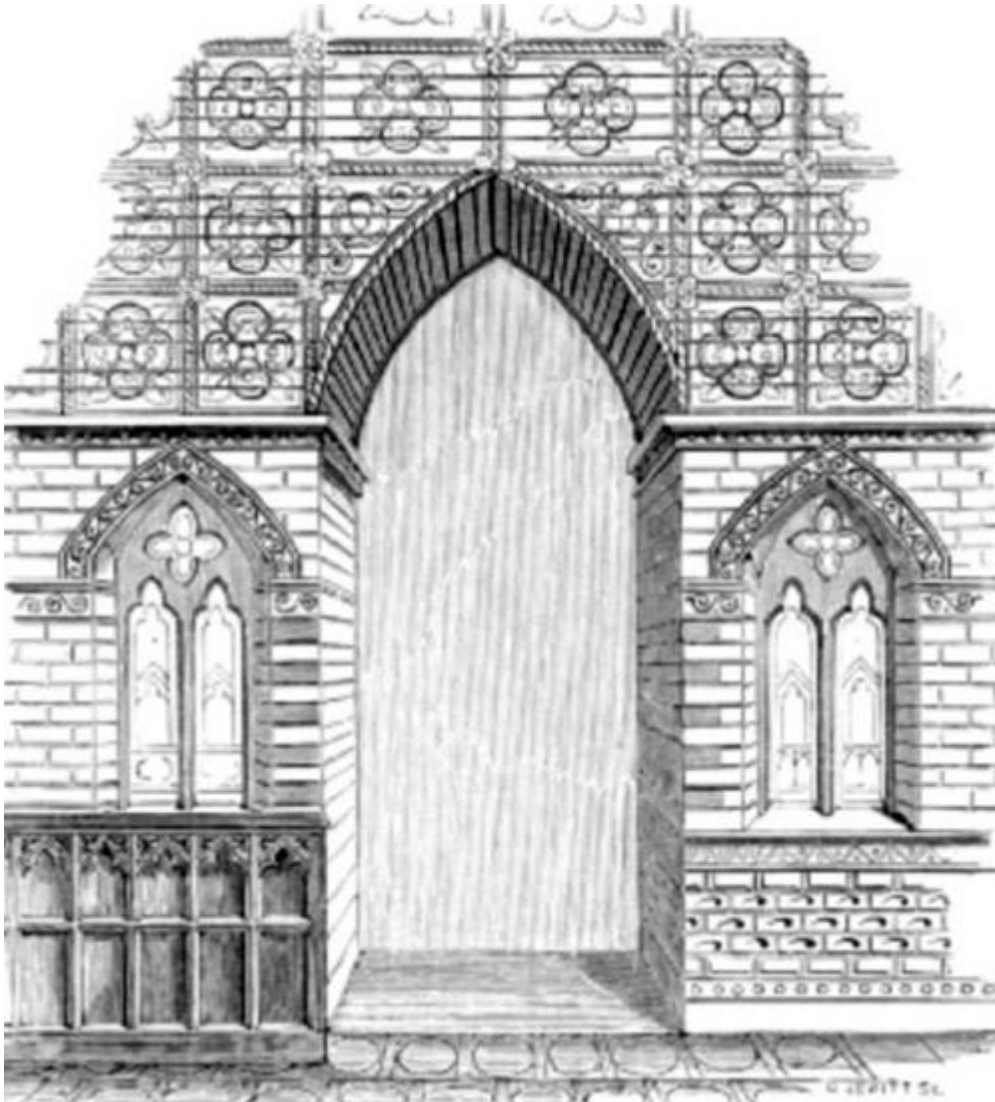


Fig. 32: 'Stones of the Temple or Lessons from the fabric and furniture of the Church' by Walter Field from chapter on 'Walls', probably drawn by J Clarke. This shows a preference for exposed brick, below dado panelling and patterning at low level to the right-hand side of the doorway that looks similar to sgraffito in some Devon churches.

book by Walter Field of 1871, 'For the sake of decoration and neatness it may be desirable that the internal walls should be covered with cement or plaster...', and goes on to show below dado patterning on plaster similar to that which appears in Devon Churches around the same time (fig. 32).

In 1874 J. T. Micklethwaite wrote that:

Colour, far from being a matter of indifference, is a most important factor in design.... The painting of a building may be postponed just as the steeple, or any other part of it, may be, but no interior should be considered finished, till all parts requiring it have been suitably coloured, and a pleasing harmony exists throughout.⁷⁰

The main part of Radford's talk, on the appropriate treatment for the inner face of a church wall, does not mention sgraffito at all but in Appendix B he relates his involvement with its application to the interior of Winkleigh Church in north Devon (figs. 33 – 35).⁷¹ This work is all pattern in carefully defined lines and grids, and in the nave, is set between bands of white plaster. There is a restrained cross and lettered slogan on the chancel arch, but it is only in the chancel itself where whole wall planes are covered, and with a different diamond style lattice, in apparent imitation of ceramic tiles of the period (fig. 34). The decoration was carried out by the Goulds of Barnstaple.⁷²

Three other churches in Devon contain sgraffito decoration.⁷³ St. John the Baptist in Colaton Raleigh has horizontal bands of sgraffito around the building, especially between the roof and a string course linking the corbel springings of the roof trusses but the nave and chancel walls are liberally decorated with lozenge shaped features containing religious symbols and small figurative images (figs. 36 and 37). There are swag of grapes and plants too in the spandrels between the nave arches. This decoration was carried out using zinc stencils under the supervision of Robert Medley Fulford (1845 – 1910). Chris Brooks and Bruce Induni, who undertook conservation on the sgraffito in 1988, commented on its relationship to the work at South Kensington, saying:

Fulford's adoption of sgraffito is remarkably early in the history of this particular form of decoration. Moreover, its stylistic character is quite different from that adopted at Kensington: unsurprisingly perhaps as Fulford was a committed Goth, schooled in the tradition of Pugin and Ruskin, to both of whom the Renaissance was abhorrent. In fact, the influence of the London experiments seems to have been tangential, for the genesis of Fulford's sgraffito was local.⁷⁴



Fig. 33: Church of All Saints, Winkleigh, Devon (1871 – 72), by R. D. Gould and W. T. A. Radford. Nave looking east showing horizontal sgraffito bands.



Fig. 34: Church of All Saints, Winkleigh, Devon (1871 – 72), by R. D. Gould and W. T. A. Radford. Detail of chancel arch.



Fig. 35: Church of All Saints, Winkleigh, Devon (1871 – 72), by R. D. Gould and W. T. A. Radford. Detail of wall in organ chapel.

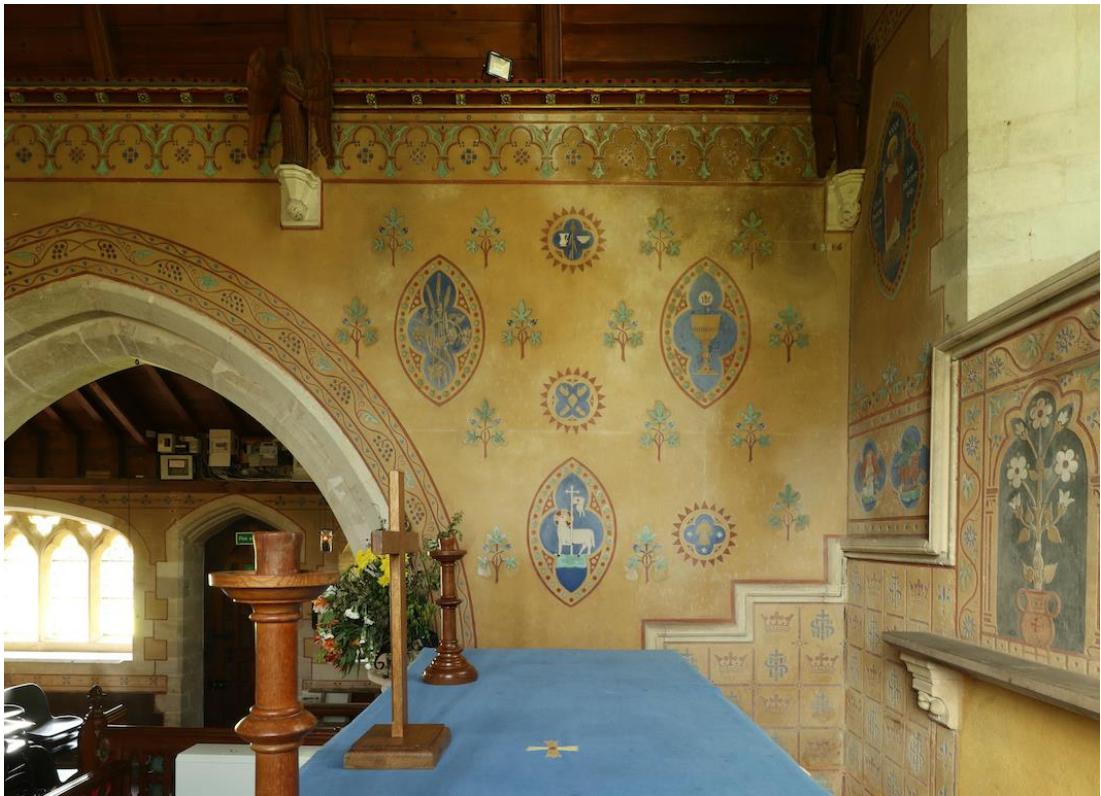


Fig. 36: Colaton Raleigh Church, Devon (1873 – 75), by R. Medley Fulford and G. Vickery. Delicate and graceful sgraffito to the north side of the chancel and reredos.

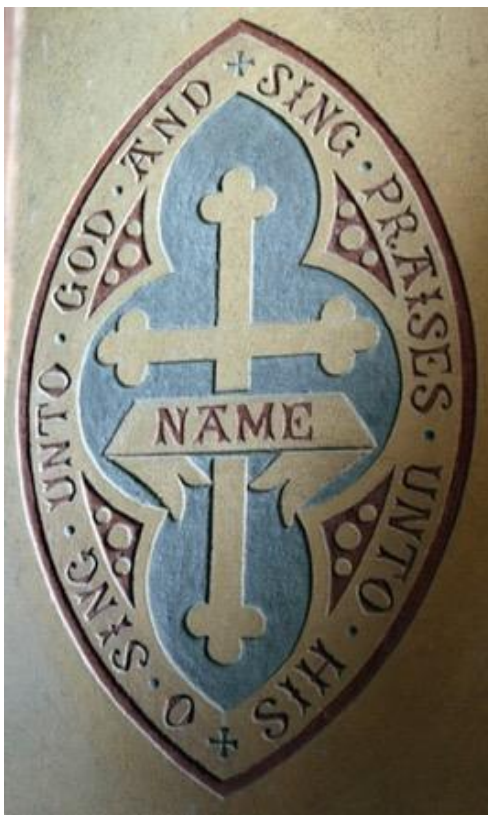


Fig. 37: Colaton Raleigh Church, Devon (1873 – 75), R. Medley Fulford, G. Vickery. Mandorla shaped sgraffito behind the organ.

Bruce and Induni go on to discuss his involvement with the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society making a connection to Radford.⁷⁵

The Church of the Blessed Virgin at Rattery shows a similar emphasis in the nave and chancel, but the intensity at the east end manifests as rows of repeating symbols, fleur-de-lis and simple foliage set within bands across the wall planes as



Fig. 38: Church of the Blessed Virgin, Rattery, Devon (1874), by R. Medley Fulford(?). Chancel south side displaying faux stonework with hieroglyphics, similar to that in figure 32.



Fig. 39: Church of the Blessed Virgin, Rattery, Devon (1874), by R. Medley Fulford(?). North side of chancel showing leaching of green pigment.

well as in faux masonry at dado level (fig. 38). There is a hieroglyphic hint in the shapes and predominant red and green colours, with evidence of leaching from the green pigment (fig. 39), a problem particularly notable in the porch where water penetration through its thinner south-west facing wall has taken a severe toll both on colours and the plaster itself.

The last church, St Pauls at Chudleigh Knighton, just south of Dartmoor off the A38, is the only one not fully decorated in sgraffito, which is confined to the chancel where most of it has been painted over, although the incised pattern is still visible. The patterns are of a kind with those in the other churches, while the remaining intact sgraffito to the reredos (figs. 40 and 41) is in the same style as that at Colaton Raleigh. What appear to be painted white highlights on parts of flowers and figures can be seen to have worn away in places.



Fig.s 40 – 41: St Paul's Church, Chudleigh Knighton, Devon (1876), by G. G. Scott, W. B. Moffat, J. Medley.

Left: Left hand side of centre of reredos, flowers in a vase.

Right: Left hand side of reredos, St Luke and angel.

This sgraffito must have relied largely on stencils, but figures 40 and 41 suggest the detailed apse designs were pounced onto plaster and cut from the transferred pattern. These Devon churches are contemporary with the work at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the slightly later College of Organists, but also with possibly the finest sgraffito scheme of this short period in the 1870s. It is the only one that manages to create a truly unified and satisfying whole in its use of

sgraffito. The church of St Peter at Hornblotton, half a dozen miles south of Wells, was designed by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson and built and decorated in 1873.⁷⁶ It is one of those works that recur in Victorian England, a gem, designed as a whole under the direction of a single guiding hand, that achieves a composition of considerable power and that gives a sense of having always been there.

Jane Lamb waxes lyrical about the church, saying it is:

...a jewel set in a serene and quiet Somerset landscape of fields and meadows. The interior is a visually stunning revelation, because of its juxtapositions of form, colour and harmony of design. It represents a complete overall solution to wall decoration in terracotta red and off-white sgraffito in the Renaissance style. Instead of the motifs of satyrs and nymphs, the church contains not only bold, naturalistic patterns around the walls, but also a figurative depiction of the prophets and biblical events, released from the confines of strict geometry, a forerunner of Heywood Sumner's style.⁷⁷

The church is small, set in a secluded graveyard, reached from a track off a country lane; its siting bears comparison with that of Sumner's first great work at Llanfair Kilgeddin. Yellow lichen encrusted stone and weathered roof with the tile-hung tower convey a repose that is matched by the sgraffito laid onto its walls. There is a foretaste of things to come in the porch, with its combination of pink and white renders and continuous text band (figs. 42 – 47). This scheme showed the potential of sgraffito for complete decoration of an interior in a way that the Devon churches did not. The integration of figurative scenes, the hint of story, pattern, friezes and lettering with the building is far subtler and effortless.

Connection to Sumner has been made by others, suggesting his influence upon the design, but he was only twenty in 1873 and a decade away from starting his work in sgraffito. There are thematic similarities in places but the style is a development of that in London. This is unsurprising when one learns that Hornblotton was decorated by Francis Wormleighton and Owen Gibbons, two of Francis Moody's team from South Kensington; they were clearly learning how to use sgraffito to best effect.⁷⁸ One can though see elements Sumner would use



Fig. 42: *St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (1873), by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, architect, and F. E. Wormleighton and O. Gibbons, artists. South elevation.*



Fig. 43: *St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (1873), by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, architect, and F. E. Wormleighton and O. Gibbons, artists. South porch heralding the pink and white colour scheme of the interior, and the use of text on the walls.*



Fig. 44: St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (1873), by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, architect, and F. E. Wormleighton and O. Gibbons, artists. Detail of Jeremiah's foot and hatching.



Fig. 45: St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (1873), by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, architect, and F. E. Wormleighton and O. Gibbons, artists. Angel on the arch over the organ showing a hint of the Arts and Crafts.



Fig. 46: St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (1873), by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, architect, and F. E. Wormleighton and O. Gibbons, artists. Dense foliage and running text band on north wall of chancel. Note the birds concealed in the foliage to the window reveals.

fifteen years later at Llanfair Kilgeddin. Is this where he got the idea to experiment with sgraffito? It is tempting to think so but there is no evidence he ever visited the church but, as we shall see, others did. It is worth noting that the *'influence and sponsor behind the rebuilding of this church was the wealthy, cultured rector, Godfrey Thring, later Prebendary of Wells Cathedral,*⁷⁹ for it was at Wells, just over ten years later that Sumner would essay his first sgraffito project for a client outside his family. There were also connections between Jackson and South Kensington: he had taken figure classes there, and Lamb believes that *'...he must have been acquainted with Moody.*⁸⁰ She notes the possible stencilling of some elements, such as the repeating sunflowers on the nave walls, but does not observe the difference between the classical figure treatment of the main arch set pieces (fig. 47) and the pre-Raphaelite influenced angels in the spandrel of the arch over the organ (fig. 45), perhaps reflecting the hands of different artists.⁸¹ There also remain occasional neo-Renaissance floral flourishes, which add to the sense of a hybrid work, combined as these are with suggestions of the emerging Arts and Crafts, particularly in the flora and fauna on the chancel walls. Lamb says of it:

Hornblotton was a landmark in the development of a new style for nineteenth century sgraffito. Freed from the constraints of decorative Renaissance motifs or the necessity to emulate more expensive

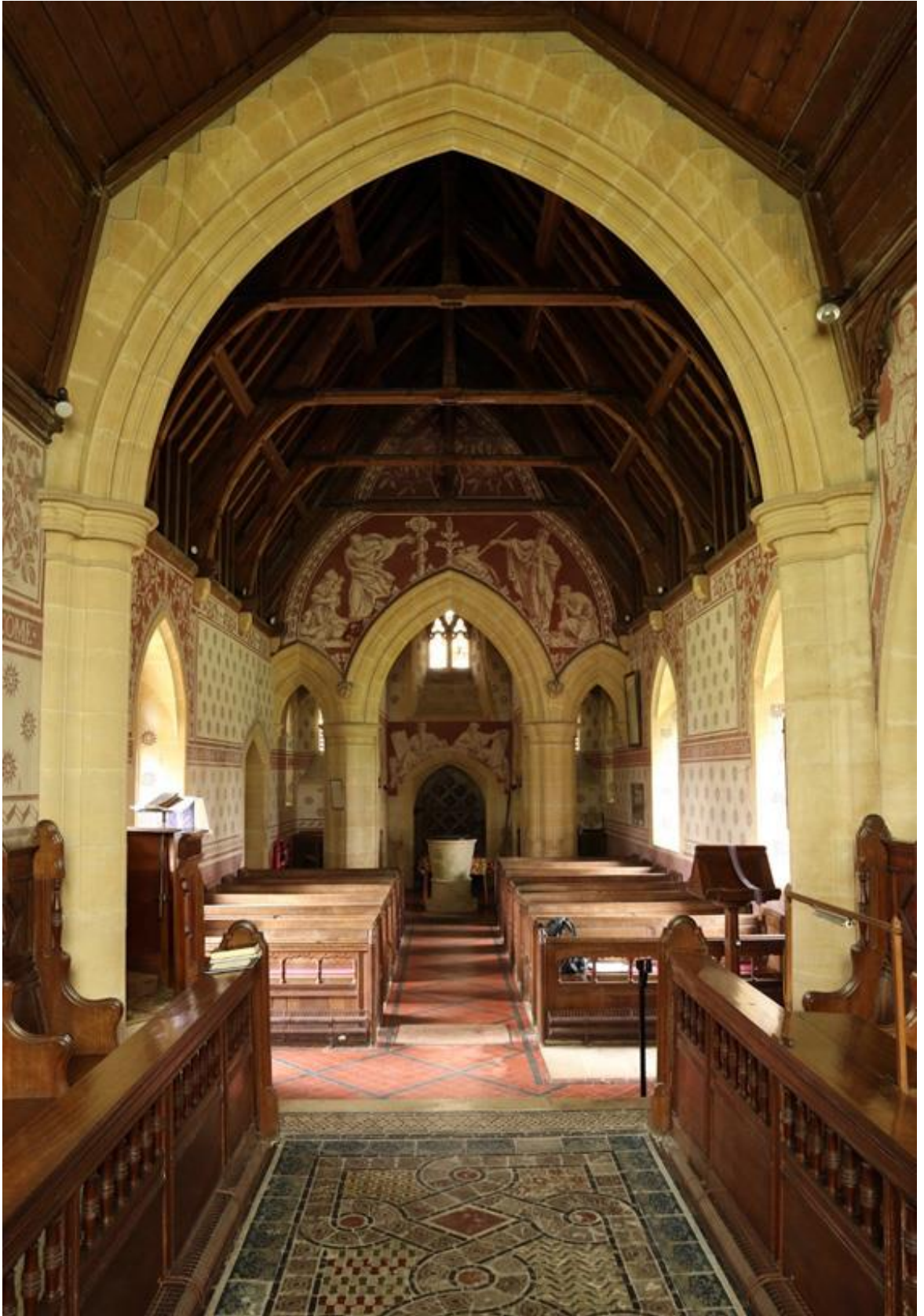


Fig. 47: St. Peter's Church, Hornblotton, Somerset (1873), by Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, architect, and F. E. Wormleighton and O. Gibbons, artists. Nave seen from chancel. The spandrel over the west end arches shows Moses striking the rock and the Brazen Serpent.

materials, here at Hornblotton it was used essentially for architectural, aesthetic and artistic effect. The style captures the whole essence and spirit of the little church and complements the architecture. The sgraffito work was not expensive, but it was handled by very accomplished artist/craftsmen, well versed in its technique. Its success depended on combining a series of standard patterns and motifs with the skills and draughtsmanship and ability of an artist to depict the human figure.⁸²

Moody and his team went on to use sgraffito to create a complete decorative scheme on the Royal College of Organists, constructed in 1874 – 75 on the west side of the Albert Hall to the designs of Lieutenant H. H. Cole.⁸³ Designed in ‘*the old English style of the fifteenth century, when large windows and plaster ornament prevailed...*,’⁸⁴ the sgraffito is fitted into panels that reflect this character, and is made up of Renaissance forms with occasional coloured roundels containing small figurative scenes or the heads of unnamed figures; it is akin to that on the Science School elevation at the Victoria and Albert Museum, but the design is tightly disciplined and reads better with this building (figs. 48 and 49).⁸⁵

The roundels, with up to four colours employed in any one scene (fig. 50), are a development from Hornblotton, which adheres strictly to two colours, and show a significant advance for the artists, as these small insertions into the mainly Renaissance themes are finely done. It is a pity that they did not take sgraffito any further. It is notable that two aspects of Sumner’s work would be such use of colour and the decoration of churches. Sumner knew of Moody’s work for in an 1891 talk he says:

While speaking of method I should like to call attention to the great methodical success of the experiments in sgraffito made at South Kensington Museum some twenty years ago, under Mr Moody. Both at the Science Schools and at the Music Schools the work seems to stand perfectly; and surely such achievements as these, and the many works executed under the skilful guidance of Mr G. T. Robinson, are



Fig. 48: The College of Organists, Kensington, London (1874), by Lieutenant H. H. Cole. Upper front elevation.



Fig. 49: The College of Organists, Kensington, London (1874), by Lieutenant H. H. Cole. Renaissance detail.



Fig. 50: The College of Organists, Kensington, London (1874), by Lieutenant H. H. Cole. Figurative roundel in colour.

sufficient witness the method is practical, notwithstanding the changes of our climate and the mischances of fog and smoke.⁸⁶

In the same year Francis Cranmer Penrose (1817 – 1903) applied a lettered sgraffito frieze and decorative panels on musical themes, with snippets of scores hidden in the neo-classical framework, to St. Paul's music school, a block south of the cathedral. Today the building serves as a youth hostel and the sgraffito is decayed. It is finely worked but the overall conception is difficult to read on the narrow streets around it and is not as effective as the decoration on the College of Organists (fig. 51).

Other sgraffito of this period should be noted. The work of architect Edward Swinfen Harris (1841 – 1924) at All Saints Church, Calverton near Milton Keynes, in 1871 – 72 is notable for its similarity to the tile effect work at Winkleigh in Devon, although no connection between the two examples is known. Harris's other work is domestic, at Castle Street in Buckingham of about 1875. It is cruder, apparently on timber lath infill panels and looks as if created with some form of stencilling (fig. 52).⁸⁷



Fig. 51: St Paul's Music School, London (1874), by Francis Cranmer Penrose. Elevation detail. Musical staves are hidden in the centre of the spandrels each side of the arch to the Palladian window.



Fig. 52: 11 Castle Street, Buckingham (c1875), by Edward Swinfen Harris. A rustic character created by the construction as well as the rather crude, apparently stenciled, sgraffito.

The 1874 schemes at Windsor Castle are curious and unusual. They are very different in character to anything else and are again applied to timber laths rather than masonry, and here on ceilings rather than walls. They were probably executed by Thomas George, a plasterer repeatedly employed by the Dean and Canons for building and plaster work, under the direction of A. Y. Nutt (1847 – 1924), surveyor to the fabric of Windsor Castle in the later nineteenth century.⁸⁸ The panels are narrow strips in groups of six or seven ranged down the east side of the cloister, with a complicated cruciform timber layout at the north-east corner. Figure 53 shows a typical panel with alternating backing coats of red and pale green plaster, cut to patterns in celebration of Victoria and Albert, while the extent of the sgraffito can be seen in figure 54. There are profiles of the two monarchs, heraldic symbols and beasts, mottos, escutcheons, complex patterns as well as mythical figures and signs of the zodiac. The mixture of motifs is sophisticated but slips into rusticity and crudeness in places, and was one suspects an experiment that was carried no further.



Fig. 53: Dean's cloister, Windsor Castle, Windsor (1874), by A. Y. Nutt and Thomas George. Typical bay. A head in profile, assumed to represent Prince Albert, is visible in the second bay from the left.



Fig. 54: Dean's cloister, Windsor Castle, Windsor (1874), by A. Y. Nutt and Thomas George. View of soffit to eastern range of cloister.

Fig. 55: Curfew Tower, Windsor Castle, Windsor (1874), probably by A. Y. Nutt and Thomas George. Ceiling.

A much smaller and intriguing example exists in a poky but high-ceilinged staff room in the Curfew Tower. This is an essay in elaborate pattern only, in white plaster cut through to reveal black beneath, that looks like a trial piece for the cloister commission (fig. 55).

English sgraffito use does not stop at this point, but traces are more diffuse. In 1879, Sir Arthur Blomfield (1829 – 1899) included a new font in his work to St Mark's Church, North Audley Street, London, 'a square vessel in Devonshire marble inset with four sgraffito panels of baptism scenes' (fig. 56).⁸⁹



Fig. 56: St Marks Church, North Audley Street, London (1882), by Sir Arthur Blomfield. Font with sgraffito panels.

Ernest George (1839 – 1922) and Harold Peto (1854 – 1933) are recorded as applying it to an arcaded porch at 37 Harrington Gardens, London a *'sgraffito panel in the enclosing side wall depicting scenes of life in "Merry England"'*.⁹⁰

In 1882, architect, John Pollard Seddon, and sculptor, George Frampton, collaborated on a large scheme on the north Kent coast at Birchington, west of Margate. A striking group of six bungalows with attached towers was built with attendant service blocks on the landward side, one detached (Poet's Corner) and two semi-detached pairs (Tresco and the Porch, and Old Coach House and Sunny Lodge) remain. They are half timbered at first floor level and here Frampton created several dozen black and white sgraffito panels. A former resident of Sunny Lodge, Brenda Kirby, researched their history:

George Frampton (1860 – 1928) designed and oversaw the construction of the sgraffito panels on the Tower Bungalows and their service lodges. They were done in framed panels in his studios in London and brought down by rail to Birchington. Because of the large number required, he could not possibly have executed them all himself, so would have supervised his apprentices, who then completed the work....

*The panels were made on a wooden framework with a charcoal grey plaster base, overlaid with a cream lime-wash finish on top. This was then scribed through while the top layer was still slightly soft, to reveal the charcoal grey beneath.*⁹¹

The alternating panels of large figures and foliage with the occasional symbol, such as a sailing ship, may have thematic connection to the former use of the blocks. The figures depict rural crafts, while others suggest the coming of mechanisation, but there is still a hint of neoclassical putti about the figures, probably executed by three different hands which are discernible in the differences between figures 57 – 59: visible confirmation of Brenda Kirby's description of their



Fig. 57: 'Poets' Block', Birchington, Kent (1882), by John Pollard Seddon, architect, and George Frampton, artist. Weathered but apparently original finish. Note the execution of the figure and the foliage with a bird compared with those in figure 58.



Fig. 58: 'Tresco', Birchington, Kent, by John Pollard Seddon (1882), architect, and George Frampton, artist. The depictions here appear clumsier, and even the three pretty panels below the window seem slightly awkward. Later overpainting will have accentuated this effect.



Fig. 59: 'Old coach House and Sunny Lodge', Birchington, Kent (1882), by John Pollard Seddon, architect, and George Frampton, artist. These panels are perhaps the most charming with the early locomotive and the hooded figure clutching a lantern; they have retained their character and the sketchy surround treatment visible in figure 57 despite later overpainting.



Fig. 60: 'Sunny Lodge', Birchington, Kent (1882), by John Pollard Seddon, architect, and George Frampton, artist. West front. The sgraffito lends a jaunty, cheerful character to the building.

making. The variation in style is suggestive of transition away from the neo-classical.⁹² More pertinently we have finally encountered a domestic example of sgraffito that fits Alan Cole's argument for the technique, and that was fabricated away from site. This though is domestic at quite a grand scale; we have to return to Revd. Radford for something more modest. In the mid-1870s he oversaw application of sgraffito friezes to a short terrace of cottages that he developed in Down St. Mary in Devon, that provide interest on otherwise plain rendered façades and, more than all the examples we have reviewed, show, with Seddon's scheme, the wider potential of sgraffito for economic use on dwellings (figs. 60 and 61). Birchington and Down St. Mary also demonstrate that sgraffito can endure, aging gracefully, in the case of the latter, with lichen encrustation.



Fig. 61: Cottages, Down St Mary, Devon (c1875), attributed to Radford. A striking effect with modest means. Sgraffito on the right-hand property has been obliterated at upper levels and painted out at lower.

These schemes, like Hornblotton a few years before, point to change in the character of sgraffito in England during the 1870s; attempting to escape Renaissance precedent. Sumner would develop this, and we will turn next to five schemes he carried out in the second half of the eighteen-eighties. His sgraffito though would largely eschew the domestic for church settings, works of scale and

grandeur as commemorative and celebratory pieces. This will be seen as arising from his background and social milieu whence opportunities to apply sgraffito would come.



Fig. 62: Cottages, Down St Mary, Devon (c1875), attributed to Radford. Detail of main dado band, showing damage and lichen encrustation. Detail though and the overall effect remains bright and strong after 145 years.

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- 1 Alan Crawford, 'Sgraffito and Stained Glass' in *Heywood Sumner: Artist and Archaeologist 1853-1940*, ed. Margot Coatts, and Elizabeth Lewis (Winchester City Museum, 1986), 17. Sumner would have known this history from other architects and historians, but an exact source for this attribution to Sumner has not been located.
 - 2 G. P. Bankart, 'Exterior plastering and sgraffito', in William Millar, *Plastering plain and decorative – a practical treatise on the art & craft of plastering and modelling*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1927, reissued by Routledge, 2015), 177.
 - 3 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito,' *Journal of the Society of Arts* (13 February 1891): 229.
 - 4 Dr. – Ing. Hans Urbach, *Sgraffito* (Berlin: Kalkverlag GmbH, 1928), 13, fig 1. The Thiems discuss this as well. See note 12.
 - 5 Viewable at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1095-9270.12203> . This detailed article does not define the decoration as sgraffito but says: '*During 2014–2016 the remains of a royal boat burial have been*

identified and excavated at the mortuary complex of the 12th Dynasty King Senwosret III (c. 1878–1841 BCE) at South Abydos ... Although located at Abydos—like the Early Dynastic boat graves—this example dates to the 12th Dynasty, late in the tradition of royal boat burials. Apart from augmenting the fragmentary record for boat burials in pharaonic Egypt the subterranean building that contained this 12th Dynasty boat burial preserves remarkable wall decoration: over 120 surviving drawings of watercraft.'

- 6 Rafael Ruiz Alonso, 'Sgraffito and typology of architecture,' paper at the 2nd International Conference *Sgraffito in Change: Original Realization vs. Secondary Interventions*, Litomyšl, Czech Republic, 21-22 November 2019. The end of antiquity may be taken to mean the fourth century AD.
- 7 Rafael Ruiz Alonso, 'Sgraffito in Europe. A global vision of an important, almost unnoticed, reality,' in *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds. Angela Weyer & Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 30. This is a broad summary of Alonso's argument in his reprinted paper.
- 8 There is uncertainty about Da Feltro's dates: 1490 – 1527 is given at <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG192576>. The British Museum also states that his original name was Lorenzo Luzzo.
- 9 Giorgio Vasari, *On Technique*, trans. Louisa S. Macle hose (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1907), 243-244 and Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artist*, trans. by Gaston Du C. De Vere (London, Macmillan and Co. LD. & The Medici society, LD. 1912 – 14), 227-234.
- It is difficult to disentangle Vasari's meaning in places as he refers to the creation of '*grotesques*' by Morto da Feltro without describing this work as sgraffito. Macle hose notes, on page 244, that '*...it was a friend of Morto da Feltro, the Forentine Andrea di Cosimo, who first started the work, and Vasari describes the process he employed in phrases that correspond with the wording of the present chapter...*' She goes on to say: '*...Vasari appears to have been the first writer who gives a recipe for it.*'
- 10 See G. P. Bankart, *The Art of the Plasterer* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1908, reissued by Routledge, 2015), 37. He credits Pietro Luggo and Andrea Feltrini with reviving the technique.
- 11 Alina Payne, 'Wrapped in Fabric: Florentine Facades, Mediterranean Textiles and A-Tectonic Ornament in the Renaissance,' in *Histories of Ornament from global to local*, eds. Gulru Necipoğlu and Alina Payne (Princeton University Press, 2016), 274-275.
- 12 Gunther and Christabel Thiem, *Toskanische Fassaden-Dekorationen in Sgraffito und Fresko: 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (München: Kunsthistorischen

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- Institut in Florenz, 1964), 19. 'Die ältesten nachweisbaren Beispiele in Florenz an der Casa Davanzati bei Porta Rossa und an der Castellani-Kapelle von S. Croce sind in die 2. Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts zu datieren.' The Thiems also give examples of work by Feltrini from the early sixteenth century.
- 13 Andreas Huth, 'Degli sgraffiti delle case.... Zur Geschichte, Technologie und Erhaltung von Sgraffito-Dekorationen in Italien', In *Sgraffito im Wandel- Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds. Angela Weyer & Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 94-111. The earliest specific example Huth gives is about 1320; he refers to the 'invention' of the technique, but the implication might be that it was already well established by then.
- 14 Thiem, *Toskanische Fassaden-Dekorationen in Sgraffito und Fresko*, 20-21. They give examples of buildings where traces of several colours have been found in sgraffito work, dating to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries just before the technique fell from favour.
- 15 Una Roman D'Elia, 'Grotesque Painting and Painting Grotesques in the Renaissance' in *Notes in the History of Art* (University of Chicago Press: Bard Graduate Center, Winter 2014), 5. The second of D'Elia's quotations paraphrases Vitruvius's conclusions about grotesques.
- 16 Jane Lamb, *Sgraffito in England 1600 – 1950* (London: Architectural Association, Historic Building Conservation, diss., June 1998), 9-10. Lamb also addresses the possible confusion of sgraffito with other similar but distinct decorative techniques, tarsia, niello and scagliola among others.
- 17 Thomas Danzl, and Carola Möwald, 'Graffito or Sgraffito? – It's more than this!' in *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds. Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 78-79.
- 18 Ibid, 82-83. The main thrust of the article concerns taxonomical confusion around the description of sgraffito, and they discuss both the origins of the word and possible definitions. They unpick the differing roots of sgraffito from two related Italian words 'graffire' and '(s)graffiare.' They then address questions around late medieval examples of single coat sgraffito mixed with other decorative techniques.
- 19 Ibid. The work was apparently dateable from the characters portrayed.
- 20 Ibid, 81.
- 21 Kerstin Klein, 'Die Erhaltung von Sgraffiti: ein Spagat zwischen Konservierung, Restaurierung und Rekonstruktion,' in *Sgraffito im Wandel- Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds.

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- Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 62-63.
- 22 Adrian Attwood, & Kimberley Reczek, 'Sgraffito Conservation at the Henry Cole Wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum,' *Association for the Study of Conservation in Historic Buildings Transactions* 38, (2015): 34.
- 23 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 12. Tracking this idea is complicated and outside the scope of this study. Tang period pottery shows the classic brown, ochre and green glazes of Chinese ceramics and one can find similar colours in examples of late Byzantine pottery from the 12 –14th centuries. The latter also show sgraffito, or incised decoration, into the clay surface. Later Chinese ceramics certainly do show apparent use of sgraffito, but these seem to date to the 13th century.
- 24 Payne, 'Wrapped in Fabric,' 279.
- 25 Huth, 97, also acknowledges this possibility. 'Beide Techniken sind so einfach, dass sie in verschiedener Ausprägung und unabhängig voneinander an verschiedenen Orten hätten entwickelt und praktiziert werden können,' (Both techniques are so simple that they could have been developed and used in different form and independently from each other in different locations). Note 11 to this comment refers to Ruiz Alonso and Urbach.
- 26 Payne, 'Wrapped in Fabric,' 279-280. Payne's article makes a dizzying but convincing range of connections between artists in a range of different media, a theme picked up by Manfred Koller in a paper to the 2017 International Conference on Sgraffito held in Hildesheim, see Manfred Koller, 'Sgraffito: Erscheinungsformen, Techniken und Restaurierungsprobleme' in *Sgraffito im Wandel*, eds. Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein, 44-58.
- 27 Payne, 'Wrapped in Fabric,' 286-7.
- 28 Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), 193-195.
- 29 Payne, 'Wrapped in Fabric,' 274-275.
- 30 Urbach, *Sgraffito*, 55; Ruiz Alonso, 'Sgraffito in Europe,' 35.
- 31 Dr Christina Krawczyk, 'Forschung – Beraten – Vermitteln,' in *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds. Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 9.

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- 32 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Clarendon/Oxford University Press, 1972), 252-3. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Semper's biographer, struggles to make him a sympathetic figure.
- 33 Gottfried Semper, 'Die Sgraffito Dekoration,' in *Wochenschrift für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe* (3.1868), <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/kunstchronik1868/0049/thumbs>
'Wirklich scheint sich die allgemeine Aufmerksamkeit der Architekten und Dekorateurs endlich diesem uralten Verzierungsverfahren wieder zugewandt zu haben, nachdem ich dasselbe schon vor mehr als 20 Jahren zum ersten Male wieder seit der Zeit der Renaissance für Deutschland in's Leben gerufen hatte; zuerst bei der dekorativen Ausstattung der oberen Wandflächen des königl. Hoftheater zu Dresden und bald nachher zur Ausstattung der Façade eines Wohnhauses in Hamburg.' I am grateful to Torsten Schiedeknecht in the University of Liverpool Architecture Department for this translation.

There were other examples of incised decoration elsewhere in Europe around the time of Semper's work in Dresden and Hamburg. The Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen is a prominent example, dating to the late 1840s; although here the technique seems to have been a form of (in)tarsia developed by the artist from his own research in Italy: *'inspired by the patterns and the colours found in the excavations in the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy among other places,'* according to the Thorvaldsen Museum website.

- 34 Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, (Yale University Press, 1996), 237. He discusses the Zurich Polytechnikum projects at 237 and 245. Curiously Mallgrave, does not refer to the 1868 article, which is of interest in part because it gives details of the plaster mixes that Semper used.
- 35 Ibid, 38. Semper left Paris in mid-September 1830 and reached Genoa on 13th October, *'then followed the coastline south to Massa, Pisa and Livorno, before turning inland toward Lucca and Florence. In the last city he spent almost three weeks, although he did little sketching in his rush to see as many sights as possible. He hastened to Rome...arriving on the outskirts of the city on 30th November.'*
- 36 Ibid, 94. His note to the paragraph in the text refers to Claus Zöge von Manteuffel, 'Die Baukunst Gottfried Sempers (1803 – 79),' PhD diss. Univ. of Freiburg, 1952, 197.
- 37 Huth, 'Degli sgraffiti delle case....,' 104.
- 38 Urbach, *Sgraffito*, 73. *'Mit der Wiederbelebung der Technik stehen die Namen dreier Männer in engster Verbindung, Minutoli, Lohde und Semper.'*

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- 39 Aleksandra Fedorowicz-Jackowska, 'Karol Beyer's Album Wystawy Starożytności i Przedmiotów sztuki and Alexander von Minutoli's Vorbilder für Handwerker und Fabrikanten. *Between History and Industry*,' ed. Dr. Tomasz Makowski (Biblioteka Narodowa Warszawa, 2019), 244-245. The rest of the information in this paragraph is from the same article. Material in English on Minutoli is sparse; the only English information located so far is at https://second.wiki/wiki/alexander_von_minutoli but it has not been possible to cross check it. There are sources in German libraries, but these are not available digitally.
- 40 Dr Adolf Sammter, 'Sgraffito in Schlesien,' in *Deutsches Kunstblatt*, (1853), 230. My thanks to Ian Boyes for translation of this article.
- 41 Urbach, *Sgraffito*, 74-75. Andrzej Bruno Kutiak presented a paper at the second international conference on sgraffito in 2019 on 'Renewal and restoration approaches for the sgraffito facades of Upper Lusatian manor houses in the 16th and 17th century', in which he illustrated the, all but fragmentary, remains of work from this earlier period. The disappearance of sgraffito is not a new phenomenon.
- 42 Emil Lange and Josef Bühlmann, *Die Anwendung des Sgraffitos für Fassaden Dekoration*, (Berlin: E. A. Fleischmann & Gropius, 1867).
- 43 Ernst Berger, *Fresko- und Sgraffito Technik Nach älteren und neueren Quelle*, (München: Digitale Sammlungen der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 1909) 138, footnote 6; 'Sempers Anweisungen sind in fast alle späteren Handwerksbücher...'
- 44 Marie Demanet, Eric Hennaut, Walter Schudel, Jos Vandenbreenen, & Linda Van Santvoort, *Les Sgraffites à Bruxelles*, (Brussels: Fondation Roi Baudouin, 1996), 31. 'le sgraffite bénéficie de l'impulsion d'un des principaux architectes et théoriciens du XIXe siècle: Gottfried Semper.'
- 45 Koller, 'Sgraffito: Erscheinungsformen, Techniken und Restaurierungsprobleme,' 44-58. See also Demanet et al., *Les Sgraffites à Bruxelles*, 31 – 36, which includes discussion of Sumner.
- 46 In Polish, Zamek Czocha. The castle is in western Poland near the town of Stankowice. The buildings in Lodhe's drawings look like farm buildings but it has not been possible to confirm their relationship to the castle. He describes them at length in Max Lodhe, 'Die Sgraffitomalereien der Burg Tschocha in der Lausitz,' in *Zeitschrift für Bauwesen XVIII*, edited by G. Erbkam (Berlin: Verlag von Ernst & Korn, 1867), 31-36. https://digital.zlb.de/viewer/image/15239363_1867/20/. Lodhe also refers to the early nineteenth century book by August-Victoire Grandjean de Montigny and Auguste Famin mentioned earlier, offering some confirmation of influence from these earlier works.

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- 47 Ruiz Alonso, 'Sgraffito in Europe,' 40.
- 48 Semper arrived in 1849. See Mallgrave, 173-177.
- 49 The Thiem's include a copy of the drawing in their book, illustration 75.
- 50 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 23 - 24, quoting *The Builder* (27 February 1858), 137-139. Curiously, there is reference to the Hamburg sgraffito as early as December 1850 in the record of an Ordinary General Meeting of the RIBA during discussion after a lecture by Sir Digby Wyatt on 2 December 1850. One Charles Fowler remarked '*that he had seen, some years ago, an attempt made by some Italian artists at Hamburg, to revive the art of sgraffito decoration, which appeared to be very ingenious, and not at all difficult, and which might, he thought, prove suitable to the climate of England.*' Cole's experiences may not have been the only ones to trigger interest in the technique.
- 51 Ibid, 26, quoting from Cole's diaries.
- 52 Ibid, 38.
- 53 The listing notice though is categorical about the decoration: '*The sgraffito decoration is arranged as a blind arcade of pointed arches decorated with bands of lozenges, zig-zags, chevrons, scallops etc.....The sgraffito decoration extends round the east return. The right (west) return prominent from the drive from Danemore Place, has an elaborately treated stack: narrow at ground floor level and corbelled out to a wider shaft above. The sgraffito decoration on this elevation is more elaborate with circle motifs on either side of the stack.*' List Entry no: 1240937. This study too has taken a broader approach to definition.
- 54 Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper*, 213. Semper apparently advised C. R. Cockerell on the acoustics for St George's Hall in Liverpool. Lamb gives the son's name as Francis, though he is referenced elsewhere as 'Frederick.'
- 55 Cockerell's comments are from discussion after Alan S. Cole's talk at the RIBA discussed below. This aspect of plaster quality is discussed further in chapter 6.
- 56 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 38-39. Patricia Cusack in 'Reinforced Concrete in Britain 1897 – 1908,' Vol. 1 (PhD diss., Edinburgh, 1981), 102-105 discusses Down Hall within the context of questions at the time about how to ornament the plain surfaces of concrete. Down Hall has lately found fame as the site of the 2020 Covid 19 series of the Great British Bakeoff.
- 57 William Millar, *Plastering plain and decorative – a practical treatise on the art & craft of plastering and modelling*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905), 219.

- 58 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 52. She consulted the archives of Trollope and Colls, the successor firm to that with whom Robinson worked and records in a note: ‘research at Trollope and Colls archives have failed to produce any record drawings of buildings designed by Robinson,’ 90. Robinson has recurred throughout this research and more work is needed to see if some of his sgraffito does survive.
- 59 ‘To St Mary’s Chapel for the Blind in Liverpool...’ *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*, (Saturday 15 October 1887): 878. Accessed 10 December 2020, at <https://eearch.informa.ie/Exe/tiff2png.exe/MK000KBJ.PNG?-i+-r+65+-g+3+M%3A%5CZYLABD%7E1%5CINDEXD%7E1%5C7094%5CARCHIVE%5C20698%5CTIFF%5C2017%5C00000014%5CMK000KBJ.TIF>.

Robinson designed St James Church, Brownhills, Walsall, between 1850 and 1852. A blurry photograph of the chancel arch shown below, dated 1916, shows a bold slogan, only partially readable and possibly in relief, reading ‘Ye shall reverence [him.....] I am the Lord.’ This large forceful decoration does not fit with other published examples of sgraffito by Robinson. If this work was a form of sgraffito carried out when the church was built it would pre-date any other known nineteenth century work in England. It has not been included in the text as the technique of the work cannot so far be confirmed.



St James Church, Brownhills History Book, 2001.
<https://www.stjameschurchbrownhills.co.uk/churchhistory.html>.

- 60 Millar, *Plastering plain and decorative*, 221. Figure 22 is from this page. On page 220 Millar includes four other panels by Robinson titled ‘*The Four Seasons*’. Their location and date are also unknown.

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- 61 This is the author's attribution. Ruiz Alonso describes this as sgraffito in his article, 'Fenomenos de Difusión y Asimilación del Esgrafiado en la Arquitectura Medieval, Moderna y Contemporánea,' in *Ciudad y Artes Visuales*, ed. Miguel Ángel Chaves Martín (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Grupo de Investigación Arte, Arquitectura y Comunicación en la Ciudad Contemporánea, 2016), 28. Examined closely the surface is effectively smooth. There is no evidence of cutting into a surface, rather of incising that has been filled in.
- 62 The best account of this lovely little church in is J. Fawcett, *Seven Victorian Architects* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976): 70-71.
- 63 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 11. She cites the example of G. E. Street's church of St James the Less in Pimlico, London, which has fine apse decoration in niello from 1861. Another surviving example is on a frieze at first floor at 61, Mark Lane, London by George Aitchison from 1864.
- 64 From the church's website: <https://www.stmarysmaulden.org/sgraffito.htm>.
- 65 *The Building News* (Sep. 3, 1880), 3.
- 66 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 27. Lamb records another example at the Church of St Michael in Teffont Evias, Wiltshire. This is a series of figurative scenes as the centre to a marble reredos behind the altar. It appears to be intarsia.
- 67 Attwood and Reczek, 'Sgraffito Conservation at the Henry Cole Wing,' 35-37.
- 68 Alan Summerly Cole, 'On the Art of Sgraffito Decoration', report of paper presented to the Royal Institute of British Architects (17 March 1873), 1.
- 69 Sir M. Digby Wyatt and Mr C[harles] Barry are recorded as speaking.
- 70 J. T. Micklethwaite, *Modern Parish Churches*, Henry S. King & Co., 1874, 287. Quoted in Bettley, James, 'All is glory within': the importance of colour in church interiors, 1840 – 1903,' *Ecclesiology Today* 45 (January 2012): 28.
- 71 Revd. W. T. A Radford, 'On the Treatment of the Inner Face of a Church Wall,' paper read at the College Hall, Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, (22 August 1872), 60.
- 72 Pauline Brain, *Some Men who Made Barnstaple...And Arts and Crafts in Barnstaple*, (Roundabout Devon Books, 2010): 129. Brain says 'John Ford (Gould) followed his father (R. D. Gould) by training as an architectural draughtsman and completed the restoration of All Saints Church Winkleigh in 1871 – 3.' Since R. D. lived to 1900 one suspects they were both involved.

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- 73 All these Devon churches were open to the public. We arrived late one afternoon in May 2019 at Colaton Raleigh and I am grateful to Mr Higginson and Mr Higgins for unlocking the Church and allowing my wife and I in. My thanks are due also to personnel associated with the others who confirmed locations and opening hours by phone in the run up to my visits. Information in leaflets provided at each church or information panels kept in situ were also invaluable with regard to dates, artists and architects.
- 74 Chris Brooks and Bruce Induni, 'The Sgraffito Decoration of Colaton Raleigh Church and its Conservation', *Devon Buildings Group Newsletter* (20 October 1988): 12 - 17. Brooks and Induni provide useful background on the Devon architectural context. Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 76, describes this work briefly in conservation case Study 2. She must have visited, saying of it: '*the final result was a most effective repair.*' The information in the previous paragraph on stencils also comes from Brooks and Induni.
- 75 Further research is needed into sgraffito in Devon and connections between local architects and those such as Sedding and Lethaby who moved to London and their influence on other architects and artists in the capital. Sgraffito in Devon has a long history in ceramics produced in Devon and the connection of ports such as Barnstaple and Bideford to European imports of pottery. Christine Longworth in her Liverpool MPhil thesis, *Buckley Sgraffito*, 1999, 159, about pottery decorated with sgraffito in North Wales, observes: '*In north Devon, pottery was made in the medieval period to supply local needs. As result of increased trade with Europe, new techniques of potting were introduced. A plain glazed pottery was being made in north Devon by 1600 and continued to be made throughout the 17th century. The decorated wares were made in the sgraffito technique. The two main centres of pottery production were Barnstaple and Bideford.*'

In the early seventeenth century Devon had a tradition of sgraffito decorated fireplace backs, with pattern echoes of sixteenth century Italian work. Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 18-19, discusses this, but for a fuller examination of this odd decorative cul-de-sac, see Ann Adams, 'Decorated Plaster on Fireplaces,' *Devon Buildings Group Newsletter* 25 (Summer 2007): 12-25.

- 76 Jackson is an interesting figure. Alan Crawford has drawn my attention to his involvement with James Powell and Sons, who perfected a nineteenth century version of an older technique: '*Opus sectile (Latin for cut work) describes a form of opaque stained glass, composed of vitreous sheets with a thickness of 3/16 or 1/4 of an inch, which are cut, painted and fired before being fitted together and cemented to a rigid backing; often a thin sheet of slate,*' Dennis Hadley, 'Opus Sectile Art from Recycled Scrap', *Tiles & Architectural Ceramics Society* (2018). Use of this method parallels that of sgraffito use in England quite closely. Jackson apparently coined the name

for the method in 1877, when using it on a reredos at Evercreech in Somerset, illustrated below; picture from www.cornishchurches.com.



- 77 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 40.
- 78 A leaflet in the church entitled 'St Peter's Church Hornblotton', noted by the author during a visit in August 2017, observes: *The designs are based on the work by Heywood Sumner, an important designer of the Arts and Crafts movement.*' Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 40, makes the correct attribution to Wormleighton and Gibbons in her study and it has since been confirmed by Alec Hamilton, to whom I am grateful for a copy of his short paper: 'St Peter, Hornblotton, Somerset: who did the sgraffito?' 2010. Hamilton located the accounts for the work from Wormleighton and Gibbons in the Somerset Records Office (now SW Heritage Trust) at Taunton, D/P/horn 8/2.
- 79 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 41.
- 80 Ibid, 40.
- 81 I owe this observation to Alec Hamilton. In an e mail to the author of 13 December 2018 he notes that this stylistic difference '*could simply be a demonstration of the two different hands.*' If so, this is of interest because it is not evident in the later work on the College of Organists.
- 82 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 41.
- 83 Eldest son of Sir Henry Cole, who was closely connected with the procurement of this building. 'Royal college of Organists,' (British History Online), Vol. 38, Chapter XIV, 217-219. The article provides insight into the design aesthetic and public response to it.
- 84 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 43.

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- 85 The V & A hold two drawings by Moody, one is of a plain 3-storey house in a terrace and the other with panels between windows decorated in sgraffito. These are thought to be sketches Moody prepared for Alan S. Cole's 1873 talk about sgraffito and its use on houses. They are similar in character to the Organ School elevations,
- 86 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito', *Journal of the Applied Arts* (13 February 1891): 229 – 235. Robinson was in the audience for Sumner's talk.
- 87 It has an odd set of initials and date of 1987 inscribed into it, although it was first listed in 1973. Visiting the scheme and the church at Calverton was prevented by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 88 C. Rider, 'Sgraffito (Dean's Cloister and Curfew Tower)' (14 November 2016). Copy provided to author by Kate McQuillan at Windsor Castle. There is a brief biography of Nutt on the Windsor Castle, College of St. George's website.
- 89 'St Mark's Church, North Audley Street,' British History Online, Survey of London, Volume 40, 100-109. This looks as if it could be niello but this point is subject to confirmation.
- 90 Hilary Joyce Grainger, *The Architecture of Sir Ernest Joyce and his partners c1860-1922* (University of Leeds, PhD diss., 1985), Vol. 3, 96.
- 91 Brenda Kirby, 'Tower Bungalow Notes.' Undated. Supplied by Bob Hinge of Birchington Heritage Group.
- 92 I am grateful to Bob Hinge for the photographs of Birchington. Visiting the scheme was prevented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter 3

Sumner's first sgraffito 1884 - 1891

Five schemes

Sgraffito intrigued English artists and architects in the mid-nineteenth century but had secured only a tenuous place in decorative tradition by the time Sumner adopted it, so it seems difficult to account for his interest. We will explore this but look first at his early sgraffito from the second half of the eighteen-eighties.

The absence of most of Sumner's own records mean that we have to find his footprint in the archives and correspondence of others, where designs he produced and letters he wrote still exist. We know from these traces that in the early 1880s he began experimenting with sgraffito. Firstly, there is a preparatory cartoon of *'Judith and Holofernes'* from 1884, which he used in the decoration of his parents' house in Winchester, to which they moved sometime after September 1885.¹

We know also about the progress of what appears to be Sumner's first professional commission for sgraffito from surviving correspondence between him, John Dando Sedding and Dean Edgar Gibson (1848 – 1924) in connection with the refurbishment of Vicars' Close Chapel at Wells Cathedral in the mid-1880s (fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Vicars' Close, Chapel, Wells (1886 – 87), by John Dando Sedding, architect, and Heywood Sumner, artist. View from near the altar. There was sgraffito on the wall beyond the screen – see catalogue. The gesso decoration is in the panels seen end on to the right of the photograph.

This tiny chapel, precisely recorded in a survey by Pugin as being 21' 7" x 14' 8",² is entered by a narrow passage separated from the worship space by a tall open screen and now has seats for thirty-two. It was subject to extensive repair that began a decade earlier as is clear from correspondence concerning work overseen by Benjamin Ferrey, then the diocesan architect to Bath and Wells;³ but the first involving Sumner occurs in late October 1885.

Sedding wrote to Dean Gibson on 8th January 1886 in response to comments Gibson must have made in an earlier letter:

I quite see the force of your remarks ab^t the damp walls: but don't let us go in for tiles! My proposal w^d. be to do the wall decoration in sgraffito work wh: is of course unaffected by damp: it is done on the smooth wet plaster. The effect w^d. be well suited for this case & Sumner has made a special study of this sort of work.⁴

This is the first explicit reference to sgraffito in the correspondence between Sedding, Gibson and Sumner, although Sumner's involvement seems to have been accepted sometime before, as on 30th October 1885, Sedding had written to Gibson, describing the scheme for alterations to the Chapel, and mentions, almost in passing:

Decoratⁿ. of wall in accordance with sketch provided by Mr Heywood Sumner....⁵

Sumner himself followed this up the next day, setting out ideas for the decorative scheme, 'This is to explain the rough idea of your chapel decoration which Sedding has sent you,' which also includes a proposal for figures in the panelling, which he would later execute in gesso.⁶

One infers that there had been prior discussion about decoration and that Sumner had possibly already provided a design for it, perhaps at this stage for one wall only as Sedding speaks in the singular, though this is more likely to be a slip of the pen; Sedding's letters give the impression of having been dashed off at speed as figure 2 illustrates.

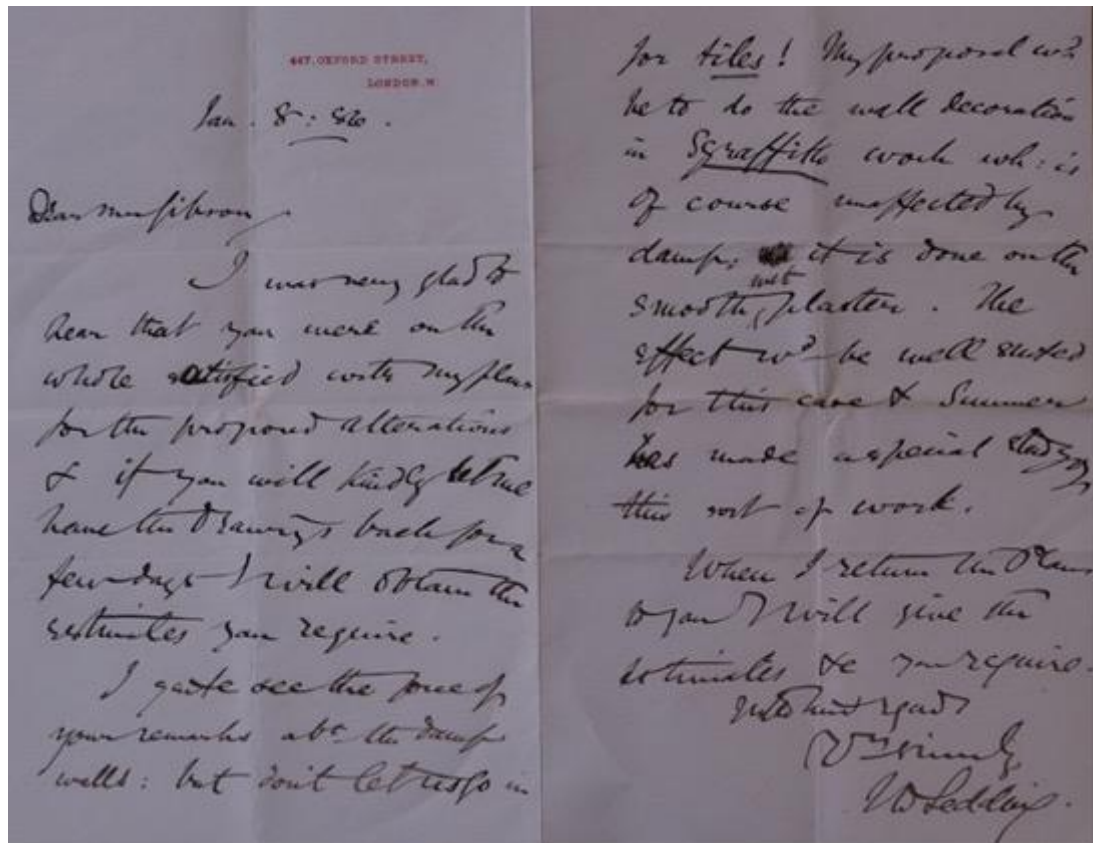


Fig. 2: Letter from John Dando Sedding to Dean Edgar Gibson, 8th January 1886, recommending sgraffito for decoration of Vicars' Close Chapel.

After his letter of 8th January 1886, Sedding wrote again on the 16th, where he goes onto say,

You are quite right to demur to sgraffito work while it is an unknown article to you. Your proposed visit to Sumner (who has specimens at hand) will I think shew you how well adapted it is to the damp wall in question.⁷

The implications of this correspondence are that Gibson is uneasy about a technique of which he has no knowledge, and that Sumner has only just started to use sgraffito as a method of wall decoration, 'special study' perhaps not indicating wide usage.

What makes this apparent insight into Sumner's early forays into sgraffito intriguing is that Dean Edgar Charles Sumner Gibson was his cousin. Gibson's mother, Louisanna, was sister to Heywood Sumner's father George. While it seems that this fact should be relevant in some way – and certainly Sumner's letters to Gibson are affectionately written, signing himself 'yr. aff. coz.,'⁸ the push to use

Sumner's work seems to emanate from Sedding. There is sometimes a family link, albeit slightly tenuous, to some of the projects that Sumner worked on over the next twenty years so this connection cannot be discounted even if it is not fully explainable from surviving information.⁹

The timing of Sumner's involvement with the Vicars' Chapel at Wells should be seen in relation to the work at his parents' house in Winchester. Elizabeth Lewis records that, *'It was at the end of 1885 that Canon George Sumner...and his wife Mary packed up the rectory at Old Alresford...and moved to Winchester,'*¹⁰ She also describes how some building work was necessary at the new house:

*...the windows on the first floor were lengthened, and a lean-to greenhouse was later added onto the north side of the house, decorated appropriately by Heywood Sumner. The large square entrance hall was completely redecorated with a three-foot high plaster frieze along the tops of the walls: as far as we know, the first and probably experimental sgraffito work executed by Heywood Sumner. In scale and design it was removed from his previous detailed work as an etcher and book illustrator.*¹¹

The reference to the greenhouse here is slightly misleading in that its construction probably dates to the early 1890s, as Sumner's sgraffito panel of 'Flora' with which he decorated it can be dated fairly precisely to 1893.¹² If building work was carried out prior to the family moving in, Sumner may have executed the sgraffito in the entrance hall during the summer of 1885, although one cannot discount it being done later in the year.

Lewis conveys a hint of surprise at Sumner's ability with sgraffito in her comment about *'the first and probably experimental sgraffito work,'* but one must assume that he had carried out numerous practice pieces before this scheme (fig. 3); although its technique and effect are significantly different from what he carried out at Vicars' Chapel despite some likely overlap in the timescales of the two works. Design connections can also be seen between Sumner's earlier illustration projects and his sgraffito, an aspect that will be addressed in due course, though Lewis is quite right about the change in scale.

From the dates associated with the family's removal to Winchester and Sumner's developing involvement at Wells, in particular his letter at the end of October 1885 referred to above, he may possibly have provided a sketch scheme for Vicars' Chapel before completing the scheme for his parents.

The rest of the sgraffito decoration at 1, the Close is not known in full as the catalogue raisonné shows, but Lewis is of the view that the Judith scheme was not specifically designed for the house, although the other figures and scenes may have been. Perhaps the Judith suite had been part of Sumner's 'special study' and he found he could adapt it to this location.¹³



Fig. 3: 1, the Close, Winchester (1885), by Heywood Sumner. The triumph of Judith, central panel from Sumner's 1884 drawing.

Sedding and Sumner appear though to have had something of a battle at Wells with Dean Gibson and more particularly with Edward Elwes, chaplain to and a former vice principal of Wells Theological College, whose letters to Gibson survive interleaved with those from the architect and the artist. Elwes wrote to Gibson in early 1886, 'As for sgraffito – it is a treatment of plaster & therefore is just what we do not want?'¹⁴ Later in this letter of 12th Jan 1886, Elwes discusses St. Peter's

Hornblotton, which had been decorated with sgraffito in 1873, and suggests walking over to visit it with Gibson, apparently to evaluate the sgraffito. Elwes has seen it before because he describes it as a bit rough when seen close to, as it must be given the small scale of the building. This concerns him with respect to its use at Wells. But he comes round to sgraffito and later in the year is discussing technical aspects of the proposed work in another letter to Gibson. What it describes would have been a major structural undertaking if applied to the whole of the north wall of the chapel. It is worth quoting this letter of 7th June 1886 in full:

Over Stowey, Bwater

June 7th 86

My dear Prof,

I quite go with your Proposal viz at once to set on foot Estimates No 1, 2 and 4 and the sgraffit~~o~~ (when shall I spell it right!) for the North Wall. 'Re damp wall' I think you misunderstand. It is proposed to hack away 7 inches and to replace precisely the same viz Asphalt 2 inches, Cavity 2 inches Brick 'in edge' [Elwes has ? over this word] not more than 3 inches. The only addition would be the plaister which is necessary for the sgraffito.

As to this my only doubt is whether the wall is ~~good~~ enough to stand so much hacking. It is if I remember rightly about 3ft thick and is built of rotten rubble with even now a great deal of wet in it. My fear would be that the whole wall might collapse. This, however you could judge of by testing the wall in one small place.

The east wall is battened with slate (& cement?) and is not a portion of the north wall similarly treated? But I fear that has not been a very successful job? So that I should feel disposed to adopt the very drastic remedy recommended by Trask.

If you think it desirable I will come to Wells on Whit Tuesday & talk it over. The Board meets on that day so I can kill 2 birds with one stone, but I am going to spend a happy day at Weston on Monday

with my Fife and Band (?) & as I have some people dying I shall not want to be away 2 days for the Board alone.

Let me hear if there are any points that you wish to talk over and I will arrange to come.

Yours affeclly

*Edward Elwes.*¹⁵

We have to assume that the work was found to be possible as the account from Charles Trask and Sons, countersigned by Sedding on 26th June 1888,¹⁶ describes the carrying out of what Elwes was explaining to Gibson:

Drawing[?] north wall of Chapel and making good inner face. Building 4½in brick wall on slate damp course bonded with solid iron ties as per[?] quotation Including new socket glazed drain from...'



Fig. 4: Vicars' Close, Chapel, Wells (1886 – 87), by John Dando Sedding, architect, and Heywood Sumner, artist. View of east end of chapel before 1893.

It may have proved very difficult to execute this work, which may account for apparent delays; the eastern half of the finished scheme is shown in figure 4. Elwes also refers to slate on battens, which one might have assumed to be an overcovering externally to protect the walls from driving rain.¹⁷ A later letter from

Sumner to Canon Church in 1896 dealing with problems with the sgraffito suggests otherwise and that the slate was bedded on cement directly onto the internal face of the stonework as a basis for his sgraffito:

I am sorry to hear from your letter of Oct^r. 9th that again there has been trouble with the sgraffito work on E. wall of the Vicar's Close Chapel.

From the first, this wall was a great difficulty. It is built, partly, of a stone that heaves, i.e. expands & contract[s] in wet & dry; and unfortunately this essential badness of wall could not be overcome by building up an inner wall of brick as the space did not admit of this the best preventive of damp coming from an outer wall.

Accordingly when the work was done in 1887 I tried slates placed against the wall face bedded in cement, but, owing partly to the impossibility of getting any current of air in this corner of the chapel to promote the setting of the cements – specially needed on a material such as slate devoid of suction – the cement did not properly set: and the result was that in July 1888 I had the whole of the work on the S. side of the E wall removed, & did it over again, taking, as I then hoped, better precautions. The work did then certainly set all right.

However the damp came through again and in 1893 I found that the surface plaster was unreliable in some places.

Having tried every expedient that I know of – outside treatment of the wall surface being out of the question – I was forced to conclude that under the particular circumstances it was impossible to do permanent sgraffito on this essentially unreliable wall. Accordingly I removed the Parian upper surface where it was unsound & liable to scale off (as you describe has been the case now) and painted in the design which was traceable on the undercoat of coloured plaster in oil colour so as to match the colour of the Parian elsewhere, using paraffin wax in my medium to resist the disintegration from damp.¹⁸

Figure 5 shows the area understood to be that to which Sumner refers

illustrating clearly the problem he had to deal with; these details are from the centre right of the view in figure 4.



Fig. 5.1 and 2: Vicars' Close, Chapel, Wells (1886 – 87), by John Dando Sedding, architect, and Heywood Sumner, artist. View of east end of chapel. The damp affected sgraffito; left as completed before 1893, and right, showing severe signs of decay, sometime after 1893.¹⁹

Short of exploratory investigation in situ into precisely what exists behind the white covering over Sumner's work we are left to note only that there were significant if isolated problems with the sgraffito in the chapel. Sumner sounds upset by this, as he concludes the letter:

This is of course very unsatisfactory to me, yet I think under the circumstances which I have stated it is the only thing to be done.

I am extremely sorry that you should have been troubled by this failure of my work, and cannot help adding that it is my only piece of sgraffito work (and I have done some every year since 1887) which has thus failed. But I have written at some length so that you might know th[ose?] long[?] standing difficulties which the wall has presented.

If you wish I will do my best to come down to Wells in the Christmas vacation or whenever the students will be away for a whole day & touch in portions that have scaled off in the way that I have described.

It is not clear from the surviving correspondence when exactly Sedding's original programme of work had got under way. According to the Articles of Agreement for the works with Trask, dated 13th August 1886, the work was to be '*complete....to the satisfaction of the said Mr John Dando Sedding on or before the 24th day of October, 1886*'.²⁰ Certainly Sumner wrote to Gibson in September about a start date for his work, but it appears that all did not run smoothly as he writes to Gibson again about a start date over five months later on 5th March 1887 as well as seeking referral to a local plasterer who he can use to prepare areas of the walls each morning;²¹ and it is early April 1887 when he is finally able to confirm a date for his arrival in Wells.²²

Sumner discusses accommodation for him and his two assistants.²³ These letters provide a glimpse into his organisation and suggest that he must have spent considerable time rehearsing the technique before this project. He would be happy to work at night if necessary, '*We can work by night, & have done so before,*'²⁴ and shows too that he has an established routine with two assistants for carrying out sgraffito. One would follow his cutting by removing the grey effect caused by small particles of the final coat adhering to the exposed colours, while the third would clear up the debris falling from the wall.²⁵ Photographs of progress on the decoration of the Lady Chapel at St. Agatha's church in Portsmouth show a team of at least five at work on the scaffold at one time (fig. 6).

Sumner's letters about the work at Wells form the only account we have of his professional manner in dealings with clients, his working methods and how he dealt with problems. Several aspects of his development of the technique are notable. Firstly, he had a well-established method by the time he started on Vicars' Close Chapel. He describes the pressure of working against the drying of the plaster and clearly has experienced assistants.²⁶ We know the names of some of them for later schemes from entries in the catalogues for sgraffito he displays at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society (A&CES) shows from 1888. He exhibited work from St Mary's at Llanfair Kilgeddin that year where the plasterer, Jas. Williams, is credited.²⁷

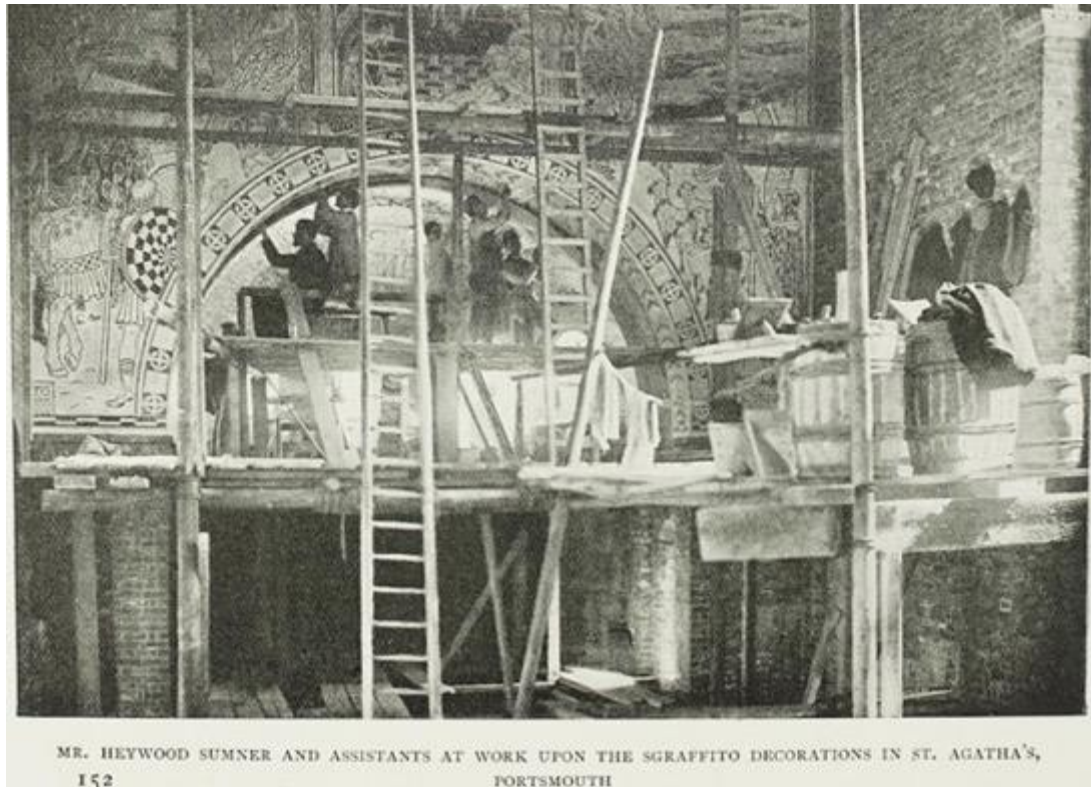


Fig. 6: Lady Chapel, St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1895), by J. Henry Ball, architect, and Heywood Sumner, artist. Sumner and his team at work. Sadly, the image is not sufficiently sharp to be sure which figure is Sumner.

At the 1889 A&CES exhibition Sumner showed sgraffito from his new home at Hill House in Chalfont St. Peter and at the third exhibition the following year work he was carrying out at a church in Ireland for which his team is credited as:

Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

Executed by HEYWOOD SUMNER,

C. H. WALTON, GEORGE MALLALIEU,

J. BYRNE (plasterer).

C. H. Walton and George Mallelieu are unknown: they were not artists who joined the Art Workers Guild as the Guild records show, nor has internet research revealed any clues about them; only their names are preserved as part of Sumner's team of sgraffito workers. Mallelieu reappears in connection with the panel of 'Flora' at Sumner's parent's home in Winchester.²⁸

Secondly, there is clear development in style from Winchester to Wells, from the drawn style of the former to the sculptural, assured character in the latter that is so identifiable in his sgraffito thereafter. The Judith panels at 1 the Close look

overcrowded and rather hectic; the only panel which shows a sound editing hand is the central one of Judith herself. They are also pictures or drawings that could exist on the printed page. The figures and settings at Vicars' Chapel reflect the nature of sgraffito; the angels on the left-hand north wall are models of concision and clarity, yet the style still gets too busy as is clear from the roundel above and assorted plants around it. Removing extraneous detail was probably essential for such a small space, although the scheme as executed would have still been somewhat overpowering. Edward Elwes may have had a point with his concern about the effect in the tiny chapel.

Two elements in Sumner's early schemes show the rapid evolution of his technique: his treatment of draped clothes and of plants. Consider the sequence of figures below, running from left to right from 1885 to 1888. The flow of drapery on Judith's followers (fig. 7.1) is well enough delineated and a similar drawn handling



Fig. 7.1 – 4: Left: 1, the Close, Winchester (1885). Some of Judith's attendants. Centre-left: Vicars Chapel, Wells, (1887). Winged angel centre north wall. Centre-right: Vicars Chapel, Wells (1887). Winged angel south end of east wall. Right: St Mary's, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888). 'Oh ye winds of God...'

of robes still lingers in the angels at Wells (figs. 7.2 – 7.3) although the treatment is broader, while the wings show the full exploitation of scraping away of the surface plaster that is used so gloriously at Llanfair Kilgeddin (fig. 7.4), where the same dramatic cutting and patterning is reflected in the angel's clothes. The work at Wells is intriguing for there is apparent development of style within the scheme, between the angel in figure 7.2, and that in 7.3, which bears similarities to the figure at St Mary's.

A similar evolution is notable in Sumner's depiction of plants, as the two illustrations in figure 8 show; the left hand one from *1 the Close* depicting a lily is well drawn but lacks the strength, complexity and earthy vibrance of the later thistle group in St Mary's Church at Llanfair Kilgeddin. Scale is important here; the



Fig. 8.1 – 2: Left: 1, the Close Winchester (1885). Judith & Holofernes. Flowering plants and ground cover. Right: St. Mary's, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888 – 90). Thistle and flowers.



Fig. 9: St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin, Monmouthshire (1888), by John Dando Sedding, architect, and Heywood Sumner, artist. South and west walls of nave showing the extent of Sumner's sgraffito.

panel at St. Mary's is at least twice the height of that at 1, the Close.

The addition of a multi-colour system, blocking in the tones required beneath the pale top layer, adds life and strength to the sgraffito. Looking at the Judith triptych, one can understand Sumner's desire for more colour. By the time he started the decoration of St Mary's in the summer of 1888, his sgraffito had acquired a maturity and power that ranges across angels, plant life, landscape scenes and a host of figures. The grace and poise in this work is remarkable, and it is worth repeating Sumner's stress on the fact that sgraffito '*gives freer play to line,*'²⁹ which he uses to striking effect. We noted in chapter 1 his talk of the abstracting hand of the artist that may be creating a scene that is recognisable but is not realistic.³⁰ And aside from 1, The Close, his sgraffito could not be in another medium. It has depth and colour, signs of the scraping and cutting away of the top layer and a definition of line achieved by removing most of the white plaster that covers the walls; the result is a marvel to behold, given that barely a year elapsed between Wells and Llanfair Kilgeddin (fig. 9).

On Sunday 8th April 1888 Sumner wrote to Julia Ady of having '*to go down to Llanvair on Thursday to explicate my design to the parish vestry '.... preliminary to getting a license to deface the church walls or something.*'³¹ The client, the Reverend Coussmaker Lindsay, apparently approved of the work once started, for Sumner

wrote again to Ady on 1st June 1888, to say that *'Mr & Miss Lindsay have returned & like the work so far as it has got.'* He goes on to say: *'It is v[er]y hard work we have to rise up early & so late take rest hence this spasmodic epistle writ just before going to bed.'*³²

Mr and Miss Lindsay's approval is understandable; this was a scheme they commissioned, and they would have agreed to its themes and design in close discussion with Sumner. It reflects the transience of human life, but within the glory of a natural world that we can and should enjoy while we are here. The selection of the Benedicite gave great scope to show this; the nave containing both the glories of nature and the seasons but also the passage of life in 'O Ye Children of Men...' panel. The promise of resurrection is presumably implied by the extracts from the story of Daniel and the furnace on the west wall, while the solace of the Christian church is suggested by the presence of key biblical figures in the chancel panels. The order of the verses suited both the space and the purpose.

St Mary's marks the culmination of a new development in English sgraffito, hinted at in St. Peter's, Hornblotton, for Sumner is telling a story, not merely applying patterns, swags or grotteschi to the walls in neo-Renaissance style. The origins of this may lie in sgraffito he carried out on the house in which he was then living.

Until the end of 1886, and apparently into early 1887, Sumner and his family were living in London; he writes to Julia Ady in December 1886 and again in March 1887 from 14 Albert Place, Kensington W, but sometime in 1887 they moved out to Hill House in Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire. This eighteenth century house still stands above the cleft of a Y road junction, and Sumner commissioned his friend and brother-in-law, W. A. S. Benson, to provide a covered entrance stairway loggia for it, which he then proceeded to decorate in sgraffito. This slightly strange and unusual outdoor decoration dates from early in 1888, just before Sumner started work at Llanfair Kilgeddin, and still looks experimental in a way that the work in St Mary's does not. It is an oddity: very personal, placing him and his family on the walls to greet visitors (fig. 10). In fact, it looks rather awkward; the symmetrical composition, which, as a technique served Sumner so well in many other places, here seems uncomfortable. The stylised trees down the staircase are looser and the

only part of the design to remain; they represent the seasons and are populated with birds and animals. The cutting shows considerable skill, in the clothes and the creation of the flames and smoke in the centre of the family scene, but the overall effect is self-conscious, and one can imagine why a later owner would cover over that portion. The important aspect of this scheme though is that, for all its oddness, Sumner begins to tell a contemporary story, of the family that lives there and the passing of the seasons while they do so.



Fig. 10: Hill House, Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire (1888), by Heywood Sumner. Farewell and Welcome panels on stairwell entrance. Heywood and Agnes look as if dressed in Shakespearean costume.



Fig. 11: Hill House, Chalfont St. Peter, Buckinghamshire (1888), by Heywood Sumner. Summer, part of the Seasons frieze on the entrance staircase.

Figure 10 is not a true representation of the work as carried out; the photograph of the four seasons seems to echo the colours as described in an article

in 'The British Architect', '*executed in red (Indian and Turkey). Golden ochre, lime blue and green (lime blue and golden ochre)*,'³³ although they have been retinted, probably more than once (fig. 11). Sumner, wrote to Benson on 22nd April 1888, reporting William Lethaby's praise of it,³⁴ after his explanatory trip to South Wales one might assume and before returning to start the sgraffito. The Sumners did not stay very long in Buckinghamshire, though their date of removal back to London is not known; by April 1891 Sumner's letters to Julia Ady are from 1, Notting Hill Square W.

The step from these small projects to the sgraffito at St Mary's is significant. It confirmed a move into major decoration of churches, and a capacity to deal with the interior of large buildings. The commission almost certainly came through Sedding, known already to Coussmaker Lindsay through his earlier work at the church in the 1870s and who he is likely to have encountered through a cousin, Sir Coutts Lindsay and his wife Caroline, who founded the Grosvenor Gallery in New Bond Street in London in 1877, which exhibited the work of Burne-Jones, Whistler Millais and others. Coussmaker Lindsay was born in Ireland in 1832 near Dublin, with a paternal grandfather who had been Bishop of Kildare, a connection that possibly has relevance to Sumner's subsequent work at Clane, which is in County Kildare; again, we encounter that suggestion of family or network connections that we observed at Vicars' Chapel at Wells; the link may have been through the client.³⁵

St Mary's may be seen as perfect in its setting, in the diversity of its subjects and in the technical virtuosity that it demonstrates, but also in the rural character of much of its subject matter, reflecting the world in the landscape immediately outside the church and inviting contemplation of this gift; but Sumner's next scheme retains a hint of the compositional awkwardness evident at Hill House. Two panels, with ancillary patterns, were carried out in 1890 at the east end of the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Clane, County Kildare, in the Republic of Ireland. The symmetrical designs look slightly unbalanced or squashed into the wall space, this is particularly so in the panel illustrating the two Marys finding Jesus's empty tomb, an impression compounded by the clashing mixture of patterns round the perimeter. There is an unresolved, rather wild, character to this work, a sense that he has included too many contrasting patterns (fig. 12); the opposing panel is a



Fig. 12: Church of St Michael and All Angels, Clane, County Kildare, Ireland (1890), by Heywood Sumner. South side of chancel, discovery of the empty tomb of Christ.

symmetrical composition and thus less affected by this problem, but the colour balance is somewhat odd.

These are the first of Sumner's overtly biblical themed sgraffito and from here on virtually all his work would be of this type; and in his next project a couple of years later a formal and symmetrical grandeur emerges with careful control of colour and disposition of figures, a sense that Sumner has truly mastered his medium, emerging as a significant sgraffito artist. The how and why of this process remain to be addressed but before moving onto his mature works it is necessary to consider his background, social and artistic world, and his travels abroad.

Family background and the Arts and Crafts

We have plotted Sumner's development as a sgraffito artist, but the origins of this direction in his life seem obscure: an upper-class lawyer from a clerical family who becomes eminent in several media; wallpaper, poster and embroidery design, etching, stained glass, sgraffito, furniture design, book illustration and as a writer; as well as, later in life, a gifted amateur archaeologist. A number of external factors converging in the late eighties and nineties can account for this change, but family, friendships and travel were also of great importance.

Firstly, though we must address the scarcity of autobiographical material, particularly, as Jane Barbour observed in a 1990 article, '*very few sources exist about him as a young man nor is there a great deal about him as he grew older,*'³⁶ compared with Morris or Lethaby, or indeed Sedding. Several sources confirm that Sumner himself destroyed many papers:

*He was sixty-eight years of age when his mother died [in 1921] and was her sole executor, so it seems highly probable that the holocaust in the grounds of the Close, which reduced to ashes so many interesting documents, was his responsibility.*³⁷

There is material though in things he sent to other people and which they or their heirs have retained. Letters and stories that he produced for his children remain³⁸ and copious correspondence connected with his later archaeological excavations,³⁹ but curiously little apparently available about his earlier artistic career. Jane Barbour (1923 – 2012) wrote two illuminating articles on Sumner's life and work, one in 1990 and another in 2006; and Gordon Le Pard one from 1994 tracing Sumner's career as an archaeologist and another in 1995 about Cuckoo Hill, the house he built on the edge of the New Forest.⁴⁰ Combined, these paint an intriguing picture of the artist. Most startling is the revelation in Barbour's later article that Sumner fathered a child by one of the family servants, Hepzibah, in about 1871. He apparently never saw his child, but Mary Sumner bought a house for her in Ealing, London, and Barbour assumes, must have provided financial support.⁴¹ This action on his mother's part may seem unlikely, but she was a fervent

campaigner ‘on issues of key importance to families and children.’ The article on the Mothers’ Union website goes on to say that:

She was also not afraid to act outside the social norms, to do what she believed to be right. At a time when unmarried girls with children were condemned and cast out, she cared for and protected her niece and her illegitimate son.⁴²

Sumner himself might thus have understood George Eliot’s sentiments about her papers, expressed in a letter to a friend, near the end of her life:

I think you are quite right to look over your old letters and papers and decide for yourself what should be burnt. Burning is the most reverential destination one can give to relics.... I hate the thought that what we have looked at with eyes full of living memory should be tossed about and made lumber of, or (if it be writing) read with hard curiosity. I am continually considering whether I have saved as much as possible from this desecrating fate.⁴³

Barbour suggests that Sumner felt ‘deep shame over the illegitimate baby’ and that this was a key determinant of the course of his life, accounting for his decision initially to study law rather than follow family tradition and enter the church, and for him not proposing marriage to Julia Ady (nee Cartwright), a lifelong friend.

This current research has uncovered four groups of letters from Sumner during the period in which he was creating his sgraffito, which offer a less determinist picture. We have noted the first, a group of eight letters and two receipts held by the SW Heritage Trust at Taunton, to Dean Edgar Gibson and Canon Church at Wells Cathedral, between 1885 and 1896 in connection with sgraffito in the Vicars’ Close chapel.

The second larger set to Julia Ady (1851 – 1924) were written between 1882 and 1908. Ady was an eminent writer and historian specialising in Italian Art of the Renaissance, and wrote about Mantegna, Raphael, and several prominent women of the period, Isabella and Beatrice d’Este and Christina of Denmark, among a range of other writings. The letters are held at the Northampton County Archives, in two

groups in the Cartwright (Edgcote) Collection to which we have already referred. Ady's archive is extensive and includes her diaries, A5 sized, bound in dark green leather, which she kept assiduously for more than fifty years (1868 – 1919), which offer additional glimpses of and insights into Sumner and her friendship with him.

The third set were to Edward Bell, the publisher of work by the Fitzroy Picture Society, and whom Sumner later consulted about publication of the *Book of Gorley* and a *Guide to the New Forest*. These are held in the Bell Archive at the University of Reading.⁴⁴

The fourth was a small group connected with obtaining diocesan faculty approval for the work at St Mary's in Llanfair Kilgeddin. These were held by the Diocese of Monmouth but their present whereabouts are uncertain, although attempts have continued to trace them.⁴⁵

The first three sets have been photographed and transcribed. These letters, in particular those to Julia Ady, give a different view of Sumner from that in published extracts of letters to his children and his later archaeological correspondence. They provide a glimpse into his family life, his work, relationships with his contemporaries and thoughts on current events, books, plays and exhibitions he has seen. There is periodic reference to his sgraffito projects, indeed one of the letters to Ady is written from Llanfair Kilgeddin. He also discusses an edition of *'Undine'*, asking her to write an article on it, which she does.⁴⁶ In some of the letters from the eighteen-eighties he discusses his artistic preferences with reference to Ady's publications on Renaissance artists, which suggest possible influences on his sgraffito, a matter to which we will return.

The letters show him to have been an engaging correspondent, amusing and clearly very busy much of the time. He is often concerned over the health of his wife and children, and about attempts by the two families to meet up that seem forever to fail; although he once or twice records meeting Ady's husband, Henry, in London or on site during his work at St Edmund's School in 1897. Contrary to Barbour's portrayal of a man not particularly attached to his partner, she notes him referring to her only rarely in later letters and then as 'my lady wife', in his letters to Ady she is simply, Agnes, and is a constant and loved presence.⁴⁷ It is understandable in the absence of these letters to perhaps have assumed Sumner *'As a young man.... was*

*retiring and diffident and relied on early friends for companionship,*⁴⁸ but he was clearly dynamic and enterprising, and must have been very persuasive in his dealings with clients over sgraffito.

The gap in reading these letters is the replies from Ady, but one gets something from her diaries. She sketches evocative vignettes of meetings, overnight stops and outings to dinner or the theatre, such as the entries for Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd June 1881 when Sumner, after completing an etching near Eckington for his book *'The Avon from Naseby to Tewksbury'*, visits the Adys for an overnight stay:

Wednesday 1st

...Henry met Heywood at Cropredy & arrived about 8. He was g^t [great] fun, fell in love with our hall chairs & kept us in fits of laughter all the eve[nin]g. with his stories of bagmen conversation & the queer places he has bⁿ [been] staying in. one farmer was full of Carlyle & v[er]y well read altho'[ugh] he began by say[in]g he c[oul]dn't give him a bed as the last man who had bⁿ [been] there wanted a bath every morn[in]g & dinner at 7! Told me of [word unclear] Mantegna & wanted to h^r [hear] all I was doing.

Thursday 2nd

Properly lovely morning of whi[ch] I was glad for Heywood. He enjoyed a comfortable bed as the g[rea]test of luxuries but was up lkg [looking] at my photos before b[rea]kfast. Took him r^d [round] the church where the monuments took his fancy particularly & at 10 he went off after say[in]g how this had bⁿ [been] the pleasantest day of all his 3 w[ee]ks. M^r Lefroy is living with him now so he was full of him, dear boy he is so thoroughly delightful & Henry wished as much as I did he c^d [could] have stayed longer.⁴⁹

Sumner was born in 1853 and grew up in Alresford, Hampshire, a few miles east of Winchester, in a family steeped in clerics: his father became Suffragan Bishop of Guildford; his grandfather, Charles was Bishop of Winchester and an uncle had been Archbishop of Canterbury. Sumner's mother, Mary, founded the Mothers'

Union and was a devout Christian. Her letters are littered with biblical quotations, and one senses a hint of the difference in the characters of her and her husband in the tone of papers they each gave at a church congress in Hull in 1890. Mary's tone is militant, her husband's more emollient; he sounds a more sympathetic figure.⁵⁰

George and Mary appear fond parents: they had three children:

*Margaret Effie, his elder sister, was four years old, and Louisa Mary Alice (Loulie) the younger one, just two years old when he was born. George and Mary were delighted with their children and enjoyed being parents. Nothing connected with the nursery was tiresome or tedious as far as they were concerned. They welcomed every moment and undertook a fair amount of the children's education themselves. "The first years are unspeakably precious," Mary wrote. The two girls and Heywood for the first eight years of his life, were taught at home as their parents had been.*⁵¹

Sumner's childhood seems to have been a happy one from which he developed a love of the English countryside; he wrote later, commenting on moving house from Bournemouth to South Gorley, and the 'garden city' nature of the former, 'made up of miles and miles of houses in gardens:'

*I never liked the sea, & did not find refreshment in garden city life: but the country inland was a constant joy: I used to bicycle about a great deal in those days...& so it came to pass that I revived all my old acquaintance with the [New] Forest...*⁵²

The rectory, Old Alresford Place, still stands, a large, slightly gaunt looking late Georgian mansion that is less than half-a-mile from the home, Langton's, of Sumner's close childhood friend, William Arthur Smith Benson (known to posterity as W. A. S. Benson). They attended different schools but shared rooms at Oxford University, where Sumner studied law and Benson Classics and Philosophy. Towards the end of his degree in Oxford, in 1876, Benson moved to London, having settled on architecture as his future direction, only returning to Oxford now and again to satisfy the residency requirements to secure a pass degree. He was articled to Basil

Champneys and worked for him between 1877 and 1880, again sharing rooms in London with Sumner, who was training for the Bar.



Fig. 13: The Rectory, Old Alresford Place, Alresford, Hampshire. Heywood Sumner's childhood home.

The friendship with Benson was significant, for it was through him that Sumner would have met William Morris⁵³, and the connection would be strengthened further in 1883 when Sumner married Benson's sister, Agnes.⁵⁴ The Benson family had *'religious links with Quakers and Unitarians, religious minorities from which a remarkable number of Arts and Crafts people came....'* Benson's father is described as *'a cultured man of sound judgement who, although conservative himself, was prepared to allow his children the freedom to develop their diverse and unconventional talents'*. His mother, Elizabeth, apparently painted well and *'read Ruskin ardently.'*

Benson's introduction to the Morris circle was due to his mother: she and his sister, Margaret encountered Burne-Jones at a rehearsal conducted by Wagner at the Albert Hall in 1877, and Benson first saw Morris as the latter was leaving the Burne-Jones's house in 1878. He became a close friend of the painter and his wife, later acting as architect for the extension of their home at Rottingdean.⁵⁵ Sumner is drawn into this world; he seems to get to know everyone in the nascent Arts and Crafts world, including John Dando Sedding and William Lethaby, who would design a studio for him in 1889 – 90.⁵⁶

Sumner probably always drew – there is a sketch by him of Benson, as a teenager, playing cricket (fig. 14), so the decision he apparently made around 1880 to pursue a career as an artist is less odd than it may seem.⁵⁷ He had a work

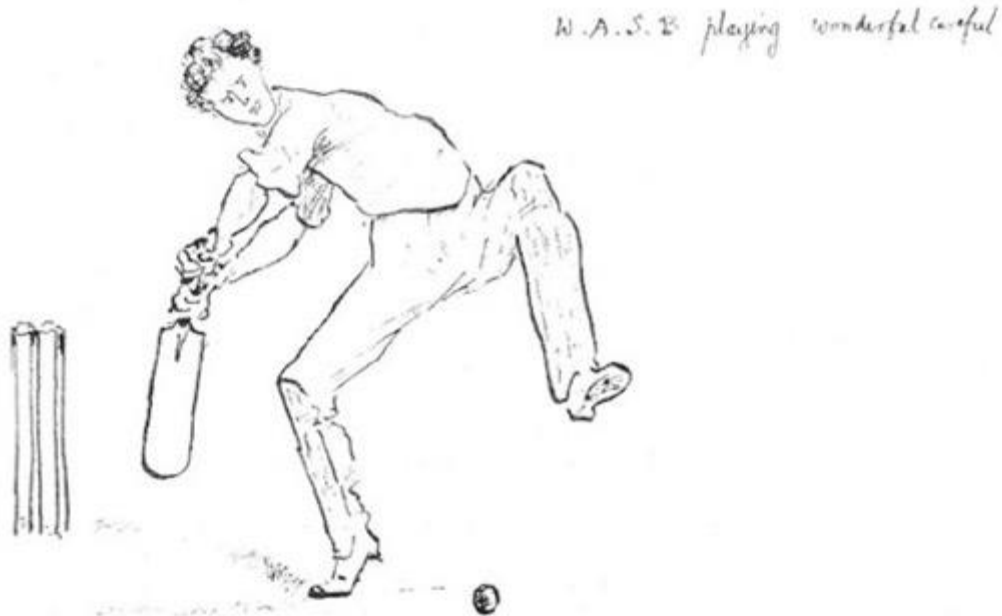


Fig. 14: W. A. S. Benson playing cricket, 'wonderful careful.' Drawing by Heywood Sumner

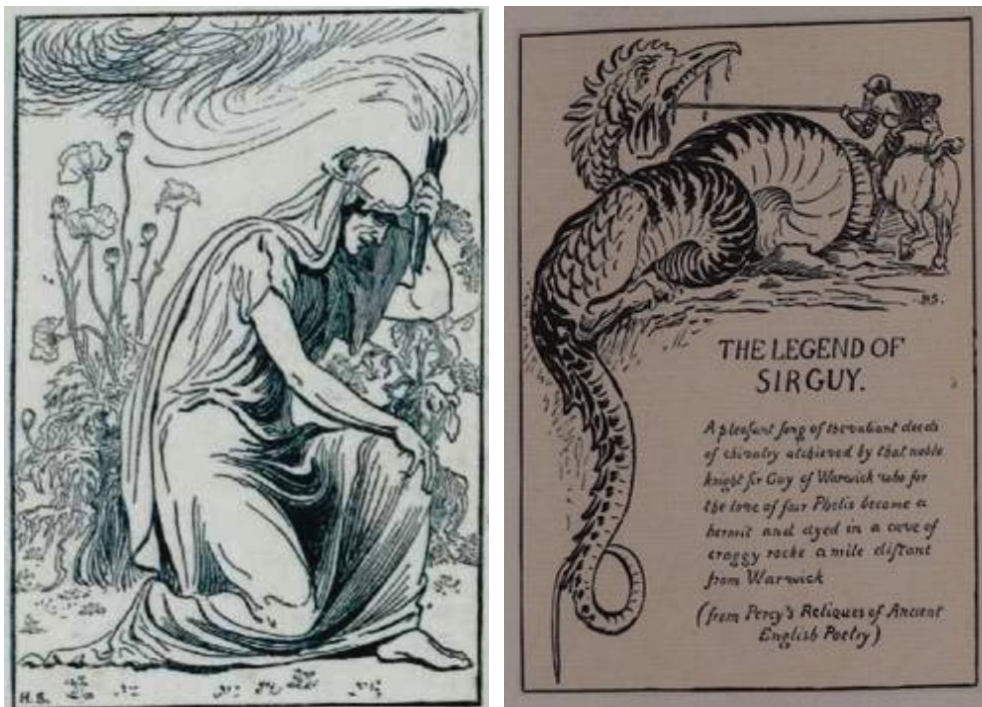
accepted at the Royal Academy that year,⁵⁸ although his first known etching, *'On the Shelbe,'* is from the year before.⁵⁹ Julia Ady, in a diary entry for Tuesday 3rd August 1880, writes of more etchings:

Up to Victoria Road and found Heywood Sumner at work. Saw all his etchings and the St George which was really very fine and I fell in love with one of St Catherine and another of Abresford Pond for the Winchester Book...⁶⁰

'Abresford' is a misspelling of Alresford; the etching of the Pond is the third in Sumner's book *'The Itchen Valley from Tichborne to Southampton, Twenty Two Etchings'*, which was published in 1881. Sumner had produced earlier drawings, but his publishing career really started with this work,⁶¹ about an area that he knew well. Tichborne is just south of Alresford, and the river Itchen runs west from here to Winchester before turning south to run through Southampton and discharge into Southampton Water. The book was sufficiently well received for him to create a similar volume of selected views and stories for the river Avon, from Naseby to

Tewkesbury to which we have already referred. About half of these etchings carry the month as well as the year of their execution, showing that they were produced between February and July 1881.

Each etching is accompanied by stories associated with the scene. These prefatory remarks also feature small drawings, executed in a style quite distinct from that of the etchings. They are mainly of architecture and people in a conventional illustrative style but here and there one comes across bold linear drawings, often strikingly composed and showing elements that would become



Figs. 15 and 16: 'The Itchen Valley from Tichborne to Southampton, Twenty-Two Etchings,' (1881), by Heywood Sumner.

Left: Side image to opening of plate 1, 'Tichborne.'

Right: Side image to text of plate V, 'Guy's Cliffe.'

trademarks of his later sgraffito. Fig. 15 shows Sumner's typical attention to folded fabric draped on a figure and accurate rendering of plants, while figure 16 is a bold, almost cartoon like, depiction of Sir Guy attacking a dragon.

Sumner provided etchings for *'The New Forest'* by John Wise, published in 1883, with other illustrations designed by Walter Crane and engraved by W. J. Linton. The 'Artists' Edition' is a large wood bound volume with untrimmed pages that provides a descriptive account of the landscape, its botany, animals and birds,



Fig. 17: 'The New Forest' (1883), by John Wise. 'Queen's Bower,' by Heywood Sumner (dated '82'). A bravura depiction of an aged tree.



Fig. 18: 'The New Forest' (1883), by John Wise. 'Sloden Hill,' by Heywood Sumner (dated 'May 82'). An almost impressionistic drawing rich in lines, marks and squiggles to create the landscape.

and archaeology. Sumner's twelve illustrations show the development of his etching style. It is looser, with more sparing use of line, which he uses to create the character of the things he is drawing. He obtains the effect of landscape by the marks on the paper, not by trying to replicate them in realistic fashion. One can see here the nascent sgraffito artist abstracting, removing that which is not necessary to his purpose; this is particularly marked in figures 17 and 18.⁶²

Development in style is also evident in the illustrations he made for an 1883 edition of *'Sintram and his Companions'* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. The plates Sumner created vary in style, from ornate floral page headers to a number of strikingly odd scenes, reflecting the story Fouqué tells. The complex frontispiece (fig. 19) tries to encompass the core of the story of the book in one plate: that of the wayward and disturbed youth redeemed by faith and the love of his mother. Sumner encapsulates two styles in one: the linear outer scene of the Angel Gabriel, reminiscent of winged angels that will appear four years later in the chapel at Wells, holding a stem of lilies and enveloped by writhing Art Nouveau flora, leaves and flowers, within which sit a figure, an owl and a bat. Such complexes of natural forms will feature in much of Sumner's sgraffito. The inner scene depicts an anxious man sitting beside a lily and a crucifixion in front of a disturbing scene of a woman and child enveloped by a shrouded figure apparently representing Death, holding an hourglass. Every surface is worked with lines, including a mazy network of hatching that covers the masonry of the chamber within which the scene is set.

There are more mundanely descriptive pictures in the book, and some almost hallucinatory ones; figure 20 is an example of the former, while figures 21 and 22 are startling, tightly composed chapter header fantasies, which use a range of graphic devices to remarkable effect. There are at least two styles of design in use in *Sintram*, possibly three, if one takes account of the floral headers to some chapters. The swirling sinuous use of line in some of his compositions bears comparison with the cover of Mackmurdo's book on Wren's City Churches of the same year, *'Mackmurdo's daring was first imitated by other designers for books and magazines.... A few designer decorators also followed at once, Heywood Sumner being the most interesting of them.'*⁶³

A graphic style is emerging⁶⁴ that would lend itself to the creation of sgraffito. Indeed, feedback from sgraffito into his graphic style is evident when looking at some of his later designs; a good example is *'Fog and Filthy Air'* from 1889 (fig. 23). Charles G. Harper (1863 – 1943) wrote a short appreciation of Sumner's graphic art in an 1892 book on *'English Pen Artists of Today,'* observing in the last revealing paragraph, almost as an afterthought:



Fig. 19: *'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque'* (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Frontispiece.



Fig. 20: 'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque' (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Illustration, 25.

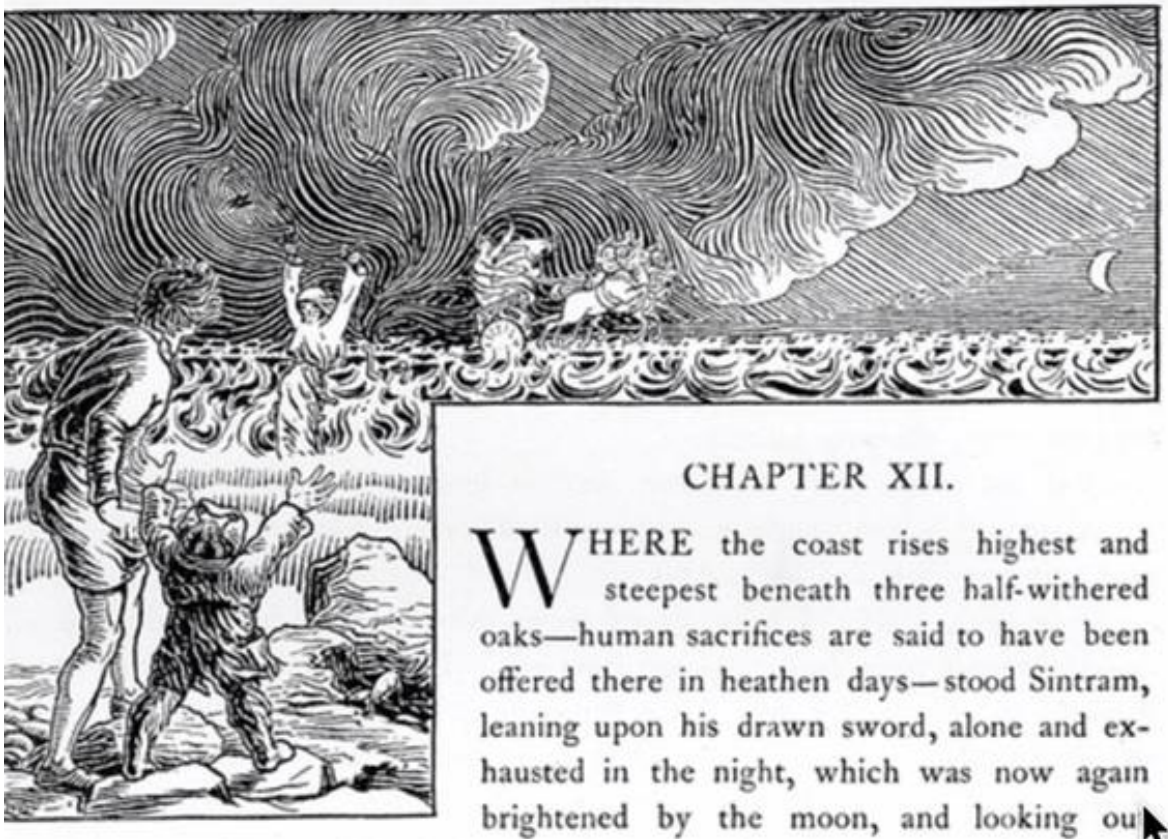


Fig. 21: 'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque' (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Header to chapter 12.



Fig. 22: 'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque' (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Header to chapter 15.



Fig. 23: 'Fog & Filthy Air (1889), by Heywood Sumner.⁶⁵



Fig. 24: 'Will, will have, wilt tho' will woe win' (1892), by Heywood Sumner, in 'English Pen Artists of To-Day' by Charles G. Harper, 97. Illustration of panel described as executed in clay board coated in lampblack.

*Mr. Sumner works almost always upon clay-board, painting upon it with lamp-black and taking out white lines with knife or graver point. The hair of the figures in the first two drawings was treated in this way, and also the entire design of 'Will will have wilt.'*⁶⁶

This medium, known as scratchboard today, exactly mimics sgraffito at studio or tabletop scale by cutting through black to reveal white beneath, and

allows for fine and precise working. As one of Sumner's graphic media the similarity to sgraffito could not have escaped him, but the same observation is true of the etching process onto metal plates, a process of removal to reveal a design.⁶⁷ Where Sumner first sees sgraffito and makes the transition to trying it out is more difficult to account for. One can argue that he was in the right place at the right time among contemporaries who had already tried it, and from whom perhaps he got both encouragement and advice, sometime during 1882 – 1884. One suspects that Sedding was familiar with the technique from his history of work and associations in Devon, but one could, for example, consider George Thomas Robinson, whose retable at Southport and record of using sgraffito we noted in chapter 2. He was older than Sumner and well established by the time the Art Workers Guild was founded, which he joined at its beginning in 1884, so Sumner would have known him.

Robinson contributed his experience in the medium at Alan S. Cole's 1873 talk which was discussed in chapter 2. The contributions of others present are revealing; most know of sgraffito, have used it or seen it on their travels, notably in Germany and Italy. Sir M. Digby Wyatt reported:

An active revival of cinquecento "sgraffito" took place in Italy, dating from about five-and-twenty years ago.... I observed some very good attempts in Florence in 1859, particularly those specimens in the street leading to the Baptistery, which were nearly opposite the Or-San-Michele.

Robinson was also present at another presentation about sgraffito by Sumner's twenty years later.⁶⁸ Reading the accounts of Robinson's working methods and those of Sumner, given together in the section on sgraffito in William Millar's book on plastering,⁶⁹ one notes similarities in their instructions on how to execute sgraffito; had the younger man had advice from the older? Perhaps though, the most convincing case to be made, is that, like Sir Henry Cole, Sumner encountered sgraffito on his travels.

The 1986 Winchester exhibition catalogue includes the following observation below the entry for a sketchbook, *Note: In 1879 Sumner visited Alsace,*

*Germany and Switzerland.*⁷⁰ Possibly more importantly, he made another extended journey across Europe between 10th August and 30th September 1882, taking in at least, according to a sketch book held at Winchester, Reims, Calais, Caddenabia (on Lake Como), Spietz and Kanderstag (both in Switzerland), Bellagio, Bologna, Siena and San Gimignano;⁷¹ he appears to have visited Florence as well. Julia Ady records a visit to Sumner on Thursday 30th November 1882:

Henry went to tea with Mr Loutine & didn't get back till nearly 7.30. had to dress in a g^t [great] hurry & drove off to Heywood's. We dined in the studio & he was g^t [great] fun, full of his Italian experiences & in love like all of us with the Della Robbias..... Saw his Italian photos (some good [?]dis & d' [dear] little sketches. S. Stefano! Cloister at Bologna, S. Gimignano's towers & walls & bits of Florence & his Cinderella too whi[ch] is just out & I am to have a copy of. A [? -?] his etch[in]g of Beaulieu he gave us too. Wanted to hear all ab[ou]t my work & begged us to come & stay with him in January or whenever we like.⁷²

This extract reveals possible influences. He confirms his liking for Della Robbia's work in a later letter to Julia Ady in 1888:

Michael Angelo[s] sadness too is almost constant, but then if I had to choose between all works of sculpting in his time I should choose Luca della Robbia Cantoria not Michael's wonderful works.⁷³

The cantoria or singers' galleries are apparently the first work for which Della Robbia is credited. They were created for the Basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence in the 1430s, a series of panels in the balustrade of a cantilevered balcony showing musicians and singers in the act of performance. They are realistic in the early Renaissance tradition and are a superficially odd preference on Sumner's part but show sophisticated use of symmetry to compose tightly grouped figures, which must have appealed since this was a device he was already using and would employ throughout his career (fig. 25). The dense plant borders that became another hall mark of Sumner's sgraffito may have their origins in the complex carvings of leaves and fruit or flowers that often encircle Della Robbia's roundels.



Fig. 25: Cantoria in Basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence (1432 – 38), by Luca della Robbia. The use of symmetry in these designs is noteworthy as a device used regularly by Sumner.

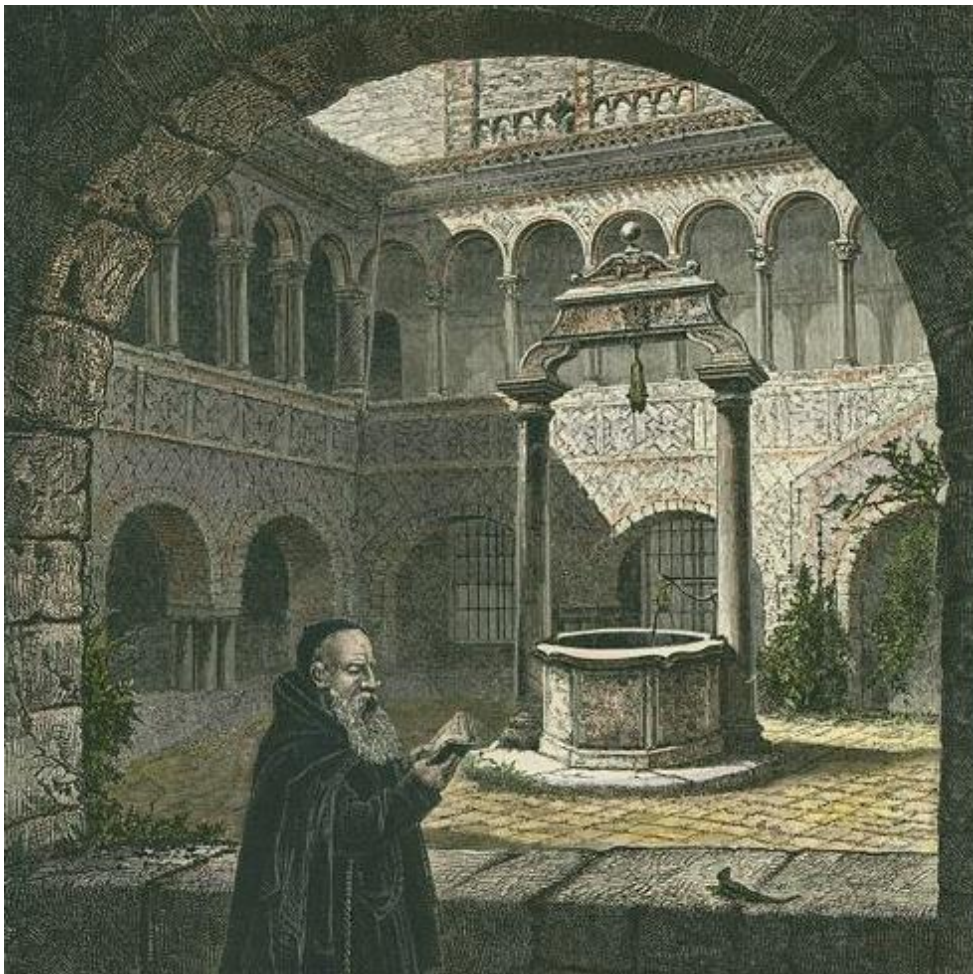


Fig. 26: Cloister of the church of Santo Stefano, Bologna, Italy (c1875). The patterned decoration could be sgraffito in a tradition of such courtyard decoration that goes back to medieval times. This could have been what Sumner saw.

The walls of the cloister at Santo Stefano in Bologna are today bare brick but minor tantalising traces of earlier decoration remain which match that shown in one mid-nineteenth century engraving of elaborate pattern covering all the wall surfaces (fig. 26). The close up in figure 27 shows this to be a close lattice detail reminiscent of the designs we encountered in Spain in chapter 2: it could be sgraffito, although another tiny detail of an animal in a square border with vaguely classical scrolls look more like stucco relief.⁷⁴



Figure 27: Cloister of the church of Santo Stefano, Bologna, Italy (2021). This surviving detail appears to match that shown in the 1875 engraving in figure 26. It appears quite crude suggesting it is either applied stucco detail or very early sgraffito. It has similarities to Moorish work in medieval and early Renaissance Spain

These are mere hints in the absence of Sumner's own records and thoughts on his travels, but Florence would certainly have exposed him to examples of sgraffito, quite apart from work he may have seen elsewhere in Italy or Switzerland. The timing is suggestive, but one can only speculate that he followed the example of Francis P. Cockerell who described at the RIBA meeting in 1873 noted in chapter 2 that *'when I was in Italy with Mr. Arthur Blomfield, we were struck with it, and we both directed our aspirations to the reproduction of it.'* We have already encountered Cockerell's experiments and his work at Down Hall, which would have been in progress at the time of this meeting. Sedding's reference to Sumner having made a particular study of it and Dean Gibson going to see examples carried out by Sumner indicate a similar path. Florence appears very important; Semper, Lange and Bühlmann all visited. Sedding went in 1874, Digby Wyatt in 1859. Cole had gone in the 1850s.

Another odd possibility arises from a form of incised decoration Sumner would have seen at the home of the parents of his sister and brother-in law. When Margaret Effie, Sumner's elder sister married her cousin Arthur Percival Heywood in 1872, the couple moved to Denstone Bank in Duffield in Staffordshire, close to the Heywood family seat at Doveleys. This large house sits in extensive grounds that drop down to the river Dove, a few hundred feet to the south. It suffered a major fire in 1875 and evidence of rebuilding is to be seen in the date stones in gables on the north and west elevations, below which run bands of what appear to be a form of incised plaster decoration. Close inspection shows deep cutting and regularity suggestive of stencilling or stamping. Sumner certainly visited, he wrote to Julia Ady just after his marriage on 26th October 1883, *'We spent.... the rest of our honeymoon in Derbyshire paying visits at Dove Leys and Duffield at which place we had a family gathering...'*⁷⁵

The decoration appears to be from two periods; one section carries the year 1856, and if stencilled would date to the period of Benjamin Ferrey's stencilled sgraffito system used at Maulden the following year. Here the base of cut shapes is smooth and of the same material as the top surface, whereas later work is as shown in figure 24, with the render visible through the lettering suggesting it was added to an existing surface.



Fig. 28: Doveleys, Staffordshire (probably 1856), artist unknown. Detail of incised plasterwork on west elevation. The underlying render can be seen through the letters.

The 1870s were a fertile period for sgraffito use in England. The previous chapter considered the design, technique, and content of some of the work produced. Here it is sufficient to note that after initial experiments in the late 1850s at the South Kensington Museums, some examples were tried over the next decade before the method reappears in several places at once in the early 1870s. Possible links were noted between sgraffito in Devon churches under the influence of Revd. W. Radford and John Dando Sedding, who both attended and gave talks to the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society (EDAS), hence an earlier comment suggesting that Sedding was already familiar with the technique by the time he met Sumner.⁷⁶ It would also be surprising if he was not familiar with the sgraffito at Hornblotton. Sumner gets to know others who had used sgraffito in this period, especially with the formation of the Art Workers Guild.

In the mid-1880s Sumner was at the heart of the debates that led to the founding of the Guild, joining at its inception; and although he was unable to attend the first meeting in January 1884,⁷⁷ he was present at the next full meeting on 11th March 1884. He appears to become a member of the Committee later that year,⁷⁸ read a short paper, among several from other members, all on the theme of “Frames”, on 17th April 1885. More significantly, he delivered another paper at the Ordinary Meeting on Friday 4th December 1885, the minutes of which record:

The Chairman then called upon Heywood Sumner & for his paper on Exterior Wall Decoration, the subject for the evening. This was

*illustrated (Mr Sumner's paper) by a small piece shewing the process of sgraffito.*⁷⁹

This paper comes as Sumner is likely to have just finished the decoration of his parents' new home in Winchester and eighteen months before he applies sgraffito to the walls of the Vicars' Chapel at Wells Cathedral. It indicates a confidence in his sgraffito technique and that he is prepared to demonstrate this to his peers, among whom some had (by their own accounts) used sgraffito.

Sumner became a member of the provisional committee, largely made up of members of the Art Workers' Guild, that was formed in early 1886 and organised the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition society (A&CES) in 1888. Here his sgraffito gets its first wide public exposure; the following summary of his entries that year, set out as given on pages 126 – 127 of the exhibition catalogue, shows their scale:

1 *A&CES: North Gallery.*

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P126

156. Drawings explaining sgraffito decoration.

157 & 158. Symbols in polychrome sgraffito: specimens of the sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin Church, Abergavenny.

P127

HEYWOOD SUMNER-continued.

Designed and cut by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

Plastered by JAS. WILLIAMS.

159. Drawings explaining sgraffito decoration.

160. Cartoon design for sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin

*Church, Abergavenny. Subject, "O
ye mountains and hills."*

161. *Cartoon design for sgraffito
decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin
Church, Abergavenny. Subject, "O
ye Winds."*

162. *Photographs explaining the
sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kil
geddin Church.*

Sumner's immersion in the Art Workers' Guild and the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society mirrors that of many of his contemporaries and would have exposed him to a wide range of other decorative media. Sgraffito was one among an array of arts and crafts that feature in the Society's exhibitions, part of what William Morris called '*the Revival of Design and Handicraft*' in his preface to an 1893 collection of essays by members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society on approximately twenty-five of these skills.⁸⁰ The range is striking, it includes textiles, fictiles (terracotta), stained glass, metal work, carpenters' furniture, intarsia, and modern embroidery, as well as an essay by Sumner on sgraffito. There is sketchy reference to fresco in an essay on mural painting by Ford Maddox Brown and George Thomas Robinson contributes a section on stucco and gesso, all plasterwork techniques. Fresco should be noted in relation to sgraffito because they are very similar in their method, they both rely on working on plaster that is wet or at least still not hard, using full size cartoons to transfer designs to the wall, only plastering as much of the wall as one can work on in a day, and the need to disguise joints between successive days' work. These matters will be explored in a later chapter, but during the later nineteenth century efforts were made to find ways of making fresco more suitable for use in England; it's vulnerability to damp echoing the same issue for use of sgraffito.⁸¹ Sumner may have opted for sgraffito with its emphasis on line and his background in etching, rather than the painted medium.

Morris's introduction to the book of essays conveys a sense of artists rediscovering and developing for modern needs old or neglected arts and crafts,

some of which are difficult of execution and very labour intensive, a description that fits sgraffito to an extent. Part of the expectation seems to have been that works would endure, although Sumner was evidently sceptical about this as he wrote a startling understanding of how vulnerable the work of one generation could be to changing tastes in the next.⁸²

Sumner's move into sgraffito lay therefore in a heady period of artistic exploration and organisation in the early 1880s. He knew exponents of sgraffito and others who knew of it. He had travelled to regions where he was likely to have seen examples, as others, such as Cole, Cockerell and Blomfield had done; and his own graphic style was tending towards one ideally suited to the medium. He also had a strong sense of wanting to create art for all, not shut up in a collector's private gallery. Julia Ady's diary for 3rd August 1880 already quoted goes on to record her discussion with Sumner:

I sympathise immensely in the feeling of liking to do windows for church & to be seen by all instead of shut up in the house of a city man who collects because it is the fashion. That is why he likes cheap art so much he says & goes in for etching whi[ch] scatters conceptions widely over the world instead of confining them to the chosen few.

This aspiration appears throughout his work, his etchings, book illustrations, sgraffito and the work in the 1890s for the Fitzroy Poster Society. It is the surviving large-scale sgraffito of this last decade of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth that we must now examine.

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- 1 Elizabeth Lewis, 'Heywood Sumner's Decorations in No. 1, The Close,' *Winchester Cathedral Record*, no. 56 (1987), 23-26. This must be the drawing exhibited in the exhibition of 1986 in Margot Coatts and Elizabeth Lewis, *Heywood Sumner: Artist and Archaeologist 1853-1940* (Winchester: City Museum exhibition guide, 1986), 52.
 - 2 A. W. N. Pugin, *Examples of Gothic Architecture; selected from various Antient Edifices in England...* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1840), 111, plate 8. Plate number given because copy accessed via Archive.org does not have page numbers after page 96.

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- 3 Sedding succeeded Benjamin Ferrey as diocesan architect in 1880, on the death of the latter. Ferrey's experimental technique for impressing sgraffito onto wet plaster walls at St Mary's Church in Maulden, Bedfordshire in the late 1850s was discussed in chapter 2. Ferrey's schedule of work for Wells survives. He specified that as much of the original stone was to be retained, possibly suggestive of only necessary repair being carried out, and predating the advent of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings by two years; for example, *'All the windows on South side to be restored with new mullions sills and jambs where required but all the old parts sufficiently sound to be left as at present and where practicable the old work to be cut out to glass groove only, and new inserted up to that line'*, Benjamin Ferrey, 'Chapel North End of Vicars' Close, Wells, Somerset, Specification for Proposed Works..., August 1875, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton ref. A/BBR 6/3.
- 4 Letter from John Dando Sedding to Dean Edgar Gibson, 8 January 1886, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton, ref. A/BBR/6/3.
- 5 Letter, Sedding to Gibson, 30 October 1885.
- 6 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Dean Edgar Gibson, 31 October 1885, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton, ref. A/BBR/6/3. Author's transcription of letter is given below:

*14, Albert Place,
Kensington [address handwritten]*

My dear Edgar

This is to explain the rough idea of your chapel decoration which Sedding has sent you.

Prophets & Preachers

The prophets – major conventionally treated in the frieze beginning from the west.

Daniel praying, Ch: IV.

The vision of the tree being adapted as a background.

Ezekiel ~~threatening~~ den...ing background, Ch: 19

The burning vine, or perhaps Ch: 17 the vine & eagles (?)

Jeremiah lamenting, Ch: 24, good figs & "very naughty figs"

Isaiah promising, Ch: 11. Background the stem (?) of Jesse continuing up to the E. end with 2 angels blowing trumpets & bearing a scroll whereon should be written a text of the promise.

This frieze, will I think, have to be carried round the chapel, but of course I cannot r...e than only think as I haven't yet seen your chapel ---

On the panelling, E: to W: preached

1 St John the Baptist

-
- 2 *St Peter*
3 *St Paul*
4 *St Augustine, Engl: [England]*
5 *St Cuthbert: Scotl[and]*
6 *St Patrick, Ireland*
7 *St David, Wales*
8 *Theodore of Tarsus*
Parochial
System
9 ?

The change to St Peter I have almost omitted as till I have seen the amount of light under the E end wall I cannot make any design wh[ich] w[oul]d be practical (?)

I am yr aff coz
Heywood Sumner

Oct 31. 85. I apologise if I ought to have addressed this letter differently.

- 7 Letter, Sedding to Gibson, 16 January 1886.
- 8 ‘*Your affectionate cousin*’ is Sumner’s signing off phrase in the eight letters written by him to Gibson held at Taunton.
- 9 Margot Coatts and Elizabeth Lewis *Reports on Architectural Visits – December/January 1985*, Hampshire Cultural Trust, Winchester. The list records details of visits that the co-organisers of the 1986 exhibition about Sumner made to buildings containing his works. They note, when discussing Sumner’s work at Christchurch, Crookham, that Bishop Charles Sumner (grandfather) had ‘*conservated [conserved?] the church in 1841,*’ 3. See also catalogue entries for: St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin, and the family connection to that area; and the links of the Heywood branch of the family to St John the Evangelist, Miles Platting in Manchester.
- 10 Lewis, ‘Heywood Sumner’s Decorations in No. 1, The Close, 23.
- 11 Ibid, 23.
- 12 Ibid, 27. The ‘Flora’ sgraffito was exhibited at the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society show in 1893.
- 13 The 1884 date on the drawing lends weight to Lewis’s thesis.
- 14 Elwes appears to have preceded Gibson as both chaplain and then vice-principal of Wells Theological College. This letter was written from Over Stowey vicarage in Bridgwater, after he had left Wells, it would seem. Letter

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- from Edward Elwes to Dean Edgar Gibson, 12 January 1886, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton, ref. A/BBR/6/3.
- 15 Letter, Elwes to Gibson, 7 June 1886, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton.
- 16 *Trask's account, Chapel Vicars Close Wells*, noted at bottom as signed by *Chas. Trask & Sons* and *J D Sedding*, dated 26 June 1888, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton, ref. A/BBR/6/3.
- 17 This device was used a lot in the north of England though more commonly on west and south-westerly facing elevations.
- 18 Letter, Sumner to Canon Church, 18 February 1896, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton. The use of wax echoes the method of spirit fresco painting developed by Thomas Gambier Parry in the 1860s. Alfred Lys Baldry describes the method in *Modern Mural Painters* (London: George Newnes Ltd., 1902): 29-35.
- 19 See catalogue for explanation of dating.
- 20 *(Copy) Articles of Agreement made this 13th day of August 1886...* Noted at bottom as signed by *Chas. Trask & Sons* and *Edgar S Gibson*, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton, ref. A/BBR/6/3.
- 21 Letter, Sumner to Gibson, 5 March 1887.

14, Albert Place, Kensington. [Handwritten]

My dear Edgar

Could you give me the Earliest date at which I can begin work in your chapel? & the name of a local builder in whom you have confidence, as I would propose having the necessary plastering work done by a local plasterer? On receiving yr answer to this latter query I will communicate with (second page starts) direct.

I would rather have a Wells man than Trask as the plasterer is only wanted daily for about 2 hours, & ∴ he C? [possible abbreviation for 'could'] combine this with other local daily work.

As to date perhaps you would kindly send me a postcard by return.

Yr aff coz

Heywood Sumner

March. 5. 87.

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- 22 Letter, Sumner to Gibson, 5 April 1887. He arrived on Monday 11th April 1887 based on the date of the letter.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid. One wonders where Sumner and his team had had to do this; it seems unlikely to have been at 1, The Close, and therefore begs the question as to whether there were earlier works. If so, no records, or other hint of them has been found during this research.
- 25 This sequence is suggested by the author's experiments in sgraffito described in chapter 6, but also by Sumner in his writings on sgraffito.
- 26 Letter, Sumner to Gibson, 9 March 1887.
- 27 Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society catalogue (1888), 126-127, entry 158. All but one of the finished nave panels and one in the chancel were illustrated in *The Building News* (25 January 1889), showing that the bulk of the decoration was carried out in the summer of 1888 and Sumner initials and dates the work that year. By 9 September 1888 Sumner was writing to Julia Ady from Hill House suggesting completion of work in Wales for that summer. Matthew Saunders 'Transactions of The Ancient Monuments Society' 40 (1996), 105-103, describes Sumner's work as '*carried out between 1888 and 1890*' and it is quite possible that he returned the following year to complete the chancel panels and the chancel arch, but it has not been possible to confirm this.
- 28 And as the taker of a photograph in the garden at Cuckoo Hill nearly twenty years later, see chapter 8, suggesting he may have been a family friend.
- 29 Heywood Sumner, 'Of Sgraffito work,' in *Arts & Crafts Essays* ed. William Morris (London: Rivington, Percival, & Co., 1893), 167.
- 30 This paraphrases Sumner's comment noted in chapter 1, from 'Of Line and Wall Decoration...' '*Line means limitation, and a certain abstraction of manner. In this quality is its strength, and the ideal imaginings of an artist may appeal more directly to the spectator's mind, if his work is plainly removed from realistic tests,*' in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* VII (1892), 59.
- 31 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Julia Ady (née Cartwright), 8 April 1888, Northampton County Archives, Cartwright (Edgcote) Collection, CE121/11, 1.
- 32 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 1 June 1888, ref. CE121/13, 3. It has not so far been possible to confirm the identity of Miss Lindsay. Cousin Lindsay had no children; he did have two sisters, one had died in 1881, the other was married according to: <https://www.thepeerage.com/p2090.htm#i20899>.

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- 33 Heywood Sumner, 'The Way Sgraffito Work is Executed,' in *The British Architect* 33 (10 January 1890), 23.
- 34 Professor Ian Hamerton, *W. A. S. Benson: Arts and Crafts Luminary and Pioneer of Modern Design* (Antique Collectors' Club, 2005), 263. '(William R.) Lethaby is full of praise of (your) alterations etc. here and the front entrance specially...'
- 35 This background on Coussmaker Lindsay is from Michael Yelton, ed., *Twenty Priests for Twenty Years*, (Anglo Catholic History Society, 2020), chapter on 'William C. J. Lindsay (1832-1912) Aristocratic Welsh Priest,' by Dr John Morgan Guy quoted at length in the Newsletter of the Ancient Monuments Society and Friends of Friendless Churches, Autumn 2020, 16-17. The suggestion of links through the client for Sumner's project in Ireland is the author's.
- 36 Jane Barbour, 'Heywood Sumner: a very private person,' *The Hatcher Review* (1990): 437-448.
- 37 Joyce Coombs, *George and Mary Sumner; their life and times*, London, The Sumner Press, 1965, 54. Jane Barbour in a later 2006 article refers, ambiguously, to 'the burning of all his mother's papers including those of the Mothers' Union as well as his wife's, and her diary'. Barbour's source for this statement is unknown, but the destruction of his wife's diary might suggest a much later date for the conflagration, or perhaps there was a second one, as Agnes died in 1939. Jane Barbour, 'Heywood Sumner,' *Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society, Newsletter*, no. 46 (Autumn 2006): 3.
- 38 Some items are noted in the catalogue to the 1986 exhibition about Sumner, see Margot Coatts and Elizabeth Lewis, *Heywood Sumner: Artist and Archaeologist 1853-1940*, Winchester: Winchester City Museum, 1986, 55, items 69-72
- 39 See Gordon Le Pard, 'The Trustworthy Mole: Heywood Sumner, Archaeologist and Author,' *Proceedings of Hampshire Field Club Archaeological Society* 50, 1995, 209-235. This is an excellent summary of Sumner's archaeological work. The title, a play one assumes on Mole in *Wind in the Willows*, suggests a certain plodding diligence, but Le Pard's account gives quite the opposite impression, of a man driven by curiosity and endowed with great energy.
- 40 Jane Barbour, 'Heywood Sumner; a very private person,' *The Hatcher Review*, (1990) and 'Heywood Sumner (1835 – 1940),' *Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society, Newsletter*, no. 46 (Autumn 2006); Gordon Le Pard, 'Cuckoo Hill – An Arts and Crafts House in the New Forest.' *Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society, News* 23 (Summer 1995); and The

Trustworthy Mole – Heywood Sumner Archaeologist & Author.’ Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society 50 (1995).

- 41 Barbour, 2006, 3-4.
- 42 <https://www.mothersunion.org/our-story/our-history>, bottom of page, ‘In Mary Sumner’s footsteps: the story of Mary Sumner.’ It is not known, to which member of her family this refers. It is possibly the way in which, for the record, she referred to the mother of her son’s child.
- 43 Kathy O’Shaughnessy, *In Love with George Eliot* (London: Scribe, 2019), 331. Marian Evans, letter to Cara Bray, 1880.
- 44 Heywood Sumner, Letters to Ernest Bell, George Bell & Sons, Reading University, Bell Archive, ref. MS/1640/188.
- 45 A response from the National Library in Wales is awaited. Progress has been delayed by the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 46 The article on ‘Undine’ probably became the genesis for Ady’s introduction to the 1888 edition of the story. Reading Sumner’s letters and Ady’s diaries, one finds a rare conjunction of both sides of a discussion between them about this matter:

Letter, Sumner to Ady, 13 June 1886, ref. CE121-8:

I have been seeing Comyns Carr this afternoon & he said to me “I wish you could suggest someone to write an article on Undine?”. (he says cannot bring out the story in the Mag:) So I modestly said “Julia Cartwright”. So says he “Mrs Ady, yes I like her writing,” or words to that effect, & authorised me then & there to write to you asking you whether you would be so good & kind as to do so.

Letter, Sumner to Ady, 22 July 1886, ref. CE121-9:

Could you begin your article on Undine with a word beginning with a H. H. for harness to your Pegasus. I ought to have remembered & told you before, as there is an initial letter – the H in question – already Engraved hence my somewhat absurd request!

Ady’s diary, 24 and 25 July 1886.

July, Sunday 25th

I wrote to Heywood who wants me to begin my art: with an H. whi[ch] he has designed. I told him I was rather inclined to say Hang it!

Ady’s introductory article does begin with an H. It is also a thorough and wide-ranging introduction to Melusine, Undine and mermaid myths.

- 47 Barbour, 2006, 4.

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- 48 Barbour, 1990, 441.
- 49 Julia Ady, diary for 1881. Sumner's etching in his book is dated 1st June 1881. My thanks to Lucy Prescott for transcribing these entries about Sumner.
- 50 George and Mary Sumner. Papers. Church of England Archives, 15 Galleywall Road, South Bermondsey, London, SE16 3PB. Mary Sumner's tone is set at the start of her paper: *'I am thankful for the opportunity afforded me of pleading before this Congress the cause of the Mother's Union – A Society dear to my heart of which I shall speak fully in a minute. Allow me first to try and pro[v]e the need for such an organisation. We live in a Christian Country, and yet we are standing face to face with a state of rebellion and disobedience to our Master's Commands which baffles and confounds us. The rivers of immorality, intemperance, irreligion and infidelity are streaming over our cities and villages destroying thousands and ten thousands of fair young lives, which but for them might be noble and beautiful.'* Some of Mary Sumner's letters are held in this archive.
- 51 Coombs, *George and Mary Sumner*, 54.
- 52 Heywood Sumner, *The Book of Gorley* (London: Chiswick Press, 1910; reprinted London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1987) 2-3.
- 53 This has been inferred from Hamerton's book, as the two men were sharing rooms in London when Benson met Morris and the Burne Jones family; Sumner would have been drawn into that circle.
- 54 There survives a brief, oddly phrased, letter Sumner wrote to Julia Ady about his engagement. *'One line to tell you that I am engaged to Agnes Benson. I don't know whether you have met her. It has been proverbially rough in its course of coming about, but now I am very thankful for the greatest blessing which can befall[!] to a man, the love and trust of a noble woman. I shall be so glad to see you both. My love to Henry'*. Assumed to be from 1882 or early 1883, Northampton County Archives, CE121/1/, 1.
- 55 This and the preceding paragraphs draw on Avril Denton, 'W. A. S. Benson: A Biography,' in Hamerton, 41-52. The remarks about Benson's father are from William Napier Bruce's introduction to W. A. S. Benson's book, *Drawing; its history and uses* reissued after his death in 1925.
- 56 Geoffrey Rubens, *William Richard Lethaby: His Life and Work 1857 – 1931*, (London: The Architectural Press, 1986), 297. Rubens notes that the studio still *'survives...on top of an existing house'*, at *'1 Nottinghill, (now Campden Hill) Sq. London W8.'*
- 57 Barbour, 1990, 442. She posits influence from *'a famous family of art teachers, grandfather, father and son'* at Eton. The latter two are William

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- Evans and Samuel Thomas George Evans (1829 – 1904). Lamb's line of connection is via the son, Samuel, who was probably teaching at Eton when Sumner was there; she suggests he introduced Sumner to his father who retired to Droxford in the New Forest, south of Alresford. Influence at the school seems most likely however.
- 58 Ady, diary for 1880, undated page but in a sequence indicative of Tuesday 3 August 1880, *'He goes to the Academy soiree tonight as an exhibitor.'*
- 59 Coatts and Lewis, *Heywood Sumner*, 59. Chronology entry reads: *'1879 Produced earliest dated etching 'On the Shelbe' on visit to Germany and Switzerland.'*
- 60 Angela Emanuel, *A Bright Remembrance-the Diaries of Julia Cartwright*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1989), 111-112. Emanuel gives the date as 30 June 1880, but Ady's diaries are hard to follow in places as she uses up blank pages to complete day entries, so sequencing entries can be complicated.
- 61 Coatts and Lewis, *Heywood Sumner*, 59. Coatts and Lewis date his earliest drawing to 1878, of 'Wootton Lodge'. George Breeze, in the opening chapter, 8, gives Sumner's earliest published work as *'A Winter's Walk'*, published in *'The Etcher'* in late 1880.
- 62 John R Wise, *The New Forest: its history and its scenery*, (Henry Sotheran & Co., 1883). Wise includes a chapter titled *'The Roman and Romano-British Potteries,'* 214, complete with illustrations of pottery findings from the author's excavations. Is this what kindled Sumner's interest in the subject to which he devoted his later life?
- 63 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, (London: Pelican Books, 1972), 91.
- 64 Sumner's illustrations to Sintram, and to the later Undine of 1888, are described by Simon Cooke on the Victorian Web entry on Sumner: *'as Arts and Crafts versions of Pre-Raphaelite conventions, radical and traditional, they represent a continuity with the earlier part of the movement while suggesting how Pre-Raphaelitism will develop'*. Pre-Raphaelite influence on Sumner's sgraffito was noted in chapter 1 on St Mary's Church at Llanfair Kilgeddin, but the thrust of this section is on the use of line in his illustrations, which connects directly to work in sgraffito.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/sumner/cooke.html>.
- 65 Sumner had a reputation for head and tail pieces for magazines and books: Ernest Gimson in a letter to his brother, Sydney says: *'I will do my best to design a heading. But the heading is beyond me I know. Heywood Sumner should be asked to do one. He is the best man for that kind of design and*

could do the very thing that is wanted if he were willing.' Recorded in Alan Crawford's STORYFILE of Arts and Crafts material sent to the author. Crawford's ref. 'Gimson letters, CAGM,' 24 November 1889.

66 Charles Harper, *English Pen Artists of Today*. New York: Macmillan and Co., 1892, 100.

67 The author bought some modern sample boards from Cassart, whose website description of the medium's potential is instructive:

Fine Quality Scraperboard is heavily coated with china clay, giving a smooth surface which is then overprinted with white or black ink.

In the Scraperboard process a sharp tool is used to engrave a line through the surface ink to expose the black or white tone beneath.

It offers an artistic medium, which is clear and precise. Used by illustrators and professionals around the world, its super smooth surface allows you to work in an extremely fine detail.

Engraving is as easy as drawing with a pencil, and it can also be coloured and reworked, offering many possibilities.

From: <https://www.cassart.co.uk/craft/scratchboard-1/scraperboard-painted-10-sheets.htm>.

The two board options purchased were white on white and black on white. Harper describes Sumner using the latter, but its similarity to sgraffito lies in the scratching as the colour layers are reversed.

The attraction of sgraffito arising from etching was pointed out to me by Kate Downie in an e mail exchange in early 2021; her sgraffito is discussed in chapter 8.

68 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito,' *Journal of the Society of Arts*, (13 February 1891): 229-235.

69 William Millar, *Plastering Plain and Decorative, a Practical Treatise on the Art & Craft of Plastering and Modelling*, B. T. Batsford, 1897 and 1905. In the 1905 edition see chapter VII on 'Exterior Plastering', between 'Dry-dashing' and 'Fresco', 219-221 for Robinson, 222 for Sumner.

70 Coatts and Lewis, *Heywood Sumner*, 59.

71 Hampshire archives, Winchester, ref. 106M95-3.

72 Ady, diary, Thursday 30 November 1882.

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- 73 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 9 September 1888, CE121/14a-14b/, 3.
- 74 Enquiries to the church in Bologna have unfortunately not confirmed this idea, but I am grateful to Fr. Paolo at the Fraternitá Francesana, Basilica di Santo Stefano, Bologna for the photograph from which figure 27 has been enlarged.
- 75 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 26 October 1883, CE121/4/, 2-3. The author visited Doveleys on 2 November 2020.
- 76 Sedding's delivered a paper to EDAS; it is listed immediately below Radford's '*Sedding, John D. Saint Buryan. Notes on St. Buryan church. - In: Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, 1872. - Held by: DHC: xPER/EXE; Barnstaple: 050/B/EXE; DEI; Exeter University; Plymouth; Torquay. - Subjects: Devon.*' Listing from records of Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society at <https://devon-bibliography.blogspot.com/2015/06/exeter-diocesan-architectural-society.html>.
- 77 Art Workers Guild, Minutes 1884 – 1885, (which curiously also covers most of 1886), page marked '11', where at the foot of the page it is recorded that: 'Messrs. Ernest George & Heywood Sumner were also unable to attend.' The volume opens simply '*A meeting of artists was convened on Tuesday Evening January the 15th 1884...*'
- 78 Ibid. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 1884 are ambiguously laid out but appear to show that Sumner became a committee member at this meeting.
- 79 Ibid, Art Workers Guild, Minutes 1884 – 1885. Minutes of Ordinary Meeting, Friday 4 December 1885, 1.
- 80 William Morris, ed., *Arts and Crafts Essays*, London: Rivington, Percival, & Co., 1893, xv.
- 81 See M. Sargent-Florence, 'Fresco Painting,' *Papers of the Society of Mural Decorators & Painters in Tempera, second volume 1907 – 1924* (Brighton: The Dolphin Press, 1925), 54-69. I am grateful to Alan Powers for drawing my attention to this article, which describes a process of applying fresco that is remarkably similar to that for sgraffito, even to the need to use a surface separated from a damp wall by a cavity.
- 82 This is an intriguing area, though largely outside the scope of this study; but it should be noted, as, in a sense, it accounts for the very existence of some of the work we are discussing. Artists expected their work to last and thus were prepared to spend years carrying it out, and clients were prepared to pay for it. We will discuss The Russian Orthodox Cathedral (the former All Saints Church) in London in the next chapter where the sgraffito took

Sumner seven years to complete, albeit in sections; but this mirrors almost exactly the period that Phoebe Traquair spent on her mural cycle at the Apostolic Church in Edinburgh. Sumner's comments on taste occur in his 1902 article 'Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration,' *Art Journal* (January 1902): 26, which are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Sgraffito 1892 – 1906

In the summer of 1892 Sumner completed sgraffito panels in the church of St Mary the Virgin in Sunbury-on-Thames in Middlesex. This was the first of a suite of large commissions for the decoration of church interiors that would occupy him over the next fifteen years, and which merit close examination for their developments in style, technique and compositional skill.

This period parallels almost exactly his production of posters for the Fitzroy Picture Society, founded in the early 1890s to give practical expression to the idea that society could be improved through the propagation of art, and which offered some of the same opportunities as sgraffito for his work to be widely seen and is worthy of note for this reason.¹ The example in figure 1 shows the same use of bold forms, flat colour and line that characterise his Sgraffito, though not all the posters were quite so graphical. It also provided another source of income. He writes in November 1897:



Fig. 1: 'And Ahab said to Elijah...', Fitzroy Picture Society (1895), by Heywood Sumner.

I am busy completing cartoons for the chapel at St Edmund's School: & doing other necessary works to pay the mounting bills: for large work is by no means remunerative I find.²

Sgraffito was nevertheless important to him: writing two years earlier about Father Dolling's commission for the Lady Chapel at St Agatha's, he observed:

It is a very interesting piece of work to me, and it will be my own fault is [if?] I do not impart what I feel to the result.³

The church as public gallery played to Sumner's strengths as a designer. He observed that his work was subservient to the architecture within which he worked:

...the decoration should belong to its place. It should seem to grow out of the wall spaces and grow in a temper of acceptance and in relation to the scale of the building..... begin with knowing your building and wall spaces by heart; brooding over them, dreaming of them, until your decoration takes shape in forms and colours of rhythmic harmony, gradually to be fulfilled in the actual execution of the work.⁴

Sumner echoes Ruskin very specifically in this:

The especial condition of true ornament is, that it be beautiful in its place, and nowhere else, and that it aid the effect of every portion of the building over which it has influence; that it does not, by its richness, make other parts bald, or by its delicacy, make other parts coarse. Every one of its qualities has reference to its place and use.⁵

Or perhaps, more exactly:

Get rid, then, at once of any idea of Decorative art being a degraded or a separate kind of art. Its nature or essence is simply its being fitted for a definite place; and, in that place, forming part of a great and harmonious whole...⁶

Sumner adhered to this approach, though sgraffito artists seem to divide, between those who preferred to work as Sumner did and those who strive to cover

every available surface, much as the artists in some of the Devon churches that we saw in chapter 3 had done, or as had the artist who decorated the Padrun House in Switzerland illustrated at the end of the first part of chapter 2.

The works in Devon arose partly because churches in the nineteenth century enjoyed the attention of most artists of the time in one form or another and were not apparently considered finished until fully decorated within. Churches provided a career for some architects, perhaps most notably John Loughborough Pearson,⁷ although Sedding, Sumner's friend and promoter, was a prolific architect of churches and their conservation in his shortened life.⁸ It was to Sumner's advantage that the decoration with colour of church interiors and particularly their walls had been a preference through the middle part of the century:

The subject of colour was of the greatest importance to those engaged in designing and restoring churches in the Victorian age. As with so much else to do with churches during that period – whether it be the style of the building itself, or how it was furnished and equipped, or what went on within in terms of liturgy and ritual, and what people wore and did – the question was approached from a variety of angles: aesthetic, historic, symbolic.⁹

Sedding embraced this wholistic approach to the treatment of church interiors, saying that it should be:

...a design by living men for living men....and wrought and painted over with everything that has life and beauty – in frank and fearless naturalism, covered with men and beasts and flowers.¹⁰

Sumner's work reflects the latter sentiment precisely, beginning at St Mary's in south Wales and enduring in the way he treated the biblical subjects of each new scheme he produced. Indeed, Alan Crawford, writing about Arts and Crafts churches, observes:

One can almost speak of an Arts and Crafts spirituality..... Arts and Crafts architects and decorative artists sometimes had things to say which were best said in a church.¹¹

This is somewhat high-flown, but Crawford has a point, and it does seem to be true of Sumner's sgraffito. The son of a churchman, deeply engaged in the arts crafts and the social¹² purpose that underpinned much of it, keen to provide art accessible to as many people as possible.

The panels at Sunbury-on-Thames consist of an Annunciation on the south side of the chancel and an Adoration of the Kings on the north; and the following year he laid a large Adoration of the Shepherds onto the south chancel wall of Christ Church Crookham. The sgraffito in these churches, barely twenty miles apart, displays a monumentality and sculptural character arising from the scale of the compositions, that marks them out as a development. They share several other traits: they tell three of the best-known New Testament stories; they are framed in the same way, under multi-arched headers and rely on careful use of symmetry in the compositions.

Symmetry is a recurring compositional device in Sumner's book illustrations and prints and he uses it widely in his sgraffito. It occurs in the arrangement of the borders and patterns that frame scenes he depicts and, cleverly, in the scenes themselves. Most of his work shows some symmetrical element. The use of an arcade of three openings to two of the three scenes at St Pauls, Winchester (fig. 2), is rather obvious, although the figures are placed differently in each relative to the



Fig. 2: St Paul's Church, Winchester (1904), by Heywood Sumner. South wall of the chancel, the Return of the Prodigal Son.

openings and the landscape beyond with occasional trees avoids the rigidity of absolute symmetry, but it is notable that the ornate grape laden border above follows the setting out logic of the main composition. The arrangement Sumner deploys in the Adoration of the Shepherds at Crookham is considerably more sophisticated. This example merits closer study because it shows the interrelationship in Sumner's work between the architecture, scene making and pattern.

Sumner faced a challenge at Crookham: the end wall is symmetrically pierced by a three light lancet window, but the side walls are erratically broken up by arched openings (figure 3 shows the arrangement). The right-hand wall, as one faces the altar, has one arch reaching almost to eaves level and two smaller openings towards the east end. The opposite side, by contrast, has two tall arched openings nearer the nave and one smaller narrow lancet close to the altar. The end wall is attractively split by the high window and a timber reredos below spanning the full width of the wall.

The window features a central crucified Christ with the Virgin in the left-hand panel and a saint on the right; they stand in a landscape of blue flowers



Fig. 3: Christ Church, Crookham (1893), by Heywood Sumner. Chancel. The Adoration of the Shepherds is on the right.

against the backdrop of a fortified city. This grouping rises over a plain reredos with decoration in the top panel of incised diamond pattern relief either side of a projecting section that has interlinked open arches across the top between short columns capped by carved angels.

One imagines Sumner struggling to settle upon the best way to tie the three wall planes together. At first, the position of his key scene, the Adoration of the Shepherds, halfway up the right-hand wall seems willful until one notices that the bottom edge of his depiction aligns with the capitals of the larger arched opening, while the springing of the capping arches over the scene meets the decorative band at the base of the sgraffito on the end wall. He repeats this positioning on the opposite wall with the angel proclaiming, *'He is not here, he is risen'*.

Seated in the choir stalls this siting makes the scenes easy to see without craning one's neck. It also lends emphasis to the top line of the reredos and the rising of the east window towards the roof. The bold stencil patterning above the Adoration and the angels opposite are repeated in bands on the east wall, where they help frame sgraffito representations of St Michael and an angel carrying a censer. This 'stencil' effect also curiously mirrors the carved patterning on the reredos.

The gem in this scheme however is the Adoration itself, a subtle, skilful, and symmetrical picture of the weary shepherds arriving to see the new-born Jesus. The timber of the stable behind the Virgin to the left echoes the trees around which the sheep graze to the right. The use of three shallow arched heads to frame the components of the scene, and the position of the central group of shepherds create a wonderfully balanced work that nonetheless conveys a sense of movement from right to left, while giving a feeling of solidity and weight. One is thus drawn to the face of the Virgin, displaying a languorous sleepiness that is carried into her pose, enveloping the infant Christ. One may take issue with the final effect of the child's face, but in the overall composition Sumner has managed to convey the story, the Shepherds' curiosity, tiredness, especially in the sleeping guardian of the flock to the right, and awareness of a special event (figs. 4 – 6).

Sumner uses dark blue in the sky, with twinkling golden stars, and the robes of the shepherds to contrast with vibrant light blue in the Virgin's robe and the



Fig. 4: Christ Church, Crookham (1893). South side of the chancel. Oblique view of the Adoration of the Shepherds showing the compositional relationships to its surroundings.



Fig. 5: Christ Church, Crookham (1893). South side of the chancel, Adoration of the Shepherds, detail of the Virgin and Child.



Fig. 6: Christ Church, Crookham (1893). South side of the chancel, Adoration of the Shepherds.

decorative frieze along the arched tops of the picture. This device, in combination with gold and silver tesserae in the haloes of the Virgin and Child, makes the scene glow. The composition fits Sumner's aspirations to abstraction through the use of line to convey his scene in a manner, which is both clearly understandable but 'removed from realistic tests.'¹³ The final touch of bringing the two central shepherds forward of the top edge of the composition enhances the sense of movement as well as generating a further hint of depth to the picture.

The scheme at Sunbury shows elements of the same compositional strategies, and the arcaded head to each scene looks like the precursor to the design at Crookham. It shows the same attention to the detail of faces, robes, accoutrements, and animals but lacks the flow and grace of the later work, although there is a hint of movement in the Adoration of the Kings presentation of the gifts, from the boy kneeling at the left-hand side uncovering a container, through the central King holding a jewelled belt to the kneeling patriarch clasping a vase (fig. 7). The Annunciation by contrast is a static moment of surprise defined by the merest of artistic touches in the graphic rendering of the figures; the framing by his wings of the angel, face upturned, and the Virgin's grace eloquently denoted by the tilt of her head and accentuated by the folds of her robes (fig. 8).

The culmination of this monumental, symmetrical approach to composition may be that which Sumner carried out in the Lady Chapel at St Agatha's church in Portsmouth in 1895, where the shape of spaces he had to decorate is quite different. The chancel arch to the chapel has the grandeur and scale of the works at



Fig. 7: St Mary the Virgin, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. North wall of the chancel, Adoration of the Kings.



Fig. 8: St Mary the Virgin, Sunbury (1892). South wall of the chancel, Annunciation.

Sunbury and Crookham but the placing of the visiting Shepherds and Kings and curve of the horizon line gives a three-dimensional character to the sgraffito, while the framing of the Holy Family within a stable lends an intimacy to the scene, a frame within a frame so to speak (fig. 9). One senses Sumner growing in confidence with his compositions, both with the arch and the delicately beautiful scenes that wrapped round the apse. The watercolour of these conveys, with great simplicity of technique, the postures of the figures and their settings, episodes in the early story of Christ. One can see again the artist's use of symmetry across the three scenes: two figures to the right of the left-hand vignette, echo the two elders to the left of the right-hand picture, as do the landscapes in each one (fig. 10).

Apart from the solitary remaining left hand side of the chancel arch sgraffito the only other indication of the finished character of the Lady Chapel is to be seen in two photographs held by Historic England, part of one of which is shown in figure 11. The detail of the Annunciation in the apse is revealing, particularly in relation to the same subject at Sunbury; with a hint of the three dimensional possibly created by this tableau that is missing in the earlier version; it is hard to say, but the Portsmouth scene feels momentary; in a second the angel will move, Mary will raise her head, the tree and leaves will sway. Sunbury seems frozen. The other delight here is the patterning of clothes and plants, evidence of Sumner's seemingly never-ending ability to convey the material of things by colour and line.

The 'may' at the start of discussion of St Agatha's arises because the full content of the schemes that followed it, in the headmaster's house and the Chapel at St Edmund's School in Canterbury in 1897, is largely unknown. The only panel positively attributed to the school chapel or the headmaster's house is a scene of David and Jonathan '*...the Lord be between thee and me for ever,*'¹⁴ suggesting a theme of friendship and fidelity, a suitably uplifting theme for a school. This gap in the record of Sumner's sgraffito is unfortunate but his work from the late eighteen-nineties starts to veer towards the symbolic rather than complete figurative tableaux. The decorative strategy at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Kensington, London, mixes the two approaches; circular pictorial tableaux are arranged within wildly ornate, but symmetrically set out, plant and geometric forms along with representations of numerous saints. The roundels sit in the spandrels of the aisle



Fig. 9: Lady Chapel, St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1895), by Heywood Sumner. Chancel arch, coloured drawing of the Adoration of Shepherds and Kings.



Fig. 10: Lady Chapel, St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1895). Scenes in the apse.



Fig. 11: Lady Chapel, St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1895). This scene was created three years after the one at Sunbury in figure 8 and is a reworking of the idea, a standing angel for a kneeling one contrasted with a sitting Virgin.

arches, a location Sumner had proposed before in setting out an unexecuted design at St Agatha's and would use later for the Days of Creation along the north aisle at St John the Evangelist in Manchester.¹⁵ Those in London are tightly cropped, with hands or feet reaching out of the circular frame and make excellent use of the format as the examples, 'Via Crucis' Christ bearing the cross, and 'Dolor Animae' the Agony in the Garden, demonstrate (figs. 12 and 13). This device gives emotional potency to key moments in the biblical story of Christ, which starts with a smaller series of roundels of the Days of Creation on the west wall and ends with Christ in Majesty on the chancel arch. Sumner's subdued palette of colour in 'Dolor Animae' to reflect the sombre subject is particularly striking. The Days of Creation are symbolic by comparison, to the point of complete abstraction for the separation of light and dark, mere graphical indications of the subject, though with increasing



Fig. 12: Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints' Church), Ennismore Gardens, London (1897-1903), by Heywood Sumner. South clerestory, 'Via Crucis' roundel.



Fig. 13: Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints' Church), Ennismore Gardens, London (1897-1903). Section of north clerestory, 'Dolor Animae.'

representational elements towards the sixth day and Adam and Eve.

Sumner uses plant forms consistently in his sgraffito but motifs change over time. At Llanfair Kilgeddin one sees realistic representation of the thistles and fruits in the garden shown in the panel, 'O, all ye green things upon the earth...' (fig. 14). Move forward ten years to the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, and apparent simplification of plant forms threatens to overwhelm the design. He retreats from this floral overload for the apse in St Agatha's in Portsmouth in 1901 where he exerts very tight control over the interplay of the various elements of the design (fig. 15).

Fruit and bold leaf forms recur, and vines and grapes in particular provide consistent framing to the action. They are there above the angels at the east end of Vicars' Close chapel in 1887 and still in use in 1904 above the Good Samaritan panel at St Paul's in Winchester; they appear to the left of the reredos at Crookham and hang at intervals down central stems between the figures in the main apse at St Agatha's in Portsmouth. The symbolism of Christ enveloping the work displaying



Fig. 14: *St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888), by Heywood Sumner. North-west corner of nave, 'O, all ye green things upon the earth...'*

Fig. 15: *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1902). Main apse, vine and grape pattern.*

God's creation and the biblical stories was evidently irresistible:

...the True vine represents our Lord Jesus, a symbol of the Christian Church, which is made up of true believers who must abide in the True Vine, Jesus Christ. He is the Vine and they are the branches.¹⁶

Looking at the vines and grapes that circle the mosaic around Christ on the chancel arch in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral one is struck by the connection to early Christian and Byzantine art in the patterns, symbols and materials Sumner adopts. Fabrics and stucco relief can be found showing similar treatment from the fifth to the tenth centuries from Egypt and the near east, as in the textile example in figure 16 although this scene is on the pagan theme of Dionysus.¹⁷



Fig. 16: 'The Triumph of Dionysus,' The Louvre, Paris. Resist dyed textile assigned to the fifth century with an upper border of vine and grape pattern very similar to what Sumner used.

The other source one can see is the intense mosaic covering every surface in St Mark's Venice, but mosaic, and mother of pearl provide only highlight and emphasis to Sumner's compositions and are not fundamental to an overall mystical effect of light glinting on gold to be experienced in Venice (fig. 17). Sumner's figures, landscapes and patterned surround strike a more practical down to earth note in comparison. Nevertheless, Peter Cormack writing about Sumner's stained glass observes this eastern influence:

.... the clerestory windows with their symbolic forms have something of the appearance of Middle eastern decorative glazing.... Of course, this provides an apt accompaniment to the Byzantine inspiration of Sumner's mosaic and sgraffito work.¹⁸



Fig. 17: St Marks Basilica, Venice (originally thirteenth century with later restorations), artists unknown. This slightly fuzzy image does convey the mystical and other worldly quality of the decoration.

The combination of colour, pattern and symbolism perhaps account for the apparent sympathy in the Russian Orthodox cathedral between Sumner's decoration and the Eastern Christian tradition, in particular the icons that line walls and chancel screen, below Christ in Majesty on the arch (fig. 18). The church is based on a Romanesque Italian example, the basilica of San Zeno, Verona which sits within a tradition of early churches with extensive internal mosaic or fresco decoration.

The sgraffito in the cathedral is best appreciated from the balconies, where it is possible to look across at it rather than obliquely upwards from the nave floor. The vibrance of colours today is a tribute to conservation work in 2004 - 2005.¹⁹ Sumner was, one senses, pleased with the results of his work; he writes to Julia Ady in 1900:

*W.B. Richmond the other day told me that he wanted me to take him to Ennismore Gardens, & wouldn't go there without me. So we met, & he spent more than an hour there looking it all over with most hearty outspoken interest. It really quite warmed the cockles of my heart.*²⁰

A last strand is worthy of note at the Cathedral; the ranks of saints between the clerestory windows are an unusual feature for Sumner, occurring only here and on a smaller scale in the gesso panels at Vicars' Chapel in Wells, for which we have noted Sumner's letter on the composition and the changes to them that occurred. One has a hint here of the complexity of his projects, not just of the design and execution, but the agreement with clients about the thematic make-up of the work that was to 'deface', as Sumner puts it, the walls of their churches. These at Ennismore Gardens will have been carefully chosen; they are an intriguing mix of early Christian martyrs, including several remarkable, strong women (four women to four men), and key figures from the early Anglo-Saxon Church. One might see here a reflection of Sumner's slogan from 1 the Close, "Women are Strongest",²¹ an unusual nineteenth century sentiment perhaps for an upper-class gentleman, which may have had to do with his mother's involvement in the Mothers' Union; but as with so much else to do with Sumner, we have no way of confirming this. It may reflect even-handedness in his own views of the sexes. He comments in a letter to Julia Ady:

I haven't a notion what you are doing for I haven't been looking at magazines for the last 3 months. At least you haven't been made a knight, which is a comfort, nor have you been fed by vagabonds as a lady author – in wh: latter respect it seems to me as an intelligent member of the public, some of younger men of letters are rather foolish.



Fig. 18: Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), Ennismore Gardens, London (1897-1903). Detail of panel to the right of the crucified Christ on the chancel arch, showing both vine and grape pattern, similar to that in figure 16, and other stylised plant forms but also the complex mix of sgraffito, mother of pearl and tesserae at this focus of the decorative scheme. The letter cutting is very skilful.

*If you produce anything, I don't quite see where sex comes in. There may be a special flavour to it, but I don't think 'Lady producers' or 'Gentleman producers' need special strokings as such.*²²

This is part of a discussion where we have only a snippet, but Sumner's letters to Ady appear a correspondence between equals, he respects her judgement and enjoys her company, a point one gleans from Ady's diary entries about their meetings.

The depiction of Anglo-Saxon church figures may have arisen from Sumner's increasing interest in the early history of England. Interest In English history was a feature of Arts and Crafts circles and in Sumner's case led eventually to archaeological excavations of Roman sites. He started work at the Cathedral in 1897, just as the family left London for Bournemouth, and finished there in 1903 while completing the design and building of their house at Cuckoo Hill.²³

The size and ambition of the Cathedral is matched only by the decoration that Sumner applied to the main apse of St Agatha's six years after his scheme in the Lady Chapel. It is monumental and at first glance can appear very different to all his earlier sgraffito but the Art-Deco sensibility that could be attributed to it, while having relevance to decorative trends at the time, can miss the connections back to his earlier work. The bearded patriarchs and evangelists echo figures at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral; there are vines and grapes; and many of the symbols and animals in the roundels, in their graphic simplicity, bear comparison with the Days of Creation in London, but Sumner is simplifying here; and has eschewed mosaic and mother of pearl, for the diagrammatic in some of the sgraffito (fig. 19).

At close quarters the effect is very powerful. The chicken wire pattern each side and the banding over the chancel arch frame the drama at the altar very successfully. Horizontal hit and miss lines that continue from each side round the apse neatly divide the scheme vertically, but it is tied together by the careful coordination of colour between the parts. Had Summer completed his nave decoration and the Lady Chapel survived this would have been an extraordinary space to visit; sadly, a change of priest, and post war planning thwarted that outcome. That said it is difficult to know exactly what Dolling and his



Fig. 19: St. Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1902). Main apse seen from the nave.

successors had had in mind for in time a vast baldachino was placed in the centre of the apse, obscuring much of Sumner's design (fig. 20).

The apse at St Agatha's was not the final apogee of a great stylistic progression, for two more works followed it, St. Paul's Church in Winchester in 1904 and St. John the Evangelist in Manchester in 1906. They display some return to pictorial form but also development in his style, a paring back of ancillary supporting detail, with a direct emotional heft not always there in his earlier sgraffito. Sumner is subtracting from his pictures to leave a distillation of the stories. We have though to unpick these designs from drawings, photographs and other records, since at St Paul's, except for a small, recovered sliver, there is nothing visible on the church walls. In 1998 a fragment of the sgraffito was uncovered from the 1962 over-plastering, that poignantly hints at what lies hidden. The work appears to be in very good condition and given the will and sufficient funds the entire work could be retrieved.



Fig. 20: St. Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1902). Main apse with original baldachino.

The main interest compositionally is the Good Samaritan panel (figs. 21 and 22). It is surrounded by typical vine and grape decoration, but this is separated by a border and avoids the almost overpowering effects of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral. A solitary tree anchors the figures and the horse as Sumner focuses our attention on the Samaritan's act of kindness. He added very little landscape background, aside from isolated figures of those who had presumably already passed by without giving assistance. The landscape though has a strange, almost distorted, character and flows round the central action to further draw the eye. Sumner seems here to merge the pared back approach of the great apse at St Agatha's with a figurative scene. We noted the other two panels at the start of the chapter, featuring parables seen against triptychs of arches framing landscape views in a manner reminiscent of some early Renaissance paintings, but these are austere and simplified when compared with the panels in the apse of the Lady Chapel at St Agatha's in figures 10 and 11.

For St Paul's there are happy survivals of Sumner's original design sketches on detail paper and the architect's drawings that show the integration of the sgraffito into the church setting, so we can see the progression to the finished work.

What has not survived are Sumner's full-size templates for the panel, but this working drawing does show that Sumner scaled up his scheme very carefully; the posture of the figures and the horse are accurately transferred to the work on the



Fig. 21: St Paul's Church, Winchester (1904). Heywood Sumner's sketch of The Good Samaritan.



Fig. 22: St. Paul's Church, Winchester (1904). South wall of the chancel, The Good Samaritan panel as executed. The original photograph was slightly out of focus.

wall, something that can be seen when comparing the surviving fragment of the Lady Chapel sgraffito at St Agatha's with the coloured design drawing but as we shall see he would make changes as he was cutting the design on the wall.

Sumner decorated St John the Evangelist, Miles Platting in Manchester in 1906 as part of restoration to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its construction. Sumner was not impressed by the city:

I have been for weeks & weeks at Manchester, where I have [been] doing some Sgraffito work at Miles Platting – now done, a piece of work that has interested me very much, and I say my grace for its accomplishment. Manchester is a terribly grim town, and I felt in exile there. It is the dirtiest place that ever I lived in, and when I returned through London it looked like New Jerusalem by contrast.²⁴

His work was extensive, decorative borders in the apse, two large scenes on the side walls of the chancel and roundels in the spandrels of the nave arches. The latter were variations on the Days of Creation that he had placed on the west wall at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, while his work in the apse was again of vines and grapes.²⁵ The chancel panels are of interest for the novelty of those on the south side, which he had never executed before, though he had sketched out designs for similar scenes to go in St Agatha's in Portsmouth ten years earlier. The crucifixion and especially the scene of women finding Christ's empty tomb carry Art Nouveau influence. There is sinuous flowing character to the women and the trees, and the lettering of the slogan across the top has an artful quality about it; the other novelty is the absence of elaborate fruit and leaf borders. The colour scheme he used is unknown; but the St Agatha's sketches give a possible hint, providing atmosphere to the executed scene in the black and white image, of the rising sun framed by trees and casting shadow on the plants under the trees but illuminating the foreground (figs. 23 and 24).

The Adoration of the Shepherds on the north wall has a compositional similarity to that at St Agatha's but the heavenly host is in the middle with the Holy Family to the right and shepherds and sheep to the left. There are some detail references back to the same scene at Crookham of 1893; but this is a less formal, relaxed depiction without the stately, posed quality of the earlier pieces. It has a gentle, rustic flavour that is rather appealing.

This chapter features schemes which share a grandeur of vision, and often a monumentality, which is reminiscent of some early pre-Raphaelite paintings but also the static power of fourteenth and fifteenth century Renaissance painting, by Piero della Francesca or Mantegna for example. Sumner may have drawn inspiration from



Fig. 23: St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, c1895. Colour study for nave decoration.
 Fig. 24: St John the Baptist, Miles Platting, Manchester (1906), by Heywood Sumner.
 The discovery of Christ's empty tomb.

what he saw on his travels. His letters to Julia Ady contain few specific artistic preferences, but writing to her in late 1881 or early 1882 after she has apparently sent him a signed copy of her book *Mantegna and Francia*, he says:

Thankyou so v[er]y much it is indeed kind of you to have remembered me & when next you come here again I shall ask – no I see you've done it. I had missed the outside title page - I need scarcely say that I shall not dare to ever breath a word of criticism as my knowledge of Italian art is limited to London, Paris and Belgium and then I only study those pictures which appeal to me personally. Still after reading y[ou]r preface I began the last page and met with sentiments wh[ich] exactly are what I feel..... Yesterday I was some time in the national gallery and felt just what you say of the real living power in Francia, especial in the new picture in wh[ich] the faces are nobly beautiful – and moreover I feel an immense gulf of living belief in the new

Perugino It is just this wh[ich] hitherto has always rather repelled me from Raphael. It sounds utterly priggish maybe to say so, but in the few pictures that I have seen of his and in the many photographs, I have failed to feel the re creating power wh[ich] absolutely original minds always seem to shed abroad. but I must stop & am looking forward to pleasant hours in lonely London, reading Mantegna and Francia. Thankyou again.²⁶

This extract seems to suggest a preference for works of the earlier Renaissance, and Ady's book contains a plate of Judith and Holofernes as well as an engraving of one of Mantegna's 'Triumphs of Caesar' paintings, which contains dense groupings of figures such as those Sumner would use at 1 the Close (the triumphant procession of Judith after killing Holofernes) and Crookham (the shepherds visiting the infant Christ), suggesting possible ideas or influence from his friend's study. Sumner's tableaux are carefully composed and clothed in a range of styles, from ostensibly accurate Roman military garb to everyday wear in the late nineteenth century, in the 'Children of Men' panel, at St Mary the Virgin in Llanfair Kilgeddin. This latter carries a didactic hint that reflects pre-Raphaelite influence as do the various angels and winged figures in this and other churches he decorated.

Sumner's colour palette might be ascribed to Renaissance influences but equally reflects the sensibilities and tastes of his time. He was using an ancient technique and employing pigments or variations of them that would have been in use for hundreds of years. The observation in chapter one about the apostles appearing as aged remnants in their corner of St Mary's church may create a Romanesque or Byzantine effect but this could be as much to do with the available colouring materials as with the composition.

Sumner was aware though that his work might not last, of the dangers posed by the tide of changing taste, for in his 1902 article on sgraffito he said:

Alas! that the graphic stories and insistent presences which inspire and express the ideals of one generation should live to be hated by another. This is idolatry. That is heresy. This is detestable. That is ridiculous. They must be hacked off, obliterated, covered with paint,

*plaster, anything so as to destroy the vision that is inevitable, anything so as to reduce the recording walls to blank silence.*²⁷

It sounds bleak yet is startlingly clear eyed about what would befall his and other work of its kind; and as if in sad fulfilment of a prophecy his last major sgraffito at St John's Church was demolished in 1973. But Sumner was a good propagandist for his chosen medium and the rest of the long article is written in a hopeful and encouraging tone and his advice has been used in recent successful practical experiments in sgraffito, to which we will turn in the next two chapters.

One hopes that today we are less inclined to rush to condemn that which we dislike through the vagaries of fashion, for one can be sure that as things change so do tastes. Perhaps that is why more than a hundred years after Sumner completed his last major sgraffito work in Manchester this thesis is in part a tribute to and appreciation of this artist.

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- 1 Susan Melanie Price, 'The Fitzroy Picture Society: pictures for schools, mission-rooms and hospitals in the 1890s' (PhD diss., Birkbeck University of London, 1996), 29.
 - 2 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Julia Ady (née Cartwright), 13 November 1897, Northampton County Archives, CE121/20, 3. The only cost information found for Sumner's sgraffito is for the scheme in south Wales in Kelly's *Directory of Monmouthshire & South Wales, 1895*, 71. '*the church is decorated with beautiful sgraffito work, illustrating the "Song of The Three Children," designed and executed in 1889 by Mr Heywood Sumner, at a cost of £500, as memorial to Mrs Lindsay, wife of the present rector: the church was thoroughly restored in 1876 at a cost of £3000.*' The figures are equivalent today to approximately £65,000 and £390,000 respectively.
 - 3 Letter, Sumner to Julia Ady, 7 July 1895, CE121/19a-19b, 3. Sumner appears to have written 'is' instead of 'if'.
 - 4 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito as a Method of Wall Decoration, *Art Journal*, Jan 1902, 26.
 - 5 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice 1 – The Foundations* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1894), §IV, 236.

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- 6 John Ruskin, 'Lecture III, Modern Manufacture and Design,' in *The Complete works of John Ruskin*, Library edition XVI, edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, (London: George Allen, 1905), §74, 220.
- 7 He created the church at Appleton-le-Moors discussed in chapter 2. See Clare Howard, and Simon Taylor, *The Church and Chapel Interiors of John Loughborough Pearson: A selective assessment of significance*, Historic England Historic Places Investigation, Research report Series no. 26-2016. The list of his church work is staggering; he was not alone in this and other architects could have been cited, Street, for example, who like Pearson experimented in the 1860s with niello as a form of inlaid decoration. Benjamin Ferrey, who cropped up regularly through this research appears to be another.
- 8 He died in on 7 April 1891, just before his fifty-third birthday; and, sadly, was followed by his wife barely a week later. Sumner wrote in subdued manner to Julia Ady on 27 April, having attended both funerals, about the events, talking of the strangeness of going to the same churchyard twice within a week. '*..everything seemed like a dream the second time.*' Letter, Sumner to Ady, 27 April 1891, CE121/15a-15b, 3.
- 9 James Bettley, "'All is glory within": the importance of colour in church interiors, 1840 – 1903,' *Ecclesiology Today* no. 45 (July 2012): 15.
- 10 John Dando Sedding, quoted by Matthew Saunders in *The Friends of Friendless Churches: St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin, Gwent*, Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society, Volume 40, 1996, 106. Saunders does not provide the source for this comment.
- 11 Alan Crawford, 'Arts and Crafts Churches,' in *Churches 1870 – 1914*, The Victorian Society Studies in Architecture & Design, 3, edited by Teresa Sladen and Andrew Saint (London: Victorian Society, 2011), 63.
- 12 But not, apparently, the radical politics of some of his contemporaries. He wrote in a letter of 1888, '*I heard Morris at the Artworkers Guild last week on "the origin of ornamental art" = Propagatn of Socialism. He preached to us quite solemnly.....but I neither believe his premisses nor his conclusions as to the freedom of workers in the past and their ~~greater~~ slavery now – but what he sd as to the origins of ornamental art was vy interesting.*' Letter, Sumner to Ady, undated, but attributable to early 1888 by reference to his starting work in April at St Mary's in Llanfair Kilgeddin, CE121/2, 3. Sumner did though contribute to a book of essays on the arts in 1893 under Morris's editorship.
- 13 Heywood Sumner, 'Of Line and Wall Decoration,' in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, 6, no. 26 (London: Century Guild, April 1892), 58.

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- 14 Joseph Gleeson White, 'The Work of Heywood Sumner – 1. Sgraffito Decorations', *The Studio*, no. 61 (April 1898), 157.
- 15 Renaissance precedent springs to mind, Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital roundels by Della Robbia for example, which Sumner evidently saw, according to Julia Ady's diary entry on discussion with Sumner about his travels, see chapter 3.
- 16 F. R. Webber, *Church Symbolism* (Cleveland: J. H. Jansen, 1927), 239.
- 17 David Talbot Rice, *Art of the Byzantine Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 22 and 30. The former shows Coptic stucco from the 5th century, the latter the resist dyed textile with vine and grape border in figure 16. The pagan decorative treatment seems to have been adopted by Christian artists to signify the symbolic meaning already discussed.
- 18 Peter Cormack, *Arts & Crafts Stained Glass* (Yale: Yale university Press, 2015), 58
- 19 Richard Griffiths Architects were the architects. See also Alan Powers, 'A Russian resurrection,' *BD magazine – refurbishment*, May 2007.
- 20 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 28 September 1900, CE121/24a-24b, 4-5.
- 21 See catalogue entry on 1 the Close for the context of this slogan.
- 22 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 7 July 1895, CE121/19a-19b, 8.
- 23 The figures depicted can be summarised as: from early church history, four women (Agnes, Catherine, Margaret and Anne), four men likewise (Maurice, Giles, George and Christopher), two apostles (Peter and John), two figures contemporary with Christ and the Apostles (Stephen and Paul), two panels for the Holy Innocents and St Francis (an odd medieval inclusion). From the early Anglo-Saxon church Sumner includes: Augustine, Oswald, Edmund, Hilda (with reference to Caedmon), Aidan (with reference to Chad and Cedd), Swithin, Anselm, Bede and Columba. Most are from the seventh century; only Anselm lived into the Norman period.
- 24 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 22 April 1906, CE132/57, 1-2.
- 25 The sgraffito is described in Revd. H. E. Sheen, 'The Oxford Movement in a Manchester Parish: The Miles Platting Case.' PhD diss., Manchester University, March 1941. Manchester Central Reference Library Archives, M194/4/14, 213. Revd. Sheen says '*the work is confined to simple vine patterns in white and golden yellow*' but from this and other photographs in the archives it seems that there must have been at least a third colour: similar details in the apse at St Agatha's in Portsmouth suggest either green,

as background, or purple for the fruit. Sadly, the Revd. Sheen gives no description of the colours of the rest of the sgraffito.

- 26 Letter, Sumner to Ady, late 1881/1882, CE121/27, 1. Ady's book was published in the summer of 1881; the illustrations noted in the paragraph below are on pages 37 and 40-41 respectively.
- 27 Sumner, Heywood. 'Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration.' *Art Journal* (January 1902): 26.

Chapter 5

Sumner's technique

The influence of Ruskin

Sumner's writings on sgraffito deal not only with technical matters of materials, mixes, drying times and the like but also with design and manner of execution. In this he shows the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, the Art Workers' Guild, and behind them, Ruskin and Morris. Sumner acknowledged the former's importance in a letter of 1892 writing after the death of Tennyson that *'only Ruskin now remains of the giants of that elder generation...'*¹

It is remarkable how many of the aims of the Arts and Crafts sgraffito satisfies. Craft based, a concern for the way art was produced as well as what was produced, no division of labour, hard work, folkish,² simple line and natural colour, not too perfect. The origin for almost all these ideas can be found in Ruskin if one has the patience to look for them.

Ruskin's writings can be difficult for a twenty first century reader, although they contain wonderful descriptive and explanatory passages. *'On the Nature of Gothic,'* chapter VI of the second volume of *Stones of Venice*, published in 1853, opens with a wonderfully evocative aerial overview of Europe from the warm southern Mediterranean to its bleak northern wastes as the basis for his discourse on differences in gothic architecture across this range of landscapes. Within the first two characteristics of the six he ascribes to gothic however are hidden statements and injunctions on the route to truth in the execution of artwork that even today are striking and radical in their implications. Consider the following extracts, quoted at length, which are important to an understanding of the ethos or moral imperative behind Sumner's sgraffito:

*We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilised invention of the division of labour; only we give it false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men; – divided into mere segments of men – broken into small fragments and crumbs of life....*³

He addresses how to deal with this:

It can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy; by determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workmen; and the equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour.⁴

Ruskin then explains how to recognise such products and how this demand should be regulated:

- 1 *Never encourage manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which invention has no share.*
- 2 *Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.*
- 3 *Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving record of great works.⁵*

He goes on, pertinently with respect to sgraffito as Sumner produced it, to deal carefully with the second of these points, saying:

If you are to have the thought of the rough and untaught man, you must have it in a rough and untaught way.... Only get the thought and do not silence the peasant because he cannot speak good grammar.

Rather choose rough work than smooth work, so only that the practical purpose be answered, and never imagine there is reason to be proud of anything that may be accomplished by patience and sand-paper.⁶

He then uses the manufacture of glass as an example, recommending the varied, rougher old glass of Venice above perfectly true and finished modern products:

Nay, but the reader interrupts me, – “if the workmen can design beautifully, I would not have kept him at the furnace. Let him be taken away and made a gentleman, and have a studio, and design his glass

there, and I will have it blown and cut for him by common workmen, and so I will have my design and finished too."

All ideas of this kind are founded upon two mistaken suppositions: the first, that one man's thoughts can be, or ought to be, executed by another man's hands; the second, that manual labour is a degradation, when it is governed by intellect.⁷

Ruskin acknowledges the need on large projects for a superintending director, whose thoughts *'should be carried out by the labour of others.'* He goes on though to argue that:

... on a smaller scale.... one man's thoughts can never be expressed by another: and the difference between the spirit of touch of the man who is inventing, and of the man who is obeying directions is, often all the difference between a great and a common work of art.⁸

Ruskin then proceeds to undermine the assumptions of Victorian society, with a view of the balance needed for a healthy life, between the work of the mind and of the hand:

We are always in these days endeavouring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense.

Now it is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. It would be well if all of us were good handicraftsmen in some kind, and the dishonour of manual labour done away with altogether...

...there should be less pride felt in peculiarity of employment, and more in excellence of achievement. And yet more, in each several profession, no master should be too proud to do its hardest work. The painter should grind his own colours; the architect work in the

mason's yard with his men; the master-manufacturer be himself a more skilful operative than any man in his mills; and the distinction between one man and another be only in experience and skill.... ⁹

This challenge to the soul destroying iniquities of early nineteenth century capitalism was potent, both to artists but also to wider political and social reform movements; it would for example have chimed with the Christian Socialist founders of the Working Men's College, at which Ruskin taught in the mid-1850s. One can imagine the impact of the last section, for example on a young William Morris, who always mastered a technique before expecting his staff to use it.¹⁰ Pevsner draws out Morris's debt to Ruskin, with '*the finest statement of his ideal of the Gothic craftsman:*'

*Consider, I pray you, what these wonderful works are, and how they were made...They were common things....no rarities.... did a great artist draw the designs for them, a man of cultivation, highly paid, daintily fed, carefully housed, wrapped in cotton wool.... By no means.... They were made by common fellows... in the course of their daily labour...And.... many a grin of pleasure...went to the carrying through of their jobs.*¹¹

Benson too was strongly affected by Ruskin, both in terms of what he did and how he treated his eventual very substantial workforce:

Benson, having attended his [Ruskin's] lectures, later followed many of Ruskin's precepts in his own relationship with his employees.

*Benson became a notably enlightened and considerate employer,*¹²

Sumner was an adherent; the choice of sgraffito as a means of expression and his writings demonstrates this. In echo of Ruskin's insistence that labour and thought be combined, Sumner wrote in 1892:

Sgraffito..... compels the work to be executed in situ. The studio must be exchanged for the scaffold, and the result should justify the inconvenience. However carefully the schemes of decoration may be designed, slight, yet important modifications and re-adjustments will

probably be found necessary in the transfer from cartoon to wall; and though the ascent of the scaffold may seem an indignity to those who prefer to suffer vicariously in the execution of their works, and though we of the nineteenth century know, as Cennini of the fifteenth century knew, "that painting pictures is the proper employment of a gentleman, and with velvet on his back he may paint what he pleases," still the fact remains, that if decoration is to attain that inevitable fitness for its place which is the fulfillment of design, this "proper employment of a gentleman" must be postponed and velvet exchanged for blouse.¹³

This connects to Ruskin's later discussion of imperfection in works of art:

It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is not imperfect.

He goes on:

.... He must take his workmen as he finds them, and let them show their weakness together with their strength, which will involve the Gothic imperfection, but render the whole work as noble as the intellect of the age can make it..... the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.¹⁴

Close inspection of Sumner's sgraffito shows its imperfections, the lack of 'an exact finish' as Ruskin describes it. Scraping into the colour coats, cutting of the topcoat that shows up more than one colour, some stiffness in the figures or oddly defined faces bear witness to the difficulty of cutting a design precisely to a pattern in the testing circumstances Sumner describes:

.... you must learn to see through scaffold-poles and putlogs, and stages in the execution of your design. No easy matter revising your work under these conditions, or to allow for the different lighting a wall gets when the scaffold is gone...¹⁵

He seems to muck in with his team: in a letter to his cousin Edgar Gibson about arrangements for his work at Vicar's Chapel, Wells, he says, Gibson having offered to put him up:

It is indeed good of you & Grace to take me for granted as a guest, yet I am somewhat uncertain whether you will like me for long. In work of this kind, meal times & punctuality thereat are liable to be postponed & ignored, as the drying of the plaster obliges you to work agst. [against] time. ~~and~~ So I shall feel all the time that I am putting out your household arrangements.

And asks:

Would this be possible? For me to lodge with my assistants in the Vicar's Close, in one of your students' rooms. And then – if you were good eno[ugh]. To let me – for me to spend my Sunday under your hospitable roof.¹⁶

He writes too of his wife finding the disorder of moving house depressing – this is in 1897 – and observes of himself:

I think doing work in buildings as I have done now for the last 10 years, had bred in me a capacity to endure incompleteness, & chaos wh:[ich] I know to be passing. So our trial is by no means equal. When I know what I am going to do, contentment comes along.¹⁷

Ruskin's ideas underpin Sumner's work and indeed his view that sgraffito should be subservient to the building it adorns; it even abides by Ruskin's Lamp of Truth, he uses no surface deceits to disguise structures; his scenes and bold patterning leave visible arches, columns and supports.¹⁸

One senses too though the influence of William Morris; Julia Ady's record of Sumner and his aspirations to Morris's mantle in the execution of stained glass noted in chapter 4 is indicative, while the Morris quote noted above could be a description of Sumner.

Ruskin's long paean to Gothic in the Stones of Venice was in many ways typical of the age. Architects and theorists of the first half of the nineteenth century

were preoccupied with questions of architectural style, especially for contemporary buildings, something that is neatly encapsulated in the title of Heinrich Hübsch's book *'In What Style should we Build?'* from 1828.¹⁹ Friedrich von Gärtner (1792 – 1847) had already built, around 1840, *'...the first major German iron and glass public building....- [the] Trinkhalle (1834 – 1838) at Bad Kissingen'* (fig. 1).²⁰ Ruskin though influential had his critics; one English reviewer of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, probably Matthew Digby Wyatt, writing in the *Journal of Design*, described Ruskin as one who:

*.... either puts his back against their further development (the article was addressing Ruskin's 'lopsided view of railway architecture') or would attempt to bring the world of art to what its course of action was four centuries ago.*²¹

There is contradiction aplenty in Ruskin;²² but profound moral and social ideas about the position of artist or craftsman (or woman later in the century, especially in stained glass and embroidery), were for Ruskin as, or almost as, important as the work itself. His radical ideas about aspects of society, and which in a patrician way he tried to act upon, harked back nevertheless to some golden age, in his case that of gothic architecture.²³

Wyatt's criticism was valid and the apparent inability of many British artists and designers to escape the clutches of the past as their European counterparts did in the early twentieth century has coloured later views of the very considerable design and decorative achievements of the Victorian period.²⁴ This is pertinent with respect to Sumner, whose sgraffito and stained glass are distinguished by their contemporary qualities; figures of recognisable people in two of the panels at St Mary the Virgin in south Wales, some said to be based on local inhabitants and his treatment of the natural world.²⁵ His sgraffito may display traces of Pre-Raphaelite influence and echoes of older traditions, Byzantine or early Christian, but it is palpably nineteenth century in style; indeed his later work bore nascent twentieth century touches of symbolism or Art-Deco. Sumner developed his own version of an ancient decorative technique, but he was not slavishly replicating a past style, as



Fig. 1: Trinkhalle, Bad Kissingen, Germany (1834-1838), by Friedrich von Gärtner '...the first major German iron and glass public building.'

architects were prone to do, whether Gothic or neo-classical. These represent a decisive break from the grip of neo-classical, grotesque ornament, such as covers the Cole building at South Kensington, and inhabits sgraffito work by other contemporaries, although some of the Devon churches, St Peter's Hornblotton and Birchington show the beginnings of change from the classical style.

Sumner does not escape his times entirely; his most radical decoration in the main apse at St Agatha's, heavily reliant on modern seeming pattern, is nevertheless figuratively based. It is not such a marked departure from some of his work in the 1890s, the bold patterning on the walls at Crookham, for example, and is rather a development. Sumner's art is so often about line and graphical qualities and effects this can provide; moving from pen and paper to scraper and plaster seems a logical and natural step, that also embraces the combination of art and craft.

One may regret that Sumner did not continue to experiment, but his letters convey the effort that his schemes required, implied in the letter to his cousin

already quoted. Writing early in his sgraffito career on 1st June 1888 he says:

Alas, I fear we shall not meet for I do not expect to finish here till early in July. Possibly in 4 weeks from now.

It is v[er]y hard work we haste to rise up early & so late take rest hence this spasmodic epistle writ just before going to bed.²⁶

By the time of his last known commission in Manchester in 1906, he was in his mid-fifties. One wonders if he was simply tired of the travelling, long periods in temporary accommodation and that a change of interest was growing. Sumner moved in 1904 to the house he had designed and had built at Gorley on the western edge of the New Forest, an area in which he felt at home: Mary Greensted observes that:

...interest in the past and a strong sense of place persuaded the Arts and Crafts Designer George Heywood Sumner to devote the latter part of his career to archaeology.²⁷

The development of his sgraffito designs between 1885 and 1906, underpinned by a Ruskinian approach to its creation, is mirrored by changes in the materials he used and detail of his working methods, which the next section will address.

Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration

Two elements are at play in the creation of sgraffito; types and mixes of plasters used and how they are applied; and the method of cutting employed to create a design. One has to understand these as a precursor to experimenting with sgraffito, The following examination of the processes and chemistry is supplemented by a glossary in the appendices.

Giorgio Vasari is generally credited with the first published description of how sgraffito is carried out and the ingredients used, although without providing mix proportions. It is only in the second half of the nineteenth century that writers started to record exact details of materials, quantities, thicknesses and other minutiae involved in its execution. Semper's 1868 article on his experience of the technique and the mixes that he used is possibly the best known from this period, though not the earliest.²⁸

Sumner stands out however; he wrote a number of articles about the process of creating sgraffito, two of which, in 1889 and 1902, give very precise guidance, almost in the form of an instruction manual. He was not alone in describing his methods but his are the most detailed.²⁹ It is thus perhaps surprising that there have been no experiments in England since with his technique such as those carried out during this research. The only example found was American, by Margaret Tomkins in 1939 for an MA thesis; her object was to compare the *'Relative Merits of Tempera and Sgraffito as Techniques of Mural Decoration for the College of Architecture and Fine Arts, University of Southern California.'* She chose to compare egg tempera and sgraffito, when fresco on wet plaster would perhaps have been more logical; we noted the similarities at the end of chapter 3. It is however Tomkins' sgraffito technique that concerns us; this involved the use of thin colour layers one on top of the other, cutting through to the correct depth to reveal a particular colour, although her general arrangements and plaster mixes bore similarities to those we will examine here. Generally, Sumner's method was to use three layers with abutting panels of colour, although Tom Organ from Arte Conservation observes of the work at St Agatha's:

*one thing that was clearly evident was Sumner's use of thin layers of coloured plasters to give shading. Whilst we normally think of sgraffito being used to allow one layer to be cut through to reveal another, Sumner used multiple layers of underlying colour. This allowed him to cut deeper in places revealing several areas of colour in one area, effectively changing the tone when viewed from a distance.*³⁰

Careful examination of Sumner's various schemes suggests that this approach was adopted to create specific effects, but was not, by his own account, his usual working method. Most of his sgraffito is at height so getting close enough to prove this point is difficult, although analysis during conservation at St Mary's did confirm three-layer sgraffito.³¹

Sumner had taken account of the '*great methodical experiments*' that Moody carried out at the South Kensington Museums a decade or so before he began his own trials, although his specifications were to be mainly cement rather than lime based.³² In his 1891 talk he observes of Moody's work that it:

*..... seems to stand perfectly; and surely such achievements as theseare sufficient witness that the method is practical, notwithstanding the changes of our climate and the mischances of fog and smoke.*³³

Adrian Attwood and Kimberley Reczek in their 2015 paper on conservation of Moody's sgraffito at the V & A note that '*Excellent records exist of Moody's original recipes and some of their modifications,*' which they summarise as:

Coarse undercoat: (3/4") – 1 part ground selenitic lime to 4 parts rough sand with addition of Plaster of Paris

Black layer (initially 3/8" but then reduced to 1/4") – 1 part selenitic lime, 1.5 parts of black oxide of magnesium and 2 parts Barra clay. Where this layer is red or pink the colouring would probably have been manganese

White layer (1/16" thick) – Silver sand, lime and whitening

They observe of the coarse undercoat:

*Adhesion problems resulted in modifying this recipe to 1 part selenitic lime to 2 parts Barra clay and 5 parts coarse sand.*³⁴

Attwood and Reczek suggest insufficient wetting or preparation of the substrate, or expansion of the second black layer as possible causes of the problems. Certainly, Moody and his team seem to have reduced the strength of their base coat from an effective 1:4 mix to 1:2:5. They omitted the Plaster of Paris, which would already have been a component of the selenitic lime, would have further increased the speed of set and might also have been a factor in the lack of adhesion.³⁵

These experiments were being carried out as modern materials such as standardised Portland cement were becoming widely available, so Moody and his team experimented with this as well but without adding gypsum, which seems to have only become usual in the 1890s.³⁶ Portland cement was simple to use and a mortar made with it would be hard by the next day but its incompatibility with breathable traditional materials caused damage to medieval buildings and this misuse was possibly known by the end of the Victorian period, although it seems probable that only repair failures on historic buildings using cement rich mortars after the first world war made this clear.³⁷ So it is surprising to find it as a component of Sumner's mixes, given that he was frequently working in old buildings and one wonders whether his problems at Vicars' Close Chapel in Wells, discussed in chapter 3, were partly caused by the strength and impermeability of his plasters.

The earliest evidence for Sumner's mixes for sgraffito is in an 1889 article in the A&CES catalogue:

Coarse Coat. – 2 or 3 of sharp sand to 1 of Portland, to be laid $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in thickness. This coat is to promote an even suction and to keep back damp

Colour Coat – 1 of colour to $1\frac{1}{2}$ of Old Portland, to be laid about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in thickness. Specially prepared distemper colours should be used...

Final Surface Coat – laid between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{12}$ inch

- *Aberthaw lime and selenitic cement, both sifted through a fine sieve. The proportions of the gauge depend upon the heat of the lime, or*
- *Parian cement sifted as above. This may be useful in a dimly-lighted building, as it dries out very white, but it sets too quick for convenience, or*
- *3 of selenitic cement to 2 of silver sand, both sifted as above. This may be used for outdoor work³⁸*

Robinson recommended the use of selenitic lime for both the top two coats but proposed a Portland cement/sand mix for the coarse coat.³⁹

In both cases the cement based coarse coat is strong, especially if mixed 2:1 sand/cement. This probably accounts for Sally Strachey's observation about St Mary the Virgin that Sumner had effectively tanked the inside of the church. Her comment was based on analysis of the plaster coats, which revealed that his mixes differed slightly from those he reported:

Coarse Coat. – 9 aggregate to 3 of [Portland?] cement to 1 of gypsum

Colour Coat. – 2-3 of colour to 1 of [Old Portland?] cement and 3-4 carbon black to 1 of lime to 1 of gypsum

Final Surface Coat. - 1 of gypsum to 5 of hydraulic (most likely Aberthaw) lime⁴⁰

The coarse coat is still strong, albeit 2.25:1, with the cement mixed with a proportion of gypsum; in effect adding Plaster of Paris. This may have been to reduce the speed of set, before the standard addition of gypsum for this reason.⁴¹ The colour coat ratios appear to be reversed from what Sumner gives in 1889 and are what he recommends in his 1902 article.

Selenitic cement was invented by Henry Young Darracott Scott (1822 – 1883), a military engineer, who worked on the South Kensington Museums and designed the Albert Hall. He discovered that modifying the processing of hydraulic lime created a material that:

sets or hardens after a time, behaving in fact, in every way like a

*cement of good quality, and sometimes equalling Portland cement in strength.*⁴²

It is usually described today as lime cement to which 5 – 10% of Plaster of Paris has been added.⁴³ Sumner was always keen to get a stronger, fine, white or off-white finish that was easy to cut.⁴⁴ The addition of the Aberthaw lime seems to have been to improve this further but the inclusion of three options of finishing coat suggest Sumner was still experimenting to achieve the appearance and durability he wanted.

Impermeability of the background layers meant that failure of other elements of the building fabric would cause significant damp problems, with excess moisture getting into the stonework and being trapped behind the plaster; Discussing St Mary's, Sally Strachey says:

*Where moisture had been trapped behind and between layers of plaster, temperature cycles within and without the church – in relationship to the different thermal expansion coefficients of the three-coat system and the stonework beneath – caused them to separate from each other and pull away from the substrate. The brittle surface and colour coat had extensive cracking and crazing, with the worst affected areas bulging as the layers were being pushed apart.*⁴⁵

Replacement of the cement-based plaster below the sgraffito with a lime mix was critical to allow as much of the building to breathe as much as possible in conjunction with the stabilisation of the sgraffito itself. It is notable that much of Sumner's sgraffito thereafter is at upper levels on church walls or is separated from ground level by a deep dado. His next scheme at Clane in Ireland begins at the same level as Mary's but rises from a projecting stone dado rail, while those at Sunbury and Crookham are much higher up. The question of damp and its effects would have been on Sumner's mind after his experience at Wells, and he devotes a large part of an article to this issue. He lists the usual causes of damp and remedies:

An inside wall is damp either because the pointing is defective, or because the material of which it is built is porous, or because the rain

is not properly carried from the roof to the ground, or because there is a body of damp earth against some portion of the wall.

To re-point with Portland cement is a simple matter, but a wall built of porous material should always be looked upon with suspicion. When practicable, the best thing to be done is to build a four-inch brick wall inside, in front of the damp wall, leaving a space for ventilation between the two walls.⁴⁶

Most of this advice still stands, except for the use of Portland cement in repointing an old wall. Then as now this was likely to have been built with a lime-based mortar and mixing the two specifications is not desirable as it seriously affects the breathability of the old construction. Sumner's suspicion of 'a wall built of porous material' perhaps indicates awareness of an issue here. He goes on to deal with the need for damp proof courses and keeping ground level below these.

The construction of an inner leaf of brickwork with a cavity behind was noted in chapter 3 as part of the works to Vicars' Close chapel in Wells. George Bankart, in his 1908 book, *The Art of the Plasterer*,⁴⁷ apparently draws on Sumner's ideas, but adds his own approach to dealing with a damp wall by the use a 'Ventilating (tile and Plaster) Lining,' his diagram and explanation is shown in figure 2.

The author has met the difficulty by lining the inside of the walls with ordinary flat, well-made roofing tiles, bedded in cement and ventilated in this manner :—



FIG. 52.—Plan of Ventilating (Tile and Plaster) Lining to Interior of Damp Walls.

The nibs at top of the tiles are knocked off, and as many tiles as are required for the purpose are cut in half lengthwise, and bedded on the wall in cement, in vertical strips, at intervals wide enough apart to receive the whole tiles lapping over them, with a dab of cement down each edge; thus a ventilating space is formed by each row of tiles, and the coating of plaster or stucco is applied to this foundation. This system has the advantage of reducing the thickness of the wall lining to the utmost, and has proved successful in serious cases. It is also much less expensive than building a 4½-inch brick wall with a ventilating space at back.

Fig. 2: George Bankart's 1908 detail for lining damp walls to receive sgraffito.⁴⁷

Sumner's specification in his longer, more detailed article of 1902, differs from the earlier one:

Coarse Coat. – 2 or 3 of clean (well washed) sharp grit sand to 1 of Portland (White's). This coat is to promote an even suction and to keep back damp

Colour Coat. – 1 of colour to 3 of fine Parian (cement), to be laid about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in thickness. Specially prepared distemper colours should be used 'in all cases Mander's powder distemper colours...'

Final Surface Coat. - Fine Parian cement in thicknesses to suit the distance off the work from the floor, $\frac{1}{16}$ " , $\frac{1}{8}$ " or $\frac{1}{4}$ " as appropriate

The coarse coat remains the same, but his colour coat mixes have weakened from 1:1½ to 1:3, colour to Parian. The latter ratio tallies with the analysis carried out on the sgraffito at St Mary's, Llanfair Kilgeddin, although they were based on Portland cement rather than Parian cement; in Sumner's 1902 list the precise ratios vary only slightly across the seventeen colours for which he gives ingredients. Thirteen are in the ratio of 1:3, one is 1:3.2, one is 1:2.8 and two are 1:2.57; averaged out the mixes are consistent.⁴⁸ He is very precise about keeping the colours separate; '...you also should provide yourself with several hawks, or mortar boards, so that each colour may have its own hawk'. With each colour mix he notes if they set more quickly than others and also explains how to lighten colours by increasing the amount of Parian but warns that this will speed up the setting. He also advises only putting as much coloured area onto the wall as will be covered the next day by the finishing coat so that the relative drying of colour and final coats is consistent across the entire work.⁴⁹

Sumner gives 'fine Parian' as his preferred finish, defined by John and Nicola Ashurst as a high strength finishing plaster, patented by J. Keating in 1846. It was made by soaking Plaster of Paris in 2.75 litres (12 gallons) of water in a solution of:

1.1 Kg [2.5lb] borax (sodium borate) and

2.2 Kg (5lb) cream of tartar (potassium hydrogen tartrate)

which was subsequently calcined (heated to a high temperature to leave a burnt residue or calx). The Ashursts go on to say:

Parian was free working and possessed good tensile strength. It was frequently used neat for mouldings over a float coat of 1 Part Portland cement to 3 parts sand.⁵⁰

This is precisely what Sumner was looking for, a fine, hard surface that he found easy to cut.

He provides instructions on all aspects of preparation, timing one's plaster coats and drying intervals, registering the design onto the wall by pouncing through the pricked cartoon with 'dry Parian wrapped in a muslin bag' to leave 'a clear impression of your design in small white dots on the grey coarse coat,' and later doing the same onto 'the newly laid white ground' but using 'Portland cement for your pounce, the grey powder of which will give a clear impression....'

Sumner conveys a sense of his excitement at the process. About to liaise with the plasterer on the placing of the colour panels, he writes:

Now, you are ready to begin the actual execution of the sgraffito. Up to this point your plasterer has been doing his work, rendering the walls, and you have been doing yours, marking in your designs; now however, you will work together in much closer union, and must plan each day's work ahead for the next week, or more, so that the coloured plaster for next day's work may be got on to-day, and so on from day to day. Why? Because sgraffito work is "fresco" in the true meaning of the word: it must be done - fresh; the process being that one day you lay a ground of coloured plaster, the next day you cover this with a thin layer of white plaster, and then you cut your design out of this thin white layer, thereby revealing the coloured ground below.⁵¹

And when he comes to the actual "scratching,"

...or really cutting, for nothing gives such clean, quick results as a knife blade fixed in a tool handle; with this tool you may learn to work with such rapidity that it will take two if not three assistants to follow you cleaning up the spaces of colour and the lines you have cut....⁵²

Sumner also gives the only detailed description found so far of the actual cutting process and how to work with the setting of the plaster:

The ground should be trowelled-up quite firm to the touch, and without any damp shine on it before you begin cutting it.....

For the first hour of two you should cut in outline all the large spaces of colour, backgrounds, long lines, etc., because the final coat when first laid on will scale off quite easily from the colour coat; gradually, however, the final coat will begin to set and to adhere to the colour coat, and as the day goes on your rate of progress will get slower and slower. At first the final coat cuts like cream cheese under your knife, then "short," i.e. crumbly, then tough, then hard, and finally like stone. It is better to leave all fine work, such as heads, hands, and feet, to the tough stage; and you should use special care in cutting during the "short" stage, otherwise you have to spend valuable time in mending breaks. Note that in cutting you should always slant your knife away from the edge which you mean to leave as a sharp outline, because the act of cutting is apt to shake the key of the final coat; by slanting your knife aright you leave intact the plaster which is to remain, and you disturb the key of the plaster that is to come away, thereby facilitating the work of your assistant who is following you up, removing the spaces of cut-out plaster and cleaning up.⁵³

Sumner's works endure despite modern views of some of his materials. Certainly, visiting them today, they are cracked, with signs of decay, discolouration and occasional damp damage, but the hard finishes and the artist's efforts remain of a technique rare in England. Several have been sensitively restored and repaired in the last twenty years. We have mentioned Strachey and Strachey's work at St Mary's, Llanfair Kilgeddin, but conservation has been carried out at St Mary's, Sunbury and St Agatha's in Portsmouth by Arte Conservation, and at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral by Hare and Humphries and Richard Griffiths architects.

The effects of the passage of time are visible on the angels from Sumner's small scheme at Brereton in figure 3. Areas of blue show the rough effect on the

colour layer of cutting away the top plaster layer with some possible signs of movement within the material at lower left. There is staining across the panel, some due to damp no doubt, but also to decay within the plaster. The right foot crossing the frame of the work has lost its surface, showing what appears to be the reddy-pink coloured coat (fig. 4) outlining the foot and where the finish coat would have defined the angel's toes. Just to the right, and more easily seen in figure 3 in the line along the hem of her robe, is Sumner's tendency to not necessarily cut accurately to the colour layer; the blue and red co-exist in the cut line. A more prominent instance of this is in the back edge of the partially hidden wing where the feather ends carry patches of blue from the main background.

This angel is the only one for which there exists a drawing for the colour layout and it shows how simply the design resolves to its basic colour palette. Complexity and interest come from the hand of the artist cutting into the top layer to the pounced outline of his full design (fig. 5).



Fig. 3: St Michael's Church, Brereton, Staffordshire (1897), by Heywood Sumner. South aisle, east angel 'Not my will but thine be done.'

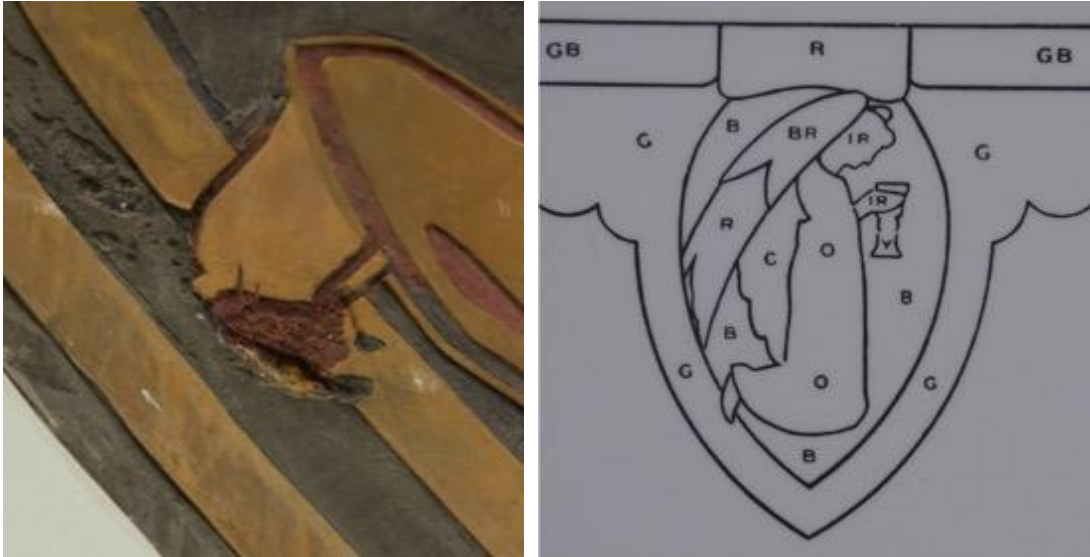


Fig. 4: St Michael's Church, Brereton, Staffordshire (1897). Detail of angel's foot in figure 3.

Fig. 5: St Michael's Church, Brereton, Staffordshire (1897). Layout for second layer of abutting panels of coloured plasters.

In discussion after a talk by Sumner in 1891 Mr. H. Stannus⁵⁴ was worried by the lack of freedom for the artist to change his design as work proceeds, which is available with a 'monochrome ground,' and that:

*in the hands of a real artist, ... was an advantage; but with parti-coloured grounds the design must be made beforehand, and there is not the chance of much alteration. The variety of colours gives a most pleasing result, but, on the other hand, there must be some slight loss of freedom.*⁵⁵

Sumner answered this criticism by saying that he often changed borders and ornamentation as he carried out the work. What he did not say, but which is clear from the details above and figure 6, is that he did not adhere to his templates rigidly. He often crosses colour boundaries and mixes the tones within the same areas; partly this was due to tolerance for slight inaccuracy that there must be working with repeated pouncing through of the design to the wall but also seems to have been a conscious decision to enliven the work. A vivid illustration of this is to be seen in the left-hand spandrel below the Annunciation panel at Sunbury where the pouncing marks are clearly visible and indicate that cutting only approximately followed the design. Indeed, above Sumner's initials in figure 6



Fig. 6: St Mary's, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. Detail from left hand spandrel below the Annunciation showing extensive remains of pouncing through from the design and the extent to which Sumner varied from this. This detail is just visible in the bottom left-hand corner of figure 10.

there are dots showing a change of mind about the design while cutting was in progress.

Figure 7 shows what at first appears a particularly dramatic example of mixed colours when cutting out his design; there is no apparent relationship between the nearer walrus and the blue and red colours marking its body and the rock onto which it has hauled out. The evident mismatch in fact appears to be an instance where Sumner overlaid red on blue and cut through to reveal different areas of colour.⁵⁶

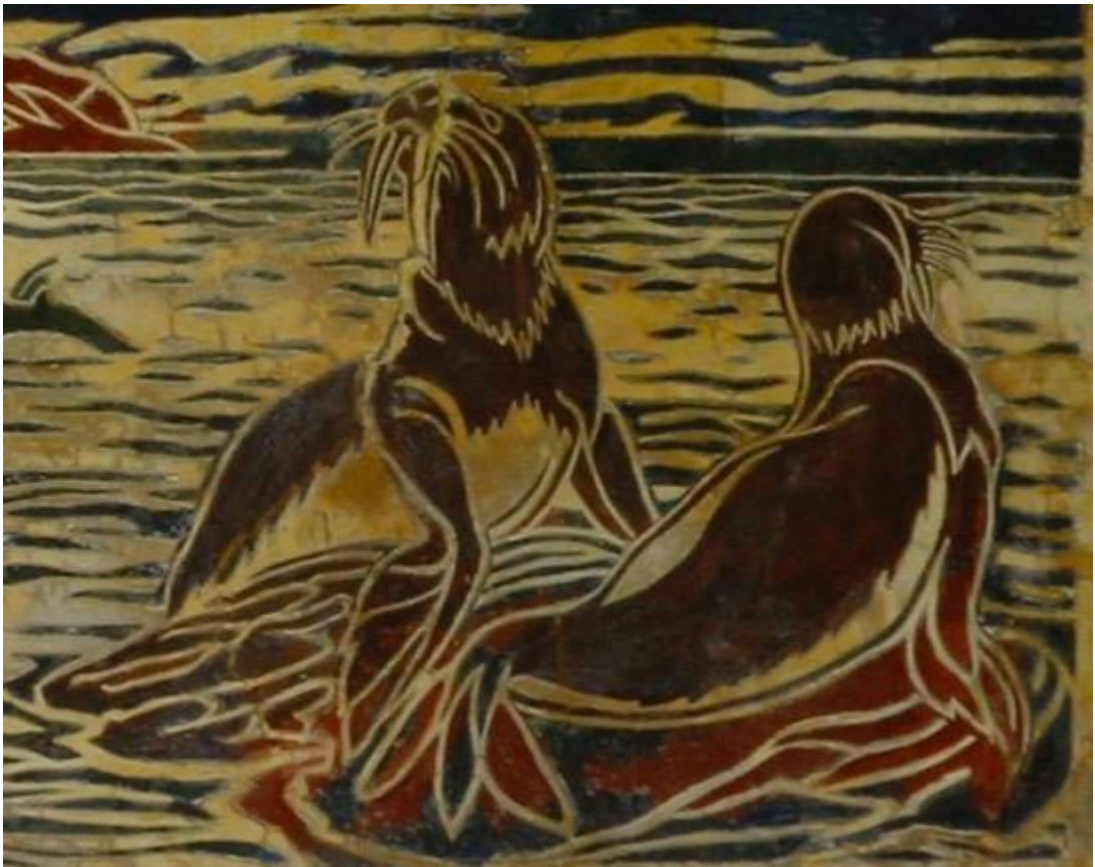


Fig. 7: St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888), by Heywood Sumner. 'O ye Whales and all that move in the water...,' detail.

Not adhering to the borders of colour panels when cutting occurs regularly though, but often very subtly, even in such a delicate and carefully cut work as the Virgin and Child at Crookham. Looking closely, the blues, purple and brown stop and start within the same cut line and in places shade from one to another (fig. 8). The same effect can be seen on the chancel arch at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral where reds and blues only roughly tally with the positions and shapes of leaves and grapes (see fig. 16 in chapter 4).



Fig. 8: Christ Church, Crookham (1893), by Heywood Sumner. Adoration of the Shepherds, detail of Christ child and Virgin's robe.

Chapter 1 touched on some aspects of the effects Sumner achieved, noting the depth of the topcoat and the three-dimensional quality this created at St Mary's, Llanfair Kilgeddin. Some random checks on depth of topcoat of plaster there ranged between 2.0 and 6.5mm, that is from less than $\frac{1}{8}$ " to over $\frac{1}{4}$ " and in places appeared thicker still. It is noticeable in other schemes, where one can get close to the sgraffito, that the top layers seem to be thinner; one imagines in part because cutting becomes less taxing, although Sumner gives ' $\frac{1}{16}$ "', ' $\frac{1}{8}$ " or $\frac{1}{4}$ "' as the cutting depth range in his later article, depending upon how far from the viewer the work will be.⁵⁷ Sumner refers to 'cutting' in his descriptions of his sgraffito, rather than 'scratching' and sometimes he appears to have carved the surface. The distinction reflects a shifting boundary; one does find thin final coats but part of the impact of his work is due to the depth of topcoats and incisions into them.

Sumner also does not outline a shape just by the contrast between top white coat and colour but sets a white line within the boundary of the colour as a secondary delineation of form. This is seen vividly in figure 3, on the angel's robe, her wings and indeed on the chalice she holds, but note the contrasting situation with hands and face, where the shape is defined by the surrounding underlying colour alone. A striking example of this double perimeter is seen in the hare at the feet of St. Giles at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral shown in figure 9. The outer boundary defines the creature over the grey plaster, but leaves substantial areas of the colour outside, while the inner white line somehow enhances the animation of the creature's pose. There are marks of working too on the grey where white plaster has been scraped off it and, just discernible, hints of brown within the outer white border. All this tells of the artist's hand and eye realising the design based on the pounced pattern, working quickly as the plaster starts to set. From Sumner's description of his method, it is likely that he defined the outline as soon as the plaster was firm enough to cut but left the details of face and fur until the surface had reached the *'tough'* stage. Seen at distance from the ground or the opposing balcony, these signs of working are not really visible, but they do convey a sense of delight in the moment of the cutting to create an animal with so much life.

Sumner talks of early starts, and working late, and working quickly, especially when starting each morning; so how big an area could he cut in a day? An answer came in the form of annotated photographs of the work at Sunbury on which Tom Organ of Arte Construction marked the day work joints apparent from close inspection of the sgraffito during conservation in 2018. Figure 10 suggests, for example, that cutting of the Annunciation scene took five days with a further two expended on the spandrels below and another on the arched sections between the projecting angels above. Breaks are as straight as possible but do pass through leaves or other detail, where the joins would only be seen by a conservator at close quarters.

Trying to replicate Sumner's method was obviously possible.⁵⁸ Reproducing even part of one of his designs, one marvels at the scheme itself and at his sophisticated and complex use of line; and moreover, at the pace at which he and

his team worked. The next chapter will report on the experiments into these matters.



Fig. 9: Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), London (1897 – 1903), by Heywood Sumner. Detail of hare from St Giles' panel, north clerestory.



Fig. 10: St Mary's, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. Daywork joints in the Annunciation are defined by black lines.

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- 1 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Julia Ady, (née Cartwright), 9 October 1892, Northampton Archives, Cartwright (Edgcote) Collection, CE121/17, 2.
 - 2 Folkish, as in '*originating from, or traditional to, the common people of a country*' (Glasgow: Collins English Dictionary, 1983), 564.
 - 3 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice, volume the second: The Sea Stories* (Smith, Elder and Co., Originally published 1853, second edition 1867), §XVI, 165.
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 Ruskin, §XVII, 165 – 166.
 - 6 Ruskin, §XIX, 167.
 - 7 Ruskin, §XXI, 168.
 - 8 Ruskin, §XXI, 169.
 - 9 Ruskin, §XXI, 169 – 170.
 - 10 Fiona MacCarthy in her biography, *William Morris: A Life for our Time* cites an observation by Burne Jones that Morris's life "*unfolded in cycles*". *He moves from enthusiasm to enthusiasm, but immerses himself in it so he knows how to do something thoroughly*', 598.
 - 11 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 280; quoting William Morris from *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. May Morris, London, 1910 – 15, XXII, 40.
 - 12 See Ian Hamerton ed., *W. A. S. Benson: Arts and Crafts Luminary and Pioneer of Modern Design* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 2005), 25 and 53.
 - 13 Heywood Sumner, 'II. Of Sgraffito work.' In *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Second Exhibition, MDCCCLXXXIX*, 36-37. London: Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, 1889. This essay was subsequently reprinted as 'Sgraffito Work,' in *The Decorator and Furnisher* (20 May 1892): 50-51.
 - 14 Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, §XXII, 170.
 - 15 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration.' *Art Journal* (January 1902): 26.

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- 16 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Dean Edgar Gibson, 9 March 1887, SW Heritage Trust, Taunton, ref. A/BBR/6/3.
- 17 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 12, September 1897, CE121/21, 2.
- 18 See John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Boston: Dana Estes & Company, 1849), §VI, 39.
- 19 Wolfgang Hermann, ed. *In What Style Should We Build? The German Debate on Architectural Style* (Santa Monica: The Getty Centre Publications Programme, 1992), which contains Heinrich Hübsch's essay *In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?* 1828. Hübsch's answer was a version of the Romanesque known now as *Rundbogenstil* (literally 'round arch style').
- 20 Ibid, 43. The illustration below is from 44.
- 21 I have quoted Wyatt from Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale university Press, 1996), 195.
- 22 Ruskin himself admitted as much: '*Perhaps some of my hearers this evening may occasionally have heard it stated of me that I am rather apt to contradict myself. I hope I am exceedingly apt to do so. I never met with a question yet, of any importance, which did not need, for the right solution of it, at least one positive and one negative answer. ... Mostly, matters of any consequence are three-sided, or four-sided, or polygonal; and the trotting round a polygon is severe work for people any way stiff in their opinions. For myself, I am never satisfied that I have handled a subject properly till I have contradicted myself at least three times. ...* Quoted in John Unrau, *Looking at Architecture with Ruskin* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 50.
- 23 Ruskin's idealistic founding of the Guild of St George in 1871 for example, with its aim to support and improve art education, craft work and the rural economy. The Guild still exists: <https://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk>.
- 24 Many British artist and designers were very influential in Europe, the Mackintoshes for example; and Ashbee and Sumner both exhibited at International Exhibitions. This is addressed in chapters 7 and 8.
- 25 Margot Coatts, 'Reports on architectural visits – December/January 1985.' Archive, Hampshire Cultural Trust, Winchester, December –January 1985.
- 26 Letter, Sumner to Ady, 1 June 1888, CE121/13, 3.
- 27 Mary Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2010), 16.

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- 28 Semper was not the first. See Emil Lange and Josef Bühlmann, *Die Anwendung des Sgraffitos für Fassaden Dekoration* (München: E. A. Fleischmann & Gropius, 1867).
- 29 Heywood Sumner, 'II. Of Sgraffito work,' In *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Second Exhibition, MDCCCLXXXIX* (London: Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, 1889), 31-39, and 'Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration,' *Art Journal* (January 1902): 21-26.
- 30 E mail from Tom Organ to the author 22 October 2020. Tom Organ also carried out the retrieval of the heads in the Good Samaritan panel at St Paul's in Winchester, and in his report, cited by Lamb, 103, says: 'Sumner sometimes varied his technique, at St. Agatha's incisions in the fine plaster topcoat were subsequently infilled with a coloured coarse plaster, effectively reversing the effect normally achieved.'
- 31 Experiments described in chapter 6 indicate that Sumner did use coloured layers one on top of the other; this point was confirmed to the author by Rachel Morley of Friends of Friendless Churches in discussions in January 2021.
- 32 Adrian Adswood and Kimberley Reczek, 'Sgraffito Conservation at the Henry Cole Wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum.,' *Association for the Study of Conservation in Historic Buildings (ASCHB)* 38 (2015): 35, discuss this: 'While historic sgraffito is often based purely on non-hydraulic lime mortars, English sgraffito from the 19th and 20th centuries often employed harder mixtures of Portland or selenitic cement and hydraulic lime.'
- 33 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito,' Paper read before the Society of Arts, 10 February 1891, reported in the Society's Journal of 13 February 1891, 230. Robinson was in the audience for Sumner's talk and in the discussion afterwards seems to claim to have preceded Cole and Moody in the use of sgraffito in England: 'About 40 years ago, however, people again began to agitate for some other process of decoration, and sgraffito began to rise again. Thirty years ago he [Robinson] had the temerity to try it on a wall in Dartmouth, but, not knowing much about it, he found great difficulties..... By and bye people got to know more about it; then South Kensington took it up....,' 233.
- 34 Adswood and Reczek, 'Sgraffito Conservation at the Henry Cole Wing..., ' 37.
- 35 This section draws on Moody's notes, from an unpublished book held at the National Art Library in the Victoria & Albert Museum, *Decoration of the South Kensington Museum, 1862 – 1874*, 25-27. Due to covid pandemic restrictions these are quoted from Jane Lamb's dissertation, 'Sgraffito in England 1600-1950,' Appendix 1 (Architectural Association, May 1998), 93-94, Almost the same text was read out as part of Alan S. Cole's paper to the Royal Institute of British Architects on 17 March 1873, 'On the Art of

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- Sgraffito Decoration*,’ discussed in chapter 2. Adswood and Reczek also cite investigations carried out in 1994, which provided detailed mortar analysis; the date suggests that this is the work to which Lamb refers in her case study No. 5, 79-81.
- 36 Jane Lamb, ‘Scratching the Surface: An Introduction to Sgraffito and its Conservation in England.’ *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, no. 1 (March 1999): 48.
- 37 Bob Bennett, *The Development of Portland Cement*, BuildingConservation.com, 2005, suggests the dangers of Portland cement-based mortar use on historic buildings was well known before the end of the Victorian period. The significantly later time frame is given in John J. Hughes and Jan Válek, *Mortars in Historic Buildings, A Review of the Conservation, Technical and Scientific Literature*, Historic Scotland, 2003, 10.
- 38 Sumner, ‘II. Of Sgraffito work,’ 33-34.
- 39 William Millar, *Plastering Plain and Decorative* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905), 219-221.
- 40 Tabulated from Strachey, Sally Strachey, A. ‘Fresh Life Refreshed.’ *Cornerstone* 28, no.3 (2007), 40.
- 41 Civil Engineering Portal, <https://www.engineeringcivil.com/what-is-the-purpose-of-adding-gypsum-in-cement.html>. The issue of what effects different additives have on cement, lime etc is a complex one. This site is explicit: ‘Gypsum is a mineral and is hydrated calcium sulfate in chemical form. Gypsum plays a very important role in controlling the rate of hardening of the cement. During the cement manufacturing process, upon the cooling of clinker, a small amount of gypsum is introduced during the final grinding process. Gypsum is added to control the “setting of cement”. If not added, the cement will set immediately after mixing of water leaving no time for concrete placing.’
- 42 Gen. H. Y. D. Scott, ‘On the Conversion of Lime into Cement by the Selenitic Method,’ *Van Nostrand’s Eclectic Engineering Magazine*, 46, no. 7 (1 November 1872): 542.
- 43 The 1872 account of Scott’s invention refers to ‘*simply allowing a small proportion of sulphurous acid gas (obtained by burning sulphur, or other well-known methods) to pass into the kiln during the burning of the lime.*’ Plaster of Paris was the original common form of gypsum (calcium sulphate hemihydrate). Its addition to the lime plaster seems to have improved the set to a very hard finish.

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- 44 F. P. Cockerell, in his remarks to the RIBA meeting on 17th March 1873 at which Alan Summerly Cole delivered his paper, *On the Art of Sgraffito*, stresses the need for 'extremely fine stuff' in the topcoat to facilitate cutting.
- 45 Strachey, 'Fresh Life Refreshed.' 40.
- 46 Sumner, 'Sgraffito,' 1891, 231.
- 47 George Bankart, *The Art of the Plasterer*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, 40.
- 48 Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration,' *Art Journal* (January 1902): 22-23. All mixes equate to 1:3, except no. 2, Bright red, 1:2.8; nos. 12, Green, and 13, Dark green, 1:2.57 (although for the latter Sumner gives two options, the other is 1:3), and no. 16, Brown yellow, 1:2.8.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 John and Nicola Ashurst, *English Heritage Technical Handbook: Mortars, Plasters and Renders, Volume 3* (Aldershot: Gower Technical Press, Practical Building Conservation, 1988), 33. The specification above for Parian cement is from their book. The imperial conversion of Borax in the book is given as '5lb' but should be as given in the text.
- 51 Sumner, *Sgraffito as a Method of Wall Decoration*, 22.
- 52 Ibid, 24.
- 53 Ibid. Robinson describes some of the aspects of cutting that Sumner does in Millar's book, *Plastering Plain and Decorative*, 219-221, but Sumner is more detailed and precise.
- 54 Hugh Hutton Stannus (1840 – 1908) was a member of the Art Workers' Guild from 1884.
- 55 Sumner, 'Sgraffito,' 1891, 233.
- 56 A revisit to the church to check this particular example was not possible during writing this chapter. The assumption of one colour laid over another follows the conversation with Friends of Friendless Churches recorded in note 31 above.
- 57 Sumner, *Sgraffito as a Method of Wall Decoration*, 24.
- 58 And, it must be said, proved irresistible.

Chapter 6

Trying out sgraffito

Two approaches were pursued in replicating one of the sgraffito methods Sumner described in his articles of 1889 and 1902:

- 1 Reproduction of a panel from one of his designs
- 2 Creation of a modern design

Reproduction of one of his designs was attempted to echo as precisely as possible the process Sumner used in creating his sgraffito. We have seen that his accounts or instructions are comprehensive but understanding so often comes through doing, through repeating a process to reveal the reasons for certain arrangements, timings and such matters as why he left details until the plaster was quite hard.

Creation of a modern design was considered to examine the suitability of Sumner's sgraffito technique in the twenty first century and showed some of the problems of designing large sgraffito pieces. His subjects were mainly religious, so what would a contemporary piece treat of? Nineteenth century commentators had noted the method as suitable for advertisements due to its durability, which would probably not suit modern requirements.¹ Other sites or purposes can be envisioned, celebratory works for events or as memorials, commissioned art work for museums, theatres or the like or indeed small pieces as house identifiers or name plates as has been the case in the Swiss city of Konstanz.² It would also reveal how to go about taking a sketch at A3 or A2 and rendering it appropriate for a large wall space. How much detail could, or should one include? Sgraffito methods vary greatly from place to place, from the scratched and shaded figurative 'paintings' of the Renaissance to the Kratzputz or thick sgraffito of post war German practice, where a government funded initiative for art on public buildings has left an extensive legacy of modern sgraffito. This is now vulnerable, ironically not due to age and decay, but from the drive to improve the thermal performance of buildings by applying external insulation.³

Reproduction required selection of a manageable, small example for a novice to try and create. One obvious choice was the recovered panel of the heads of the Good Samaritan and the traveller he aids from St Paul's Church in Winchester as it is about 600 x 450mm in size and so of suitable scale for studio recreation. Tracing over an enlarged photograph though quickly showed this to be too difficult for an initial sample. Something less demanding on the cutting hand of a beginner was needed; a simple pattern or plant element beckoned as a trial panel. Eventually, a landscape detail was selected, of a fruit tree from the *'All ye green things...'* scene at St Mary's, Llanfair Kilgeddin. An A3 sized tracing was made from a photograph, selected to include three colours and both linear and round shapes. Even this ostensibly simpler design pointed up the fact that if one has never tried sgraffito before a 'sampler' was needed, a panel on which to practise cutting out various shapes of different sizes, with perhaps two colours, to test out the timings, states of plaster that Sumner refers to and the use of a variety of different tools.⁴ The designs are shown in figures 1 and 2.



Fig. 1: Design of test panel 1, the 'sampler'.



Fig. 2: Design of test panel 2, pricked through. Source location shown at right, from *'O all ye green things upon the earth.....'* at St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin.

The main purpose of the experiments was to test Sumner's plaster mixes and to learn how easy or difficult the cutting process is. Certain differences from Sumner's working conditions were thus accepted in the conduct of the experiments, as for example in the use of mesh within timber frames in lieu of application to masonry for obvious reasons of convenience. This method was known in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, examples were noted in chapters 2 and 4, including one by Sumner. William Millar provides a brief description of it in *'Plastering Plain and Decorative'* from 1905:

SGRAFFITO SLABS – Slabs for sgraffito are constructed by first making a wood frame to the desired size. This is then lathed, or covered with strong wire-netting, or with metal sheet lathing. The frame may form the edges and ruling-off points, or rules may be temporarily fixed on the outsides of the frame to give the desired thickness of the plastic material. The frame is then plastered with any desired lime or plaster in the usual way.⁵

Initially two A3 test panels were carried out, using two from a selection of wooden frames made up of timbers stripped from an old pallet and other pieces the author had in store; and adopting Millar's idea of thin laths fixed to the frames to gauge coat thicknesses. Two panels had a solid plywood back, the others a hit-and-miss array of battens. Both were then lined with galvanised render mesh secured through mesh spacers with flat headed, roofing felt nails (figs. 3 and 4).



Fig. 3: Two A3 and three A2 frames made up for sgraffito tests. The difference in backing was to see if there was any impact on drying of the base coat but none was observed.



Fig. 4: A2 frame under construction showing spacers to receive mesh sheet and battens on top of the frame to define backing and topcoat thicknesses as suggested by William Millar.

Sand, cement and mesh were easily sourced locally; other materials proved more difficult to find. No source of Parian cement was found in the UK, and initially it seemed possible that the same would be true of selenitic cement, until discovery of a modern ready bagged material closely matching Sumner's selenitic cement and silver sand; Lime Green Solo one coat plaster, a mixture of selenitic cement, sand and chalk.⁶ The sgraffito was therefore carried out using Sumner's earlier specification, essentially the same as that used at Llanfair Kilgeddin, with cement as the binder in the first two layers.

Sumner defines his colours as *'in all cases Mander's powder distemper colour'* but gives no further details. Mander's is described in 1865 as manufacturing colours and paints, suggesting that pigments alone could be purchased.⁷ Modern coloured pigments for adding to plaster or render were difficult to track down but were eventually purchased from Celtic Sustainable in Ceredigion, all taken from their Earthborn Earth pigments range, except for ultramarine, which was from the Coloured Earth synthetic range.⁸

It was necessary to work outside due to the absence of a suitable workshop or spare space inside the house, so a temporary studio area was created on the lawn, a work bench under a gazebo. Mixing and applying the cement sand base coat with a brick-laying trowel and large float trowel was accomplished, albeit awkwardly, achieving a rough 19mm coat that was reasonably level (figs. 5 and 6). The panels were covered with damp clothes, left propped against a wall outside and rewetted periodically over the next two days as the weather was warm, with the

result that they did not crack at all. Belated scoring of the surfaces unfortunately raised aggregate particles which had to be scraped off once the panels were dry.

The first 'sampler' panel was started after two days drying of the base coat in line with Sumner's guidance on timescale. A test design of shapes had been prepared and pricked through, using a mixture of tools, a needle tied to a wooden rod as suggested by Sumner, two thin unthreaded bradawls and a serrated wheel on a plastic handle (fig. 7). The wheel was quicker but difficult to control on curves and complicated shapes and the needle gave very small holes. The larger bradawl was most effective and gave slightly larger perforations. Testing the hole size revealed that:

- 1 Holes need to be close together, 4 – 6 mm apart at most. Initial attempts to speed up the process with holes 12 – 15 mm apart transferred inadequate detail through to the plaster surface
- 2 Pricking holes through onto corrugated card rather than a dense cardboard gave bigger holes as the point penetrated further through the tracing



Fig. 5: Test panel 1. Application of cement sand base coat.



Fig. 6: Test panel 1. Base coat complete. View at gap in frame edges showing thickness and guide battens for depth of later coats.



Fig. 7: The various tools tried for pricking through designs. The blue handled bradawl was the author's preferred option.

First attempts at pouncing through onto the prepared plaster were unsatisfactory but sufficed because the areas of colour to be applied were very simple and enough of the coloured powder used was visible (fig. 8). Sumner used Parian cement to pounce through his colour areas onto the base coat but attempts with the Lime Solo showed that the grain size with sand and chalk added was too large and did not work, so the ultramarine colour was substituted. The colour borders were painted in with acrylic paint to provide visible lines for application of the colour layers (fig. 9) and the surface thoroughly wetted to minimise suction of moisture from the colour coats, to avoid too rapid a set and prevent any cracking.



Fig. 8: Test panel 1. Detail of base layer surface with blue pounce line on roughened surface of the base layer.



Fig. 9: Test panel 1. Colour area boundaries painted in.

Mixing colours was done with old plastic yogurt pots to gauge powder and cement quantities, and a larger bucket for mixing with water:

First blue section: 1 colour: 3 cement

Second blue section: 1 colour: 1 cement

Red section roughly: 1 colour: 1 cement

Application of the colours was more difficult with the tools to hand; colour boundaries were irregular, and smudges of red appeared on the blue. The following picture sequence illustrates the process (figs. 10 – 13).

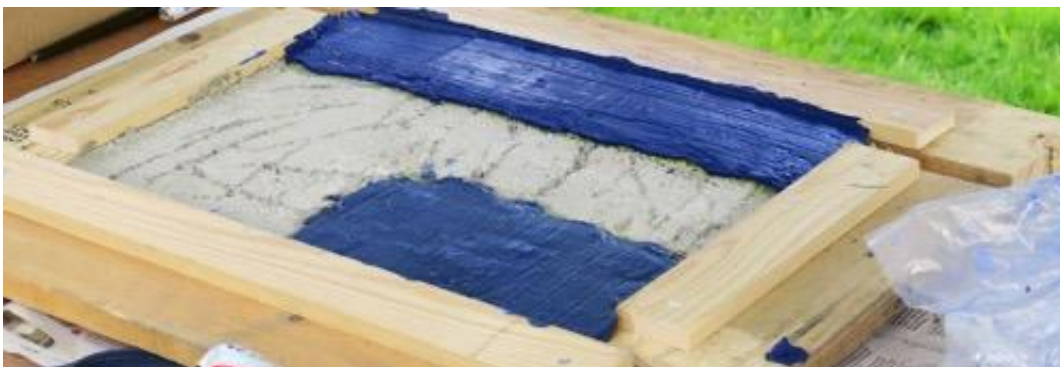


Fig. 10: Test panel 1. Blue colour areas applied.



Fig. 11: Test panel 1. Blue colour coat complete. View at gap in frame edges showing thickness and guide battens for depth of later coats.

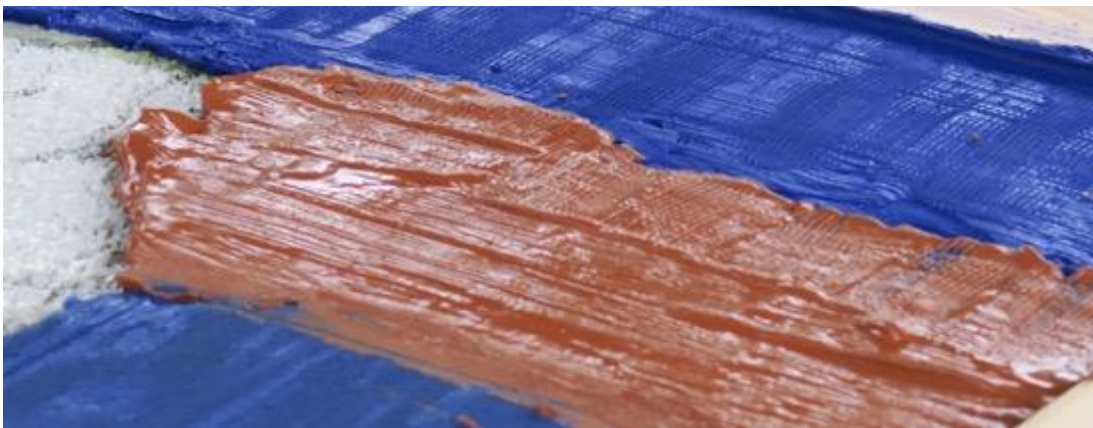


Fig. 12: Test panel 1. Application of red colour. Irregularity of boundaries and smudging of colours can be seen as well as the difficulty of applying the coating without suitable tools.

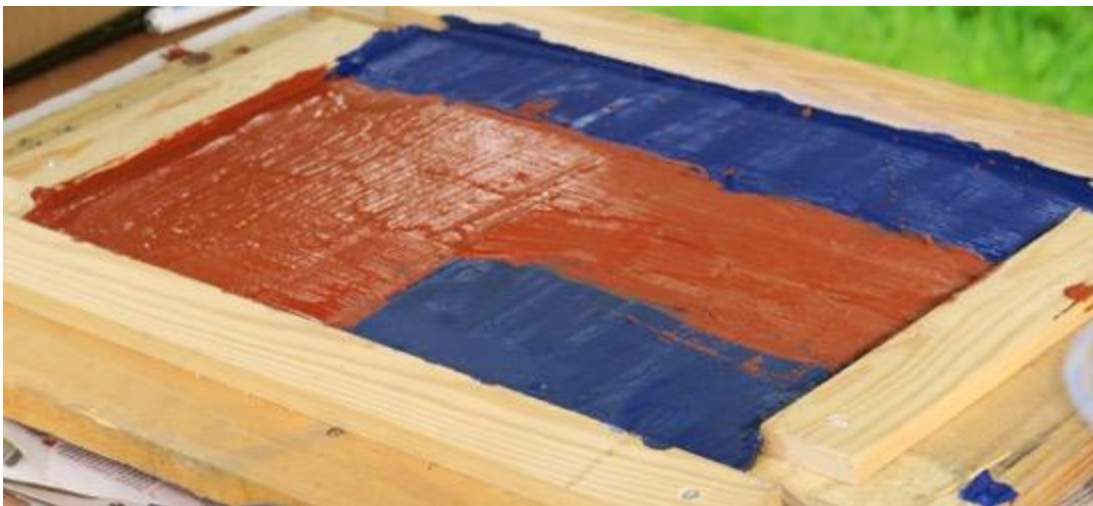


Fig. 13: Test panel 1. Colour block layer complete.

The finishing coat, mixed 700ml of water to 2.5kg of Lime Solo plaster, was applied early the following morning and allowed to set under a damp cloth. The manufacturer's instructions indicate that at least an hour and a half should be

allowed before final working of the surface. Sumner says the surface, as noted in the last chapter, *'should be trowelled-up quite firm to the touch, and without any damp shine on it before you begin cutting it.....'* This point appeared to be reached after two hours and the panel was laid flat on the working table and the full design was pounced through with dry cement in a muslin bag, as Sumner directs; this worked quite well, albeit with some areas of poor transfer and one location where the design was missing (fig. 14).

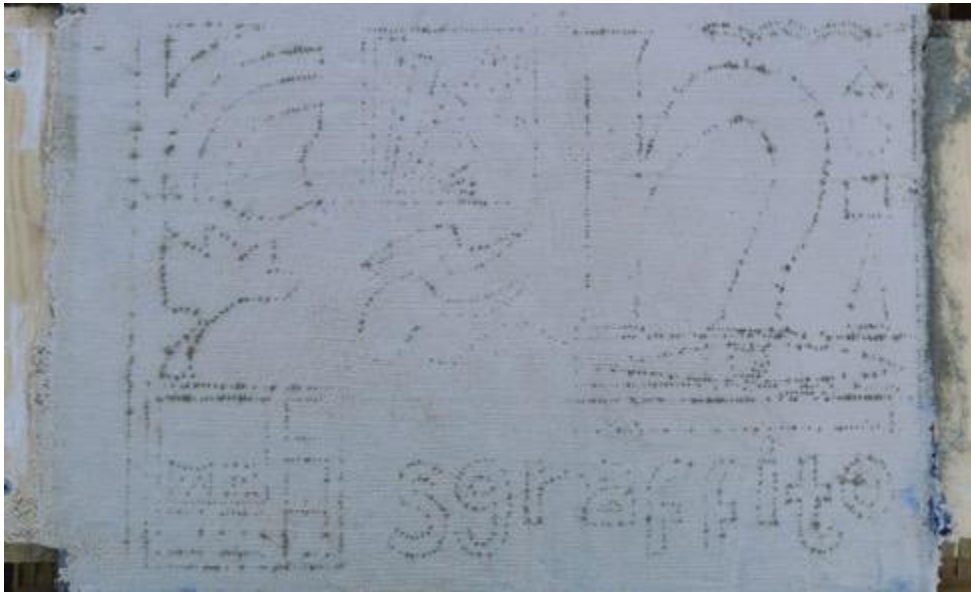


Fig. 14: Test panel 1, with design pounced through. Note the variation in registration and lack of transfer in the centre

This first attempt at cutting was done on a very hot day, starting at 11.00am, and it was clear as soon as the first incisions were made that the plaster was already drier than Sumner would have wanted it. Cutting the outline of the large letter 'H' was quite hard and the plaster creaked slightly with the effort, but then the material could be pulled out fairly easily. Within half an hour though edges began to be pulled off as the outline was cut despite leaning the scalpel blade against the plaster edge that was to remain. This seemed to match the character of the 'crumbly' stage which Sumner describes (figs. 15 and 16).

Cutting of various shapes was tried over the middle of the day, with visible problems of flaking edges and sections of plaster peeling where lines were cut too close together as is visible above the small 's' in figure 17. The depth of the topcoat varied considerably from 6 – 7 mm at the top right to as little as 2mm elsewhere



Fig. 15: Test panel 1. Starting to cut the large letter 'H' with a scalpel blade in a proprietary handle.



Fig. 16: Test panel 1. Starting to clean off the residual plaster on the colour surface.



Fig. 17: Test panel 1. Extent of cutting after 2 ½ hours through crumbly stage with colours cleaned up. Note the loss of plaster above the small 's', and the rough edges, especially where the curve of the 'H' meets the upright. The large 'S' was cut as a freehand experiment without a pounced line to follow.

and this latter depth was much easier to cut through. Working with the panel flat meant it had to be tipped up every so often to clear material that had been cut away and gloves were needed to avoid getting cement on one's wrists, the initial lesson here seemed to be, start at the bottom and work up the panel.

By the time cutting stopped about 1.30pm the plaster was becoming quite hard, and it was not really expected that more would be possible. The panel was

dampened and stored upright in the shade under a damp cloth and left until later in the afternoon. A further attempt at cutting started at about 4.15pm to prove a point, but surprisingly cutting was both possible and in some respects easier. With care, finer detail and lines closer together could be achieved; note in particular the eye and brow at centre right in figure 18; the 'tough' stage clearly lasted longer than expected.



Fig. 18: Test panel 1, completed. The group of shapes across the middle of the panel, from left to right, fish; triangle in square; eye and brow, figure '1' and at top right a notional date, were cut in the 'tough' stage using a combination of scalpel and pointed but round ended metal-working tool.

The panel was again wetted and covered with a dampened cloth in the shade, a process repeated over the next day or two, with the result that the top plaster coat has not cracked.

This exercise was valuable in proving how effective Sumner's technique was but also in the lessons it provided, and which the second panel confirmed:

- 1 Proper plastering tools were necessary. A small float trowel, bucket trowel and a small diamond shaped tool for fine working were

purchased, as well as two hawks to help keep coloured mixes separate. These proved their worth on the second test panel in making it possible to apply more even coats of colour and small areas of contrasting tones, as well as a finish coat of fairly consistent thinner depth

- 2 A cooler day for working would have been desirable; and close review of the setting of the plaster at half or quarter hour intervals was essential to not miss the earliest opportunity to start cutting. Both these elements were in place with the second panel attempted. It is prudent however to wait until the damp sheen has gone from the setting topcoat otherwise pouncing through with cement leads to clogging of the holes in one's design as the cement picks up residual moisture from the plaster. The second panel thus suffered from a relative failure of the pouncing and required the design to be worked in part by eye with the paper design to hand, although just enough cement dots had transferred to provide overall guidance. Carrying out the second panel also suggested that using register nails as Sumner did would be necessary and important if subsequent, and larger, panels were tried, to ensure design alignment with colours. This was a problem with both A3 panels and, while it lends character to the work as was discussed in the last chapter, it would be helpful in areas where one did want to achieve certain colour relationships with good precision
- 3 The combined effects of items 1 and 2 made initial cutting much easier with the plaster in Sumner's soft 'cream cheese' state. Leaning the blade against the remaining plaster was effective with edges remaining largely intact, while the material to be removed did peel away with little effort. The result was that working flat and tipping the panel up to let debris fall away did not work as the slightly wetter plaster stuck as it was removed, and it very quickly became necessary to have the panel vertical and cutting thereafter was carried out from this position so debris could fall away

- 4 The reason for applying the finish coat over the colours within twenty-four hours also became clear; it prevented them setting completely and thus required little effort to scrape away the traces of the white plaster with a wire potter's tool. The colour layer on the first panel had been raked with a glue spreader creating ridges for keying the finishing coat. This made removal of plaster residue difficult and so no keying was done to the second panel colours
- 5 A consistent thinner topcoat made working through the crumbly stage possible with care. Indeed, it was found that small sections that became detached could be re-adhered by wetting the back and top and working the surface carefully to bond them to the adjacent secure material, something which Sumner and his team also did.⁹

The following sequence of annotated photographs of progress with the second panel illustrate these points (figs. 19 – 30). The author was surprised and pleased at the outcome; a more polished piece based on part of one of Sumner's designs.

Figures 29 and 30 show clearly the difference between the basic cutting of the shapes and the effect when cleaned out. The second test panel demonstrated how quickly a skilled cutter could work and how much plaster would rapidly accumulate. This accounts for Sumner referring to having two or even three people following on behind him; perhaps one sweeping up and removing debris from the floor, while two others took out the remains of plaster in the cut areas; figure 31 shows the three main tools used for removing these in this experiment. The second test panel demonstrated that the soft stage lasted for as much as a couple of hours so speed would be of the essence. It was possible to keep cutting out in the slowly hardening crumbly phase, but it was slower going and required more care to avoid damage to fine points and edges.

One final point was noted from the finished panel, an apparent roughness or granular quality to the cut edges. Discussion with the manufacturers of Lime Solo revealed that the sand grain size used in its composition is approximately 0.75mm in diameter as opposed to the average 0.33mm size that would be in a true silver

sand such as Sumner had used. This change has arisen due to the danger to the lungs of the fine dust in the sand which is therefore filtered out from modern products.¹⁰



Fig. 19: Test panel 2. Larger pounce holes for base coat outline.



Fig. 20: Test panel 2. Blue powder outline on base coat.



Fig. 21: Test panel 2. Colour zones painted in and lettered.



Fig. 22: Test panel 2. Colour blocks in place. Wetting of the base coat did not occur for the application of the green and this began to dry and crack very quickly. Extensive repeated wetting and working over the surface was needed to mitigate this failure in the process.



Fig. 23: Test panel 2. Waiting for topcoat to dry sufficiently. Damp sheen is still visible.



Fig. 24: Test panel 2. Pouncing through with cement in muslin bag: cement can be seen picking up moisture from the plaster below.



Fig. 25: Test panel 2. Starting to cut using scalpel blade in a handle. Panel moved to upright position. Note plaster residue left on colour layer over tree trunk as main bulk of material removed. It peeled off with little pressure.



Fig. 26: Test panel 2. Cleaning off plaster residue with a wire potter's tool.



Fig. 27: Test panel 2. Continuing cutting. Note the various stages of cleaning out residue.



Fig. 28: Test panel 2, completed. Colour to cutting discrepancies very visible. Marks on the white surface have been cleaned off as far as possible without causing damage. Note repair – refixed dislodged piece at centre top-left, see also figure 30.



Fig. 29: Test panel 2. Initial cutting out of leaves and fruit on test panel 2 before cleaning off the coloured surfaces.



Fig. 30: Test panel 2. Enlarged detail of completed panel. Scraping of colour coat can be seen as can the repair near the centre top. Such working marks are visible in Sumner's sgraffito upon close inspection.



Fig. 31: The three main tools used in cleaning off remaining plaster from colour areas. From left: pottery wire loop, blunt ended bradawl and dished pewter working tool.

A number of questions arose from these experiments so a larger A2 sample based on another panel at Llanfair Kilgeddin was carried out to address the following:

- 1 How did Sumner manage to locate very small areas of contrasting colour within another colour area?
- 2 Would register nails help to locate the design when the colour blocks and then the pattern are pricked through so as to more accurately locate colour areas within the cut design?
- 3 Would one person be able to lift a larger panel given that the A3 ones were heavy?
- 4 Could an upright position be created for application of plaster and for cutting?
- 5 How to achieve good transfer of designs onto the plaster surface by pouncing

The first question drove the choice of panel for replication, a section of the 'O All ye fowls of the air....' design that frames the south door of the church where very precise spots of red define a bird's feather within an area otherwise coloured blue (fig. 32); the template created is shown in figure 33.

Base coats were applied to two A2 panels, laying 19mm thickness onto one with a slatted back and a thinner 10 – 12mm coat on the other with a ply sheet back; this latter panel was used for the third experiment. The thinner render dried firm with no cracking even when 2" register nails were hammered through it into the plywood; the whole unit was easily liftable although the upper frame edge battens were also removed to keep the weight down as much as possible. Attempts to apply the render to a frame mounted vertically on an artist's easel were a failure; the easel moved and tipped under the pressure of the trowel. All plaster application was therefore carried out with the panels flat but cutting was done with the panel upright.

The challenge with this larger piece was twofold, resolving how to obtain small irregular patches of colour in the middle of another colour block and applying the plaster to a level even thickness. Sumner gives no clue on the first



Fig. 32: Test panel 3. Detail from 'O all ye fowls' panel from St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin, with the area for replication highlighted. The small red areas on the right-hand bird can be seen.



Fig. 33: Test panel 3. Template of birds positioned by the register nails, with reinforced holes in the tracing as Sumner recommends, and the design pricked ready to be pounced through.

point in his writings, so small flashes of contrasting of colour were a puzzle at the time this example was carried out. I did wonder if he had sometimes used two or more layers of colour, cutting through to reveal the one he wanted, but this would have complicated his usual method. Had he simply painted in colours afterwards, or had he done as was eventually the device used in this instance, cut masks to cover such areas when the first main tone was put on? I decided to experiment with

masking out areas; and, given the author's unskilled plastering, these were used for the other larger colour blocks as well to provide a good line to work to. Subsequent information made clear that Sumner had in fact layered his colours.¹¹

The register nails made accurate pouncing possible, but the extent of colour transfer was still not very good, although sufficient to allow painting in of the colour block outlines. This is in part attributable to the use of ordinary building sand with a large aggregate instead of a dedicated plastering sand in the backing mix, which had the effect of making a thin plaster coat with a smooth surface difficult to achieve and indeed this panel had a slight hump towards the centre.

The masks made application of the blue colour straightforward. The larger perimeter masks, simply laid in place, were held sufficiently by the surrounding frame, while the small pieces to define the red patches were pinned with small copper tacks. This improvised strategy worked well; figures 34 – 38 show the sequence of operations.



Fig. 34: Test panel 3. Base coat with colour block outlines pounced through with blue colour powder and painted in. Mask for green visible at bottom right.



Fig. 35: Test panel 3. All colour masks in place. Pins holding small central masks are just visible.

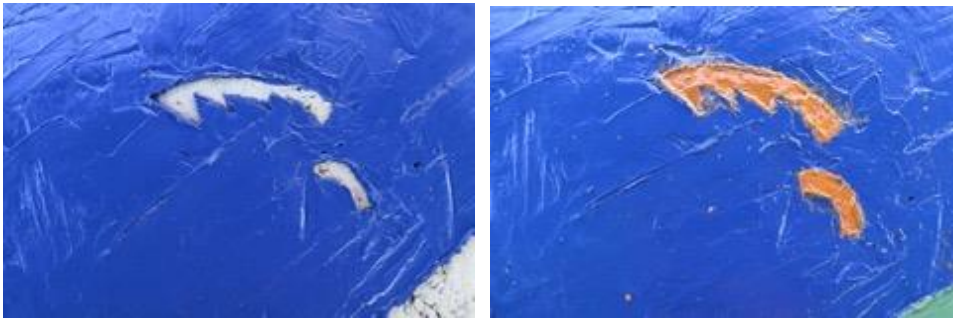


Fig. 36: Test panel 3. Blue colour coat completed with mask for red removed. Despite being covered in blue plaster the masks were effective.

Fig. 37: Test panel 3. Red infilled. This was an inexact process and looked unsatisfactory but once dried and cut through proved very successful.



Fig. 38: Test panel 3. Colour layer complete. Photo taken morning after and just before white top layer applied. Note the roughness of the surface, as a result of which no further keying had been applied. This looks messy but once cleaned after topcoat cutting most of this disappeared and although the register nails did locate the colours in the shapes wanted in the design there was still a bit of blue within the space of the smaller red panel in the finished work.

The variable thickness of the topcoat, between 2.0 and 2.5mm up to 7.0mm made drying rates across its surface differ such that the damp sheen had gone in some but not other areas two hours after its application; pouncing through was in fact done about ten minutes after this point and was successful to most areas. The presence of the register nails allowed the design to be lifted two or three times to check the extent to which the design was appearing on the plaster surface beneath (figs. 39 and 40).

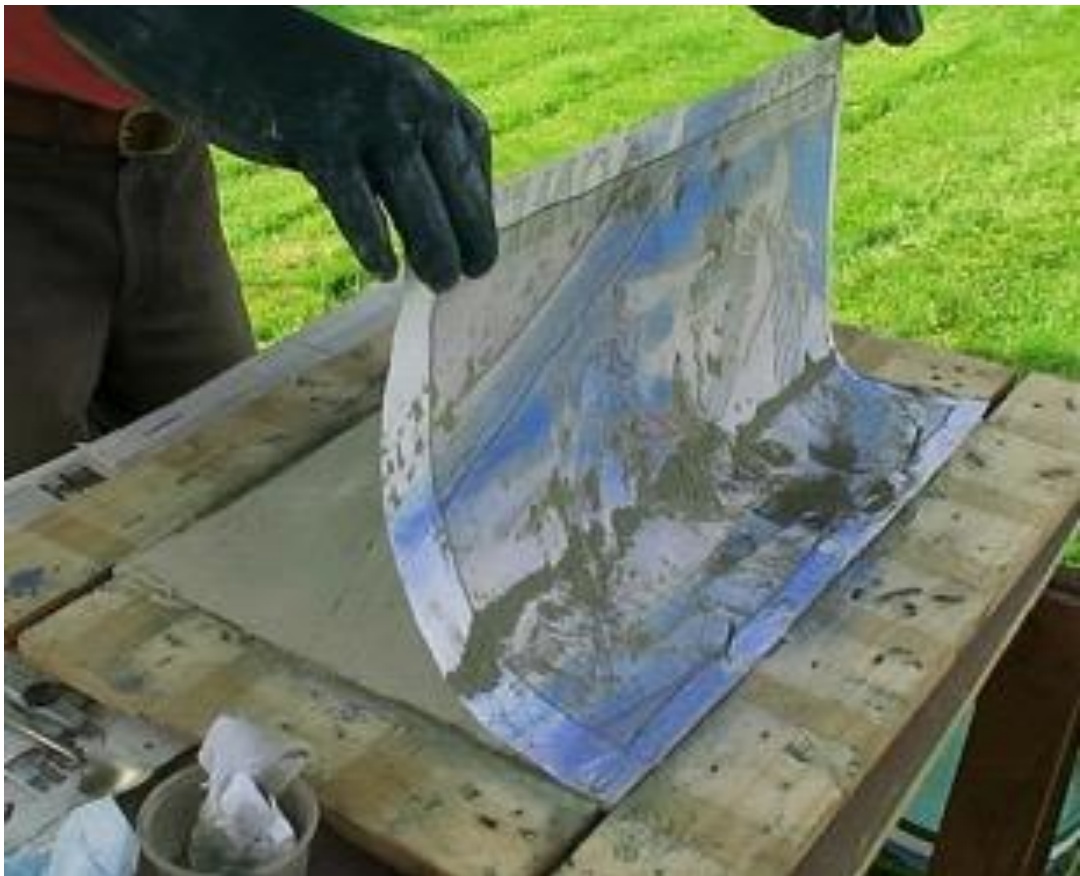


Fig. 39: Test panel 3. Pouncing onto topcoat. Checking transfer of the design was possible because of the register nails.

The cutting of the design proved more challenging than it had with the second panel, partly due to the variation in plaster thickness, but mainly because of narrow slivers of plaster that were to remain between shapes, especially in the wings. Patience proved essential with this as it had when waiting for the topcoat to dry enough before pouncing the design through. Cutting fine detail in Sumner's 'tough' stage did work but still required great care, especially to ensure one's blade



Fig. 40: Test panel 3. Completed pouncing through. The image conveys the variation in transfer of the design to the plaster but there was enough registered to make working the design accurately possible. An experiment is needed doing this with the panel vertically as Sumner would done onto church walls.

was tilted to press against the plaster to remain, but the experience was not conclusive. Time records from four-to-five hours after first cutting show that some areas with narrow plaster separation were cut without damage but that others were not. Figure 41 shows the timings of cutting and problems encountered. This is partly a lack of skill but also probably due to the varying thickness of the top layer; it is though also a problem Moody encountered:

Shading by lines can easily be done, provided they are not too near together, otherwise the projecting white layer might be apt to chip off.

It was reassuring that more skilled practitioners also faced such difficulties, although Moody was referring to use of parallel shading lines '*hardly more than 1/16" thick*,¹² The whole panel was finished in about 6 ¼ hours, which included a short lunch stop. The soft 'cream cheese' stage is brief, at most 2 hours, while the tough stage really only begins after four hours from the start of cutting. The experience of Sumner's stages was less clear than with panel 2 and involved a lot more breakages of sharp



Fig. 41: Test panel 3. Cutting problems. The two wing blades in the right-hand box were cut 45 minutes after starting and the division came away and was refixed, a repair that has held. The large blue section in the larger box was cut about two hours into cutting, so just into the 'crumbly' stage, while the four incompletely cleared blades were cut after four hours without problem. This view also shows the pounced pattern very well.

points and divisions between coloured areas, as the completed work in figure 42 illustrates; some design improvisation was needed and, somewhat surprisingly, resulted in a reasonably satisfactory finished panel.

It is known that Sumner had to effect repairs, presumably one imagines for reasons similar to those encountered in these experiments or to correct mistakes. Arte Conservation in their report on St Mary's Sunbury¹³ note this and indeed looking at the photographs of that scheme in detail it is possible to identify patching (fig. 43). Once cutting was complete a series of repairs were attempted using Lime Solo mixed in small quantities and modelled into position after the colour beneath had been roughened. Patches were fixed to secure areas and as stand-alone pieces such as the recreation of the centre of the 'A'. It was fiddly but surprisingly easy to carry out and the work has lasted through the weeks following as the panel was allowed to slowly dry, and the result lifted the finished piece making the effort worthwhile (figs. 44 and 45).



Fig. 42: Test panel 3. Finished panel with damage. This is very noticeable in the letters but also in sections ringed on the left-hand bird where creative liberties had to be taken to rescue the design, merging two feathers into one. The same problem is evident on the right-hand bird. The letters were cut at roughly hourly intervals and all except the 'Y' and 'L' presented difficulties; they should probably all have been cut in the late 'tough' stage.



Fig. 43: St Mary's Church, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. Annunciation. Apparent repair to top layer ringed.



Fig. 44: Test panel 3. Post completion repair recreating the 'W'.

Two panels will be left outside under cover from direct rainfall to test durability through the winter, while the third will be brought indoors to see how the plaster responds to a centrally heated environment. Sumner observed that the finish coat mix which these experiments were replicating is suitable for use externally.

One unexpected problem was staining of the finish coat by blue colour scrapped from the design. This could probably have been cleaned off by careful scraping near completion but for one person acting as cutter, cleaner-outer of lines and general tidy-upper meant this step was missed at the end of the day but is to be noted for the future. These experiments demonstrated that Sumner's instructions are sound and that his working method can be replicated, and that prefabricated panels could be shop made and secured to a building quite easily.

A fourth panel is proposed, but is outside the scope of this research,¹⁴ in order to apply certain major lessons:

- 1) Use of thinner, even layers of colour and finishing coats
- 2) Keying of plaster surfaces to aid adhesion of succeeding coats



Fig. 45: Test panel 3. Panel after repair. The effect is enhanced by the repairs, which are only visible by looking closely.

- 3) Trial of differing knife blades for cutting
- 4) Extending cutting period at tough stage

The template method adopted for the two red areas in the middle of the third panel was very successful, which is partly attributable to the use of register nails, but it is difficult to imagine it being used on a large scale. Curiosity about this and the belated discovery that Sumner had indeed superimposed layers of colour, led to careful re-examination of the panels at Llanfair Kilgeddin and Sumner's subsequent two schemes, Clane in Ireland and Sunbury west of London, to look for evidence of how widely he may have done this. A close look at the depiction of a butterfly in the 'O ye children...' panel at St Mary's reveals a circle of a different shade of blue around the orange butterfly, which suggests that a larger circle of orange was laid down under the main blue layer (fig. 46). The halo of darker blue behind the girl's head lends support to this idea and suggests a more complex working method in some areas than Sumner's writings suggest. Enlargement of the butterfly shows particularly vigorous scraping, which does indicate strenuous efforts to remove all traces of blue overlying the orange, although one cannot but wonder whether a



Fig. 46: St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888), by Heywood Sumner. 'O ye children of men...' Detail showing colour difference of blue surrounding butterfly from main blue ground. A similar colour discrepancy is discernible around the child's head.

certain amount of post cutting colour touching in was still required.

The two later schemes show less use of very small contrasts within other colours. Reds do occur within the trees in the Baptism panel at Clane, but these are larger and of regular shape; elsewhere colour blocks appear large and interlocking with another colour only occurring to a very limited extent, as can be seen around the foot of the kneeling figure to the right in the discovery of the Tomb panel. At Sunbury the main panels appear to avoid this problem altogether, with only limited blobs of poorly registered contrast colour noticeable around the fruit on the plants in the spandrels of the arches below. One wonders if Sumner learnt lessons from his first major project and was more discrete about his disposition of colours on the wall to ease the process of cutting.

Completion of three sample panels confirmed the practicality of Sumner's style of sgraffito and that his instructions can still be applied. With the aid of a skilled plasterer and assistants it is possible to see how large areas could be

completed each day, as noted at the end of chapter 5; these experiments did show why Sumner and his team worked very long days.

Creation of a modern design was undertaken to understand the constraints that the technique imposed. A first idea to create a narrow frieze in the author's house of the view out of the window across the valley was followed despite one clear disadvantage: it was at a much smaller scale than Sumner's work with implications for the level of detail that could be accommodated. A small sketch was traced over and simplified with sgraffito cutting in mind to create a colour block template which resulted in a stylised slightly abstract version of the scene. This was painted to test colour combinations and establish how many were needed (figs. 47 – 49).

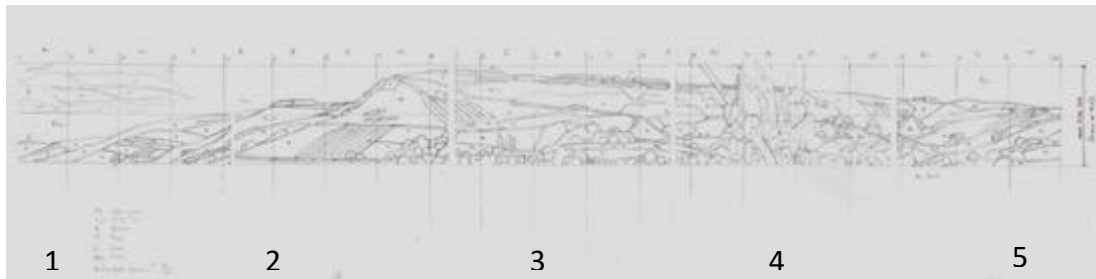


Fig. 47: Frieze design. Small scale pattern grided and divided for scaling up on computer. Colour blocks with key listed bottom left. Six colours were proposed.

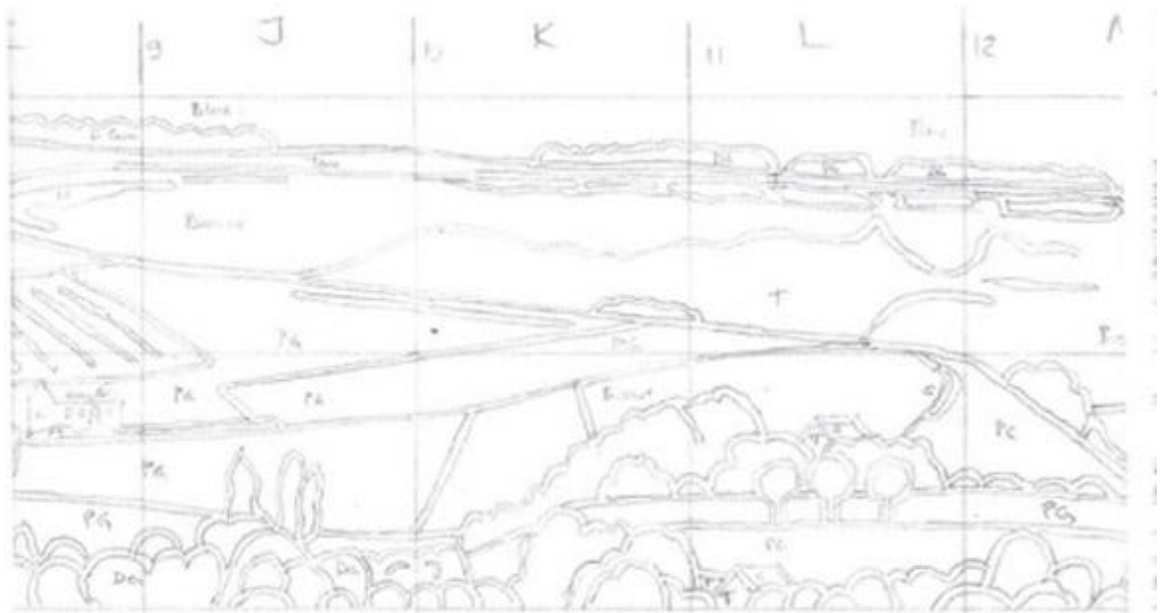


Fig. 48: Frieze design. Detail of figure 47, panel 3.



Fig. 49: Frieze design. Coloured maquette of panels 2 and 3.

The uncoloured line drawing was blown up in sections to the size of its intended location via computer and a large format printer in the University of Liverpool Architecture Department. These were mounted on A2 length pieces of foam board with a balancing sheet on the back to stop curling and were painted to create a full-sized mock-up of the frieze for temporary fixing in position (fig. 50).



Fig. 50: Frieze design. Coloured mock-up of frieze in position.

The immediate conclusion was that the design was too detailed for such a narrow location and that it would need to be simplified or made more abstract for the concept to work successfully. This effect, resulting from a change of scale from the original desk top maquette, was pertinent with respect to Sumner's work, where such issues must have occurred regularly. It was decided to take a section of the design and double its size so that it would fit an A2 trial panel, to see how the design of small section could be made effective by changing the scale, number of colours and particularly the extent of detail included. The result of this process, with the practical experiments already described, showed that a different design

strategy was needed, avoiding something that was too overtly figurative, an aspect that Sumner comments on with respect to designing for sgraffito; for this reason, this process was not developed further as part of this study.

One final lesson should be taken from this exercise; it is laborious as the description above shows, which probably explains why Sumner carried out less than one a year. He writes to Julia Ady in September 1900 about the main apse decoration at St Agatha's:

I am hard at work on the central apse of the Winchester Coll: Mission church at Portsmouth walls & windows. There is a lot to do, and it's work that interests me very much, as they have practically let me do it just as I wanted to. My studio here is full of great figures (these were giants in those days) nearly 8 feet high.¹⁵

It would have been fascinating to see Sumner's studio thronged with huge Old Testament figures, for the scale of what Sumner undertook is daunting to contemplate, especially given all the other media that he worked in.

These trials have shown the effort involved and perhaps lend weight to an earlier observation that by the end of first decade of the twentieth century Sumner had run his course with the technique. His large schemes were prestige pieces, complex, intricate, and team operations. He did carry out smaller examples; the angels at St Michael of All Angels in Rugeley was completed in just three weeks in July 1897.¹⁶ It is notable that one drive to use sgraffito in this period was for more modest repetitive decorative treatment to plain facades, whereas much of Sumner's work fits into a different, monumental category.

Sumner's main work in sgraffito ended with the installation at St John's in Manchester in 1906; his last piece in 1910 for his brother-in-law a small coda only. By 1914 sgraffito has disappeared from the UK lexicon of architectural decoration. We will return to Sumner in due course, but the next chapter will address the contrasting fortunes of sgraffito in England and Europe during the twentieth century.

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- 1 Joseph Gleeson White commented that he found it curious *‘that it is not employed a hundred times more freely.... its adaptability for permanent advertisements is so obvious, that it is a matter of surprise not to find it used for gable ends of factories, and dozens of other places...’* ‘The Work of Heywood Sumner – 1 Sgraffito Decorations.’ *The Studio*, no. 61 (April 1898): 156-157. The argument is ‘probable’ as the next chapter will consider a contemporary Spanish example, where sgraffito was used for this purpose.
 - 2 By Hans Sauerbruch (1910-1996). Ilse Friedrich gave an illuminating talk on the work of this artist and his legacy of a large number of sgraffito panels for houses at the second international conference on sgraffito in Litomyšl in the Czech Republic in November 2019.
 - 3 I am grateful to Angela Weyer at the HAWK Institute in Hildesheim, Germany, for drawing my attention to this problem and also to the extensive post-war sgraffito legacy in Nurnberg. The video at <https://vimeo.com/300973872?ref=fb-share&1> discusses this issue as well as showing the preparation of a sgraffito panel and recording the work of various sgraffito artists.
 - 4 Given the still wide use of sgraffito in several parts of Europe my original plan was to attend a short training course in Europe to learn the basics of the technique and practice cutting small designs to deal with the ‘sampler’ stage. Planned for some time between February and April 2020 this proved impossible to do; family commitments prevented attendance at a course in Spain in late February and a later invitation to a workshop in the Czech Republic lapsed due to the covid pandemic. The process described was therefore set up and carried out alone during the quarantine period over Spring and Summer 2020.
 - 5 William Millar, *Plastering Plain and Decorative, a Practical Treatise on the Art & Craft of Plastering and Modelling*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905), 384.
 - 6 Lime Green Products Ltd., Coates Kiln, Stretton Road, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6DG, or <https://www.lime-green.co.uk>. Sourced through the Lime Centre in Winchester, at <https://www.thelimecentre.co.uk>.
 - 7 See <https://owlpen.com/family/mander-brothers>. Sumner’s descriptions are broad, Turkey red, Yellow, Fast crimson etc, but give no reference numbers or clue to their constituents. Many will probably have been earth-based colours, but it is possible that some would no longer be usable today due to toxicity or other health and safety issues.
 - 8 Celtic Sustainable, Unit 9, Parc Teifi, Cardigan, Ceredigion, Wales, SA43 1EW, or <https://www.celticsustainable.co.uk> and <https://www.celticsustainable.co.uk/pigments/>.

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- 9 This is observable in several places in the panels at St Mary's Church in Sunbury. See figure 43.
 - 10 Conversation with James Ayres at Lime Green Products Ltd., Coates Kilns, Stretton, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, TF13 6DG, on 1 September 2020. <https://www.lime-green.co.uk/products>.
 - 11 See notes 30 and 31 in chapter 5.
 - 12 F. W. Moody, *Decorations of the South Kensington Museum*. (London: National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, unpublished, 1862 – 1874), 25-27.
 - 13 Thomas Organ, 'The Church of St Mary, Sunbury-on-Thames: Report on the Cleaning and Conservation of the Sgraffito by Heywood Sumner and Murals by George Ostrehan c. 1892,' Faversham: Arte Conservation, Report ref. Sunbury-on-Thames 2, 2018, 9.
 - 14 Covid 19 restrictions and the need for good weather to allow outdoor working means that the earliest likely date for this will be spring 2021.
 - 15 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Julia Ady, (néé Cartwright), 9 October 1892, Northampton Archives, Cartwright (Edgcote) Collection, CE121/24a, 4.
 - 16 Sheila M. Simpson, 'St Michael's Church, Brereton: A Short Guide to the Church,' Brereton: St. Michael's, Brereton (2011), 9. An undated article by Harry Thornton, sent to me by the author, elaborates: *St. Michael's Services Register shows that whilst the work was in progress church services were held on consecutive Sundays of 11th, 18th and 25th July "in the new schoolroom", and on the following Sunday, 1st August, 1897, against the 6.30 pm service is entered "Dedication of Sgraffito Work."* Thornton, Harry, 'Angels in the Chancel,' Brereton: Parish Magazine, 1999.

Chapter 7

Other sgraffito artists and external use in England and Europe

Sumner became the leading sgraffito artist working in England between 1890 and 1910. He used a technique that was ideal for large scale decoration, and that can easily be replicated today, but he created no school and had no followers; of his co-workers that we have encountered nothing further is known or heard of.¹

Sgraffito was used by some of Sumner's contemporaries, but it was not taken up widely as a medium for external or internal decoration and in England it disappears until after the Second World War. A different history occurred in Belgium reflecting wider use across Europe that has persisted to the present. So, what happened?

Jane Lamb concludes her examination of Sumner thus:

*Sumner's sgraffito achieved the integration of artistic decoration and vivid imagery with architecture, the decoration becoming an integral part of the structure it adorned. His skill was unique and his style personified an heroic age, leading towards the themes and style of a new century and far removed from the revival begun in 1858, with its conventional patterns and motifs and the flat and ornamental grotesques of the Italian Sixteenth century.*²

This summation is broadly true though it retains something of Pevsner's view of the late nineteenth century and the Arts and Crafts as mere precursors to modernism, rather than letting the works stand in their own right. Lamb does go on to record the persistence of sgraffito in Europe and the impact there of the Arts and Crafts.³ There were occasional, seemingly isolated, examples by people other than Sumner in England between 1890 and the First World War of equally skilful execution yet quite different in character. The experiments of the 1870s led to an apparent dead-end. We should though briefly consider those few sgraffito artists and architects who have become even more lost to us than Sumner, for, apart from their aesthetic interest, two of their works bear on discussion of the utility and durability of sgraffito in the UK.

George Thomas Robinson should be recalled here although he was discussed in chapter 3 and died in 1897: his contribution to sgraffito was apparently considerable but the absence of known surviving examples makes it impossible to appreciate the extent of his sgraffito use.⁴

Another worker in Robinson's mixture of sgraffito and fresco was Tito G. Cesare Formilli (c1856 – 1942) about the location of whose works information is similarly sparse. He settled in England in 1894, giving a talk at the Art Workers Guild on 5th October about '*External Colour Decoration of Buildings,*' the year that Sumner was Master of the Guild, and exhibited designs and decorations in sgraffito at the Royal Academy from that year until 1903 (fig. 1). The effect he achieves is three-dimensional, and, if a little crowded, does convey a startling sense of birds in the undergrowth.⁵



Fig. 1: Sgraffito with fresco (c1890s), by Cesare Formilli. Compare this with Sumner's two pheasants at Doveleys in catalogue entry in volume 2.

Another figure, some of whose work survives, is Alexander Lauder (1836 – 1921) non-conformist, architect and successful owner of a pottery business in Barnstaple. He was an influential figure in the town, becoming mayor in 1885:

*and his influence upon the craftsmen of the town, teaching at the Art School; and as an employer of budding architects cannot be over emphasised.*⁶

One of those who trained in his office was William Lethaby, who later built a studio for Sumner in 1889 at the top of his London home. Jane Lamb discovered that Lauder:

*would decorate many of the houses he built with huge sgraffito murals, terracotta fireplaces, high relief ceramic tiles, all carved or modelled with his own hand.*⁷

His style is evident in decoration for 'Ravelin Manor,' his own house in Barnstaple. It is executed in a form of sgraffito, described in the Historic England listing as '*low cement relief*.'⁸ Twenty-one panels illustrate '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*' on the walls of a large staircase and landings and is unusual; it appears to be a mixture of sgraffito, fresco and shallow relief (fig. 2), which prompts thoughts of the frieze in the Presence Chamber at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire. Boldly modelled and dramatically posed Lauder created a completely different atmosphere to Sumner's work or that of any other contemporary artist in the medium.



Fig. 2: Ravelin Manor Barnstaple (c1897), by Alexander Lauder. Part of hall and staircase decoration on the theme of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

Shortly after Lauder completed this decoration Sir Thomas Graham Jackson, working on the chapel at Giggleswick School between 1897 – 1901, returned to sgraffito for part of the interior decoration, nearly thirty years after completing St Peter’s Hornblotton. A recent guide on the Chapel explains how the work was procured; Jackson got two of his office pupils to cut the work, one of them, William Nicholls (1875 – 1949) recalled:

I was on the Chapel job for two years and when it was approaching completion, Jackson asked me to do the Sgraffito decoration in it. I said I did not know what Sgraffito was and he said that did not matter, told me where to see some, got a book about it and said I could experiment as much as I liked in the boiler basement of the Chapel.⁹

This is a remarkable account; what book did he get and what examples did he look at? The passing similarity to Sumner’s border decoration, all vine leaves and grapes, may suggest he visited an example of his work, but we can only wonder.



Fig. 3: Giggleswick School Chapel (1897 – 1901), by Thomas Graham Jackson. Section of dome and arched support with sgraffito leaves and grapes.

These examples illustrate the very different effects that can be created with the technique, but also the lack of a tradition, a growing use of sgraffito as a decorative tool. George Bankart wrote in 1908 of sgraffito, just when its use was declining:

Mr Sumner's work, as all know, is at once sound and refined, and in its general effect, delightful. By means of the paper which he contributed to the catalogue of the first exhibition of the "Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society," he was one of the first to direct the attention of decorative artists to the excellence of sgraffito where there is plaster: to him in great measure, and to the late Mr G. T. Robinson, its revival in England is due.¹⁰

Sumner wrote widely on the technique through the 1890s and the technique is listed in books on plastering among a wide range of finishes available. William Millar, we have noted. It appears again in a 1912 book by Wilfred Kemp, *'The Practical Plasterer,'* although Kemp's chapter is largely a reprint of Sumner's 1889 essay for the Arts & Crafts Exhibition society catalogue. Millar's is the more thoughtful advice; he is also aware of the technique's tenuous foothold in England and that *'Sgraffito is extensively used on the Continent, especially in Germany and Italy.'* He goes on to comment:

Its limited use in Great Britain is probably due to erroneous impressions that it would not resist our variable climate, and that it would prove too expensive for general use. Examples herein named tend to prove that it is a durable and inexpensive decoration.¹¹

Bankart supports this:

After the authorities at South Kensington had experimented on the walls of the New College, it required no further advertisement, and it is good to know that the sgraffito there has in no way suffered from exposure to the variations of the English climate.¹²

Robinson's support of this view was quoted in chapter 2. This general belief¹³ in the durability of sgraffito externally makes it appropriate to look at two other works, both rare external sgraffito, one from sometime in the 1890s, the other completed in 1908, and to consider how they have weathered.

The artist of the Friern Dairy in Islington is unknown, but between 1895 and 1900 they created a series of panels depicting the passage of milk from cow to

home. It is located on a busy street, which is important both as to its condition but also aesthetically because of its contribution to the streetscape.

The seven panels are set a half brick back into arched recesses, which are framed by stone pilasters with a decorative parapet above, and sloping projecting



Fig. 4: Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900), artist unknown. Composite elevation of whole scheme.



Fig. 5: Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900), artist unknown. The street scene.

sills below to shed water rather than letting it sit at the base of the sgraffito. Jane Lamb records conservation work carried out on the panels in part three of her dissertation, observing that:

The initial survey found the sgraffito panels were in good overall condition, except for some cracking. The cracks appeared to be stable, with no evidence of hollow areas or lamination, though there was some surface damage.¹⁴

Only cleaning and very minor repair was carried out, and, seen close up today, one can sense their age and see some damage; but cross the road and all coheres. The scenes seem a remarkable survival but in fact correct

choice of materials for the sgraffito and well detailed surrounds do not make this so unlikely; given the fate of other sgraffito work one is more surprised that the vagaries of fashion have not seen it covered over or destroyed.

The dairy designs are something of an enigma; the artist is unknown. Lamb hints that maybe the executor was not English, *'Scenes in sgraffito, which advertised so graphically and permanently the nature and function of the building were unusual in England.'*¹⁵ They are also in a mixture of styles; the cows, trees and plants in figure 6 have a hint of Sumner, they are treated broadly and suit the medium, whereas others are closely detailed like an etching or drawing (fig. 7).



Figs. 6 and 7: Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900). 'Grazing' and 'Country Delivery' respectively.

A further oddity is the crudeness of the lettering, suggestive possibly of a second or maybe third, less experienced hand, and indeed ragged edges in the cutting are to be seen on this, whereas the scenes are cut with assurance and adept use of hatching and the colour coat to achieve shade and depth (figures 8 and 9).



Figs. 8 and 9: Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900). End of word 'Grazing.' And milk maid's head from 'Old Style Delivery' respectively. Roughness and ragged edges of the lettering compared with the assuredness of figure 9 suggest the hands of different artists. Surface cracking is visible in both, but the overall condition is excellent.

The 1908 work is a frieze on the gable of the former Paignton Art College in Devon:

These illustrate respectively Applied Design, Sculpture, Painting and Architecture.... The sgraffito panels were executed by the first headmaster, Wallis, and are said to have been influenced by the sgraffito work on the Royal College of Organists, Kensington. They are a rare example of English external sgraffito work. They were in poor condition at time of survey (1991) but there are plans to repair them.¹⁶

They were still in poor condition, compared to the Dairy, when visited in summer 2019. Set high on a gable wall, with only a small coping above them, they are framed by projecting moulded tiles, those across the top shaped with a drip, but the bottom edge tiles create a small shelf, trapping water so there is black staining in the bottom 150mm of the plaster. There is loss of the white surface and

significant cracks were observed. Looking at the work as a whole (fig. 10) it is striking that the main damage is to the roundels and along the bottom 600mm or so. There are isolated patches of distress elsewhere, but the main design of red exposed through a top white coat is intact, although the whole piece must be considered very vulnerable.



Fig. 10: Former Paignton Art College, Devon (probably completed 1908), by Arthur George Wallis. Sgraffito to gable.



Fig. 11: Former Paignton Art College, Devon (probably completed 1908), by Arthur George Wallis. Detail in top right-hand corner.



Fig. 12: Wolborough House, Brixham, Devon (1908), artist unknown. Detail of sgraffito on the heavily coved eaves, which is well protected from the weather.

The design is finely worked (fig. 11), delicately lettered with figures defined in few but expressive strokes, and it meets the aspiration of artists for a way of covering large expanses of blank masonry or render. The failure of the roundels may be attributable to problems with the underlying colour as much as to the site's exposure to the rain and sea air but only investigation would reveal this.¹⁷

The benefits of good surrounding detail are clearly important therefore, a point emphasised by another example in Devon, Wolborough House in Brixham, also dated 1908, which overlooks the harbour. Here only a broad projecting eaves cove has been treated with sgraffito, but the position suggests that it has been sheltered from the vicissitudes of rain, wind and sea much better than the Paignton work (fig.12).

Sgraffito in England can thus survive the damp climate and exposure to the weather if it is protected well and the correct materials are used.¹⁸ Render to the outside of buildings may be less common than in other parts of Europe but it does occur quite widely, particularly in Scotland. The failure of sgraffito to take hold may therefore be merely that other forms of plaster embellishment established themselves pre-eminently first. Bankart has only one short chapter on sgraffito

while much of his book is devoted to stucco-duro, pargetting and other forms of raised and moulded plasterwork, which are undoubtedly more common in the UK.

It is curious nonetheless that greater advantage of off-site fabrication of panels and installation as cladding, or in prepared sections of elevations, was not explored. Millar, as we noted in chapter 6, provided instructions for '*sgraffito slabs*', timber frames supporting a wire mesh, Birchington in Kent was carried out this way and the experiments carried out for this research have shown they are quite practical.

For work to be executed in situ timing and temperature are important for external rendering works. Winter always presents problems avoiding rain and the risk of materials freezing. Prolonged wet periods can seriously hamper a building programme particularly if extensive rendering work is delayed and scaffolding has to remain in place, but the use of sgraffito in discrete panels would permit of work being carried out more easily around other operations, or indeed for panels to be executed after the rest of the exterior had been completed.

Another factor in the decline of decorative render externally in England may have been the replacement of lime by cement in construction in the early part of the twentieth century. Discussion of mixes in chapter 5 noted the unusual choice Sumner made for his plaster layers for work on existing masonry, but most of his work was internal; and indeed at least one of his choices of top layer, Parian cement, '*was frequently used neat for mouldings over a float coat of 1 part Portland cement to 3 parts sand.*'¹⁹

Most commentators who have written about the material constituents for sgraffito have described lime as the basis, ostensibly assuming external use.²⁰ Francisco Gonzalez Yunta, describing a sgraffito project in Madrid in 2007, summarises key advantages of lime:

- 1 *A long, proven history of use*
- 2 *Lime mortars are elastic, preventing shrinkage*
- 3 *They are permeable to water vapour allowing a wall to breathe and dry out after wetting thus not stressing the render coating.*



Fig. 13 – 16: Antigua Farmacia Gayoso, Madrid (2007), artists unknown. Elevation before sgraffito application.



Fig. 14: Cutting the pounced design.....



Fig.15: Partially cut design.



Fig. 16: The finished shop front.

His paper is entitled *'The Traditional Technique of Sgraffito with Lime Mortar, a Current Advertising Resource,'*²¹ oddly echoing suggestions for the use of the technique in England in the nineteenth century. His purpose is to show the suitability of sgraffito as a way of marrying the values of tradition and craftsmanship to the need for a brand image for a long-established pharmacy. He discusses also the decline in traditional crafts in Spain, apparently not solely a British problem.

Yunta details the process of design and application of the sgraffito scheme, rather as Sumner had done in his 1902 article; his account is short, comprehensive and well-illustrated; figures 13 – 16 give a flavour of the work. He also details the cost, €138.48/m², carried out by four master plasterers in six days and observes:

*that the disposition of the whole team, given the uniqueness of the work, was the best possible; it is striking how people's motivation does not always have to be of an economic nature and how in certain trades there is still interest in the result of work "well done."*²²

This echo of Arts and Crafts ethos is a reminder that well executed craft or skill is still to be found in parts of Europe. Training in sgraffito use is available in Spain, Germany, the Czech Republic and Italy; review of research into the technique shows extraordinary interest since the 1990s.²³ Ruiz Alonso comments:

*it should be pointed out that the study of this artistic technique is really recent work, with little more than a century of activity, although for some twenty-five years it has been experiencing its best moment at an international level.*²⁴

The breadth of historical sgraffito in Europe is enormous, and its re-emergence and use in the nineteenth century across the continent gained a momentum that never occurred in the UK, and a tradition of use has persisted. This is best illustrated by selective reference to examples from the last one hundred and thirty years.

Semper was influential in the spread of a neo-classical thread of sgraffito across Europe in the late nineteenth century but Ruiz Alonso attributes its major success to the rise of symbolism and Art Nouveau.²⁵ Antonio Gaudi and Domenech i



*Fig. 17: Casa Punt, Valencia (1906), by Manuel Peris Ferrando. Front elevation.
Fig. 18: Casa Punt, Valencia (1906), by Manuel Peris Ferrando. Sgraffito detail.*



Fig. 19: Maison Cauchie, Brussels (1904), by Paul Cauchie. Frontage from the park opposite.

Montaner employed it, as did a long list of their contemporaries; a lesser known architect, Manuel Peris Ferrando (1872 – 1934), built the Casa Punt in Valencia in 1906 opposite the south east corner of the cathedral (fig. 17). An attractive floral pattern in pink and white is interleaved in a free form mix of neo-classical and art-nouveau detail. The building is typical and like many others sgraffito lends delicacy and finesse to the massive frontage structure; patterns are sometimes eccentric, but this decorative tendency took root in Catalonia on top of the older Moorish sgraffito tradition notable elsewhere in Spain.

Belgium, and Brussels in particular, are renowned for examples of sgraffito from this period. Two of the best known are Paul Cauchie's house from 1904, and decoration on the Hotel Ciamberlani of 1897. Both have been rescued from a decayed state, La Maison Cauchie in the early 1980s and the Hotel in 2006.²⁶ Cauchie was a painter and decorated his house to advertise his profession, creating an intricate frontage that uses adjacent houses to frame his artwork but does not dominate them (fig. 19). At the centre is a large sgraffito panel symbolising the arts, drawing for elements of its treatment on the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, particularly the roses.²⁷ Cauchie decorated parts of the interior in sgraffito, a fine frieze of symbolic figures surrounds the dining room, where today there is also a sample of the render and tools used from the restoration (figs. 20 and 21). The plaster section shows the light-coloured topcoat, into which the design was cut, with colour applied afterwards, and the underlying grey base, although there may



Fig. 20: Maison Cauchie, Brussels (1904), by Paul Cauchie. Section of sgraffito decoration in dining room.



Fig. 21: Maison Cauchie, Brussels (1904), by Paul Cauchie. Sample of sgraffito and tools.



Fig. 22: Hotel Ciamberlani, Brussels (1897), by Paul Hankar and Albert Ciamberlani. Restored front elevation.

have been a further levelling layer externally.

The Hotel Ciamberlani appears to have had a more complex three-layer plaster construction, using charcoal as the colour for the upper sgraffito backing coats and iron oxide for the lower in mixes of sand, hydraulic lime, trass and horsehair for reinforcement.

Germany continued to see sgraffito after World War 1. Urbach gives a number of examples, including decorated flat blocks, where sgraffito ornament frames entrances or picks out details, bay windows or the tops of gables (fig 23). He

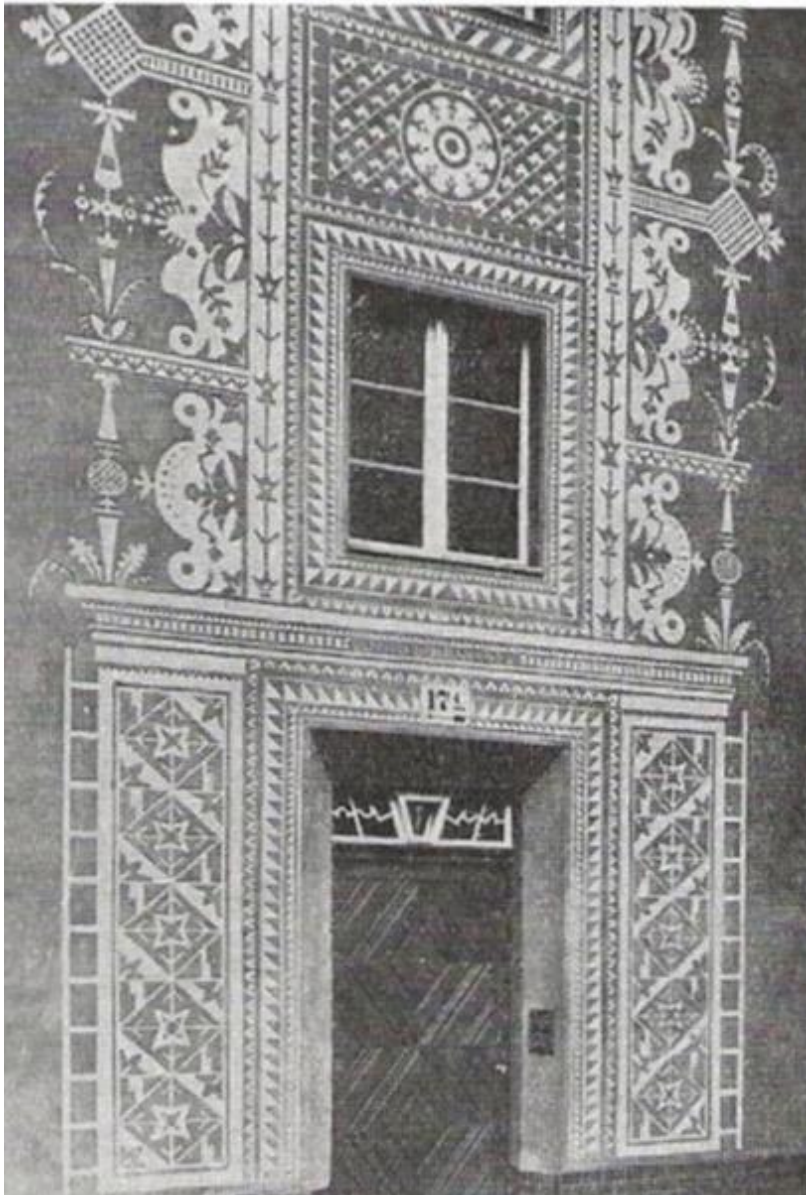


Fig. 23: House entrance and bay window in the settlement of the Civil Servants' Settlement Association of the Reichspost in Berlin-Zehlendorf, Teltower Strasse (c1927). Architect: Prof. Franz Seeck; Sgraffito by Paul Thol.

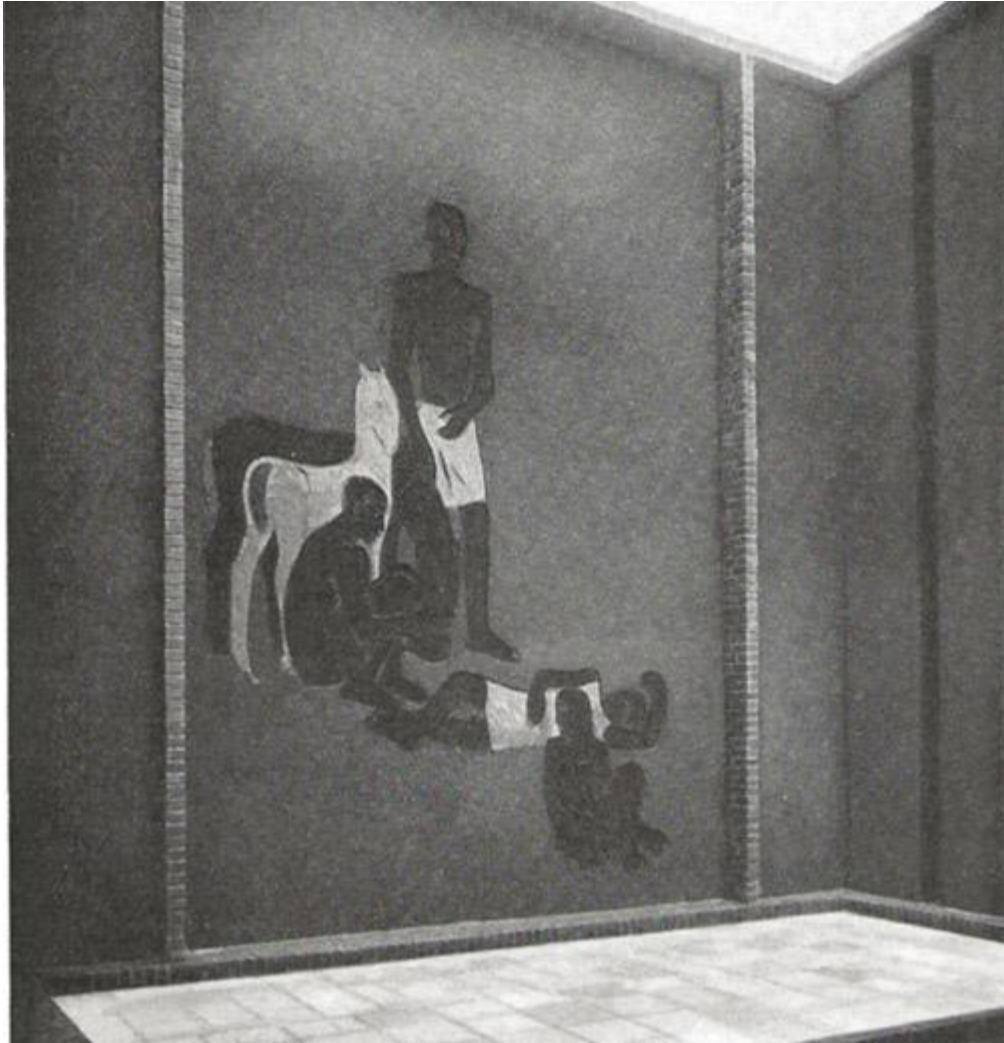


Fig. 24: 'Menschen und Pferde' (1929), by Prof. Lois Gruber, Exhibition of German Art, Düsseldorf.

also includes illustrations of work by Prof. Lois Gruber from an exhibition of German Art in Düsseldorf in 1928 (fig 24), which shows fine art use of the medium.

Decoration of housing though is a tradition that continues to this day in Germany. Post war sgraffito was employed as a means of enlivening the repetitive flat blocks of the reconstruction. Hildesheim in northern Germany has an extensive legacy of such work, although:

...very few are listed. Today, these facades are mostly covered with paint or plaster, and others will disappear under thermal insulation.²⁸

After the Second World War Germany's introduction of the 'Kunst Am Bau' (Art on Building) initiative, whereby one to two percent of construction costs were

allocated to artwork, led to widespread application of sgraffito, to the extent that one commentator in Nurnberg said that:

... I would show sgraffito as the art on building form of the post-war period.²⁹



Fig. 25: Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Woman with bird.

Fig. 26: Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Figure of woman.



Fig. 27: Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Scene of construction workers. The depth of sgraffito using 'Putzschnitt' is easy to see.



Fig. 28: Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Birds in a nest, The layers of different coloured plasters can also be seen in this detail.

The range of designs, styles of sgraffito and subject matter used is huge. Figures 25 – 28 can only give a flavour of this flowering of incised decoration. Many use a technique called ‘*Putzschnitt*,’ which does not translate easily into English. Literally it means ‘*plaster cut*’ but it is actually a ‘*very thick sgraffito*’ employing several superimposed layers of colour, which results in dramatic sculptural effects that take advantage of sunlight and the play of shadow over the surface.³⁰

Some interventions were subtle, understated but with very effective wit, as in figure 29. The flight of birds across the gable relieves and enlivens an otherwise dull expanse of render. It was this idea that the Coles and others in the nineteenth century saw as the potential of sgraffito. Indeed, watching the video from which figures 25 – 29 came, one is impressed by the civic spirit that spread art works across its buildings, by many artists in different styles and on different subjects. This post war use of sgraffito was not confined to Germany. Most of the old Polish city of Danzig (Gdansk) was destroyed in the second World War and during the reconstruction artists were invited to participate; the result was extensive decoration of facades in sgraffito.³¹ Or look further east to Israel where in recent years a large legacy of post war sgraffito has been recovered in a range of styles, locations and subject matter (fig. 30).³²



Fig. 29: Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Flying birds on gable.



Fig. 30: House in Tel-Aviv (1970), by Dan Livni and Ora Livni. 'Floral Sgraffito.'



Fig. 31: Hotel in Białowieża, Poland (2015), by Art Mur. Celebrating one of the last reserves of the European Bison.



Fig. 32: Berlin, Germany (2012), by Alexandre Farto, known as 'Vhils'. Sgraffito portrait of a Berlin nightclub owner on an old rendered wall.

Sgraffito is still created in Europe. Two examples will demonstrate this. Firstly, a mural of 2015 by a group called Art Mur, on the walls of a hotel in Bialowieza, Poland, celebrating one of the last reserves of the European Bison. It was executed with traditional methods, cutting back through a top layer to reveal a darker coating beneath.

By contrast, 'Portuguese artist Alexandre Farto, known as 'Vhils' works with existing rendered walls, cutting back to the masonry below to create his pictures. He uses pneumatic tools, picks and, apparently, even explosives to achieve his effects demonstrating a creative approach to reuse of old rendered walls. This technique redefines what sgraffito can be and suggests that there are other new variations of method or materials waiting to be added to the list of plaster mixes and styles that are already known.

This brief and selective foray into twentieth and early twenty-first century European sgraffito has brought us up to date. It tells of a technique in rude health, but that is always under threat. Sgraffito is a wafer thin skin on buildings and vulnerable to neglect, thoughtless destruction or the demands of global warming prevention through external insulation of buildings. The quandary posed by the latter begs the question whether thin render coats on insulation treatments could not lend themselves to the use of the very fine scratched decoration often employed on such work in the past. This would require further experimentation, as would the advent of new materials, such as Jesmonite, but these matters are beyond the scope of this study, although the conclusion must be that a revival of sgraffito is quite practicable, whether using old techniques or new materials.³³

1 Agnes Sumner in her garden diary records a photograph taken by George Mallelieu, one of Sumner's co-workers credited on some of the A&CES exhibits. Winchester, Hampshire Archives, sketchbook, 106M95, CD25, 27.

2 Jane Lamb, *Sgraffito in England 1600 – 1950* (London: Architectural Association, Historic Building Conservation, diss., June 1998), 61.

3 Ibid, 63-64. See also Gillian Naylor, *The Arts & crafts Movement – a study of its sources, ideals and influence on design theory*. London: Studio Vista,

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1971. Chapters 6 and 7 explore how education and artistic trends in Britain were shadowed and then overtaken by European countries
- 4 Jane Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 90. She consulted the archives of Trollope and Colls, the successor firm to that with whom Robinson worked and records in a note: '*research at Trollope and Colls archives have failed to produce any record drawings of buildings designed by Robinson.*' Robinson has recurred throughout this research and more work is needed to see if some of his work does survive.
 - 5 A summary of his exhibits is given in Algernon Graves, *The Royal Society of Arts, A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904*, Vol. III (London: Henry Graves and Co. Ltd. and George Bell and Sons, 1905), 140. Accessed 18 July 2019 at: <https://archive.org/details/royalacademyart07gravgoog/page/n170/mode/2up>. Lamb records Formilli's talk in her notes, no. 11, 90; Massé records it in his account of the art Workers Guild, H. J. L. J. Massé, *The Art Workers Guild 1884 – 1934* (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1935), 106.
 - 6 Pauline Brain, *Some Men who made Barnstaple...and Arts & Crafts in Barnstaple* (Minehead: Roundabout Devon Books, 2010), 13.
 - 7 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 55-56, quoted from Thomas B. Alexander, *RIBA Journal*, 1957, Vol. 64, 218.
 - 8 Historic England List Entry, Ravelin Manor House and Little Ravelin, grade II listed. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1385344>.
 - 9 Barbara Gent, *Giggleswick School Chapel: A guide in support of the Chapel Fund*, Giggleswick School with Hollingwood Design and Print, June 2018, 34.
 - 10 George Bankart, *The Art of the Plasterer* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 44.
 - 11 William Millar, *Plastering Plain and Decorative* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905), 218.
 - 12 Bankart, *The Art of the Plasterer*, 44.
 - 13 There were dissenters, notably Walter Crane, in his 1911 book '*William Morris to Whistler...*' he says: '*Our climate—more especially town climate—is generally unfavourable to the effectiveness and permanence of the work as exterior decoration. There is, however, an excellent object lesson in sgraffito of various kinds to be seen on the back wall of the Science Schools at South Kensington, the work of the late Mr. Moody.*'
 - 14 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 77. She gives no date for the conservation which is assumed to have occurred in the mid-1990s.

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- 15 Ibid, 53.
- 16 Historic England Listing Notice 1298310. Lamb says this work took ten years to complete presumably starting in 1898.
- 17 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 79. She describes conservation in the early 1990s to stabilise the panels *'in the true tradition of SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings). The approach was not to restore the mural, but to consolidate it in its present state.'* It had not been thought *'correct to speculatively restore what was in large part a freehand design,'* Comment from Devon Environment Department 1993.
- 18 Even gypsum-based plaster decoration can survive externally in the UK if adequately protected from the worst of the weather, but *'must not be allowed to take up water and certainly must not be exposed to running water'*, Nicola and John Ashurst, *English Heritage Technical Handbook: Mortars, Plasters and Renders, Volume 3* (Aldershot: Gower Technical Press, Practical Building Conservation, 1988), 34. Wide overhanging roofs and sheltered locations are implied.
- 19 Ibid, 33.
- 20 See chapter 2 on Kerstin Klein's list of historic render mixes for sgraffito.
- 21 Francisco González Yunta, 'La Técnica Tradicional del Esgrafiado con Mortero del Cal, un Recurso Publicitario Actual,' I Jornada Nacional de Investigación en Edificación, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2007. Accessed 8 August 2020, <https://www.ibercampus.es/i-jornada-nacional-de-investigacion-en-edificacion--2726.htm>.
- 22 Ibid, Section 6, pages unnumbered, *'que la disposición de todo el equipo, dada la singularidad del trabajo, fue la mejor de las posibles; resulta llamativo como la motivación de las personas no siempre tiene que ser de naturaleza económica y como todavía en determinados oficios se conserva el interés por el resultado del trabajo "bien hecho".'*
- 23 From the author's research and contacts in Spain, Germany and the Czech Republic.
- 24 Rafael Ruiz Alonso, 'Fenómenos de Difusión y Asimilación del Esgrafiado en la Arquitectura Medieval, Moderna y Contemporánea.,' in *Ciudad y Artes Visuales*, ed. Miguel Ángel Chaves Martín (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2016), *'Debe señalarse que el estudio de este procedimiento artístico es una labor realmente reciente, con poco más de un siglo en activo, aunque desde hace unos veinticinco años viva su mejor momento a nivel internacional.'*

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- 25 Ibid, 22-24.
- 26 For accounts of the restorations see: Maurice Culot et al. *La Maison Cauchie, Entre rêve et réalité*. (Brussels: Maison Cauchie, 2005) and Claire Fontaine, 'Looking for an idealistic Sgraffito at Hotel Ciamberlani in Brussels,' in *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, edited by Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 210-222. Fontaine's article has typographic errors for the date of the house, giving it as built in 1887 and 1897. The latter is correct.
- 27 Culot, *La Maison Cauchie*, 15-16.
- 28 Anneli Ellesat-Brummer, *Sgraffiti in Hildesheim – Neue Erkenntnisse zu Material und Technik ausgewählter Fassaden der Vor- und Nachkriegsarchitektur*, in *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, edited by Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 63-64.
- 29 Nikolaus Bencker, Untere Denkmalschutzbehörde Stadt Nürnberg, 'Sgraffito wurde ich bezeigen als die Kunst Anbau Form der Nachkriegszeit,' transcribed from video, *Sgraffito - Die Kratzputzkunst der Nachkriegszeit*.
- 30 The artists are unknown. The quotations are from an e mail exchange between the author and Angela Weyer in May 2020, discussing English translation of 'Putzschnitt.'
- 31 Anna Kriegseisen, *Die Sgraffito-Dekorationen der 1950er Jahre in Danzig: Technologie, Modifizierung, konservatorische Problematik*, in *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, edited by Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 239-241.
- 32 Mika Tal, Shay Farkash and Gabriel Yossi, *Sgraffito Murals in Israel: Documentation and Conservation in Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, edited by Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 266-274.
- 33 The author discussed experimenting with Jesmonite with Stephen Brettland in the University of Liverpool School of Architecture model workshop in February 2020, but Covid 19 restrictions prevented this. See <https://jesmonite.com>.

Chapter 8

The last of Sumner's sgraffito, his influence in Europe and the twentieth century in England

Sumner's story is not quite complete, and we return to him as the Edwardian period unfolds, to his last sgraffito and his influence in Europe. This leads to a brief look at unexpected post World War 2 sgraffito in England before examination of how his work has received renewed attention since the nineteen-fifties, contemporary questions about the status and protection of his work and possible future sgraffito.

In 1897 the Sumners moved away from London. *'The Book of Gorley'*¹ recounts how the family went first to Bournemouth then in 1904 to South Gorley, Fordingbridge, on the edge of the New Forest. Sumner did not cut himself off from the arts and his old friends as the move out of London has sometimes been taken to imply, but it was in part a return to his country roots, away from the dirt and bustle of the City. It was also to aid his family's health; his letters to Julia Ady in the 1890s refer periodically to concerns about Agnes' health and that of one of his daughters, Betty (Beatrix?). In a letter from Bournemouth in 1898 he observes that:

*Agnes is well, & there is no doubt that this place & air does really suit her which is an infinite blessing.*²

Later though in *'The Book of Gorley'* he records:

*Then Agnes' health at Bournemouth furthered the process of uprooting. She made no progress there. The health giving of the place seemed used up. So what with my own inclinations and her health, I passed from dream to action, & set about discovery [of a piece of land] in real earnest.*³

The move to the house he designed at South Gorley led to chronicling the family's life in their new surroundings, their traditions and history and to archaeology. One also senses the importance of the new house to the family from Agnes in her recording of how they developed the gardens. She took

over one of Sumner's sketch books in 1906 and used it for the next thirty years to record in detail how they developed and tended the gardens, especially what roses they planted, the layout of the rose garden and later in 1908 a plan of the '*enlarged kitchen garden.*' There are a few photographs of the house shortly after they moved in, looking stark in its newness compared with its appearance today (figs. 1 – 2). Agnes can seem an even more elusive presence than Sumner in the historical record, but she appears extensively in Sumner's letters to Julia Ady, often with respect to her health but also in greetings on her behalf from Sumner. Effie Heywood, a niece records:

She was a quiet gentle little woman, whom one scarcely expected to have the sense of humour, sympathy and great commonsense which she possessed. She was beloved and teased by her family, and her passion for knitting called forth much amusement...⁴



Fig. 1: 'Cuckoo Hill', South Gorley, Hampshire. Agnes Benson with three of her children (it is assumed, the small boy in the wide brimmed hat is Humphrey, the youngest son, born in 1896) on the front steps at Cuckoo Hill. From the start of her garden diary. The photo seems to date from 1904.⁵



Fig. 2: 'Cuckoo Hill', South Gorley, Hampshire, 2019.

The family settled here. Gordon Le Pard in an article on the house charts the Sumners' engagement with their new community; it is sympathetic and informative about 'a comparatively wealthy gentleman in a rural community,' but who had the 'ability to make friends very easily in all levels of society.'⁶ Agnes' health seems to improve, she lived until 1939. Sumner began 'The Book of Gorley' almost as soon as he arrived in the New Forest and the best account of its genesis is probably his own, in a letter to the publisher with whom he had dealt for many years over publication of posters for the Fitzroy Picture Society, Ernest Bell:

2.9.08

Dear Mr Bell,

I should like to show you a book that I have written, & to hear what you have to say about it.

It has arisen thus – when first we came here, I felt that some chronicle of our settlement, & housebuilding might be of interest to my children, & so I began a record of how things came about.

Then I got a book made for me of old water-colour paper, & therein wrote my screed as nicely as I could, & illustrated it as I went along.

Then the subject widened from a chronicle of how I built this house, into a chronicle of the varied life that surrounds us here at the edge of the forest.

Now, I find that this book which has gradually been filled, seems to interest the people who have seen it, & I feel that I would rather get it into printed book shape myself, than leave it to chance & my successors – as I originally supposed in the making.

If you would give me an appointment, I should like to show you the M.S. illustrated book, & would leave a copy of the M.S. with you, if you were interested in what you see, & were willing to give me your opinion thereon.

Believe me. V. Sincerely.

Heywood Sumner

Ernest Bell snr(?)

Aug: 13.1908⁷

Bell was not receptive, and a version of the book was only later published in 1910 by the Chiswick Press. It is an entertaining read and beautifully illustrated, and tells, with occasional references to his sgraffito that he was still busy artistically. Indeed, one section near the beginning about the construction of the house suggests a complicated and trying period in their lives:

On April 3. 1903. Beatrix, Clara, Barnes & I first inhabited the new house at Cuckoo Hill. On April 7th Agnes, Humphrey & Doris & Christopher joined us. Michael completing the party on the 8th. During the summer of 1903 Agnes was in better health than she had been for some years past; so we decided to add to the house.....

Then, in August 1903. I made a road up to the house from the Blunt's Barn lane, so as to avoid the steep 'leane' hill, and thus began the building of the 2nd part of the house. The addition did not at first interfere with our domestic arrangements. In September I was away, completing the wall decoration at All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, but

Agnes stayed on with the children until Oct' 26. Then 'Eagle's Nest' Bournemouth was taken for 3 months, & there Agnes had a severe illness which kept her abed most of this time.⁸

Later the same year he writes to Julia Ady to see if he can stay with her and Henry while he examines wallpaper designs for a national student competition, presumably in London, though the letter does not say so. The Adys were living at Ockham near Woking at this date which would have been an easy train ride into the city.

Sumner continued to exhibit at The Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society until 1916, by when the change in his interests and concentration on archaeology are apparent. He exhibits '*A map showing the ancient Earthworks of Cranbourne Chase*' and '*Plans and Illustrations for Stonehenge, To-day and Yesterday.*'⁹ In 1910 though a variety of artworks appear as the list below from the exhibition catalogue demonstrates:

9 A&CES 1910

P22

9 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
"The Bee Garden." Original Drawing
for Fitzroy School Picture. £10 10s

P30

67, 68 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
*Cartoons for Sgraffito. Decoration
In St. John's Church, Miles Platting,
Manchester.*

P69 HEYWOOD SUMNER.

*Cartoon for Sgraffito. In a garden
House at Doveleys, Staffordshire.*

P112

329 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
*Wall-paper" "The Wild Iris." Printed
under the direction of METFORD
WARNER. Exhibitors, JEFFERY AND
CO.*

P122

372 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Arras Tapestry, "The Chace." Exhibitors, MORRIS AND CO.

P161

608 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Photograph of decorative painting, Albion Church, Hammersmith.¹⁰

It is poignant to see his final two sgraffito schemes listed; St John's we have discussed but the scheme at Doveleys (already noted in chapter 3 because of decoration on the main house) was not known to have been executed until 1985 when Elizabeth Lewis visited the house formerly occupied by Sumner's sister and brother-in-law in north Staffordshire and found that the work did exist and was intact; she records:

This is a large Victorian mansion, the main block is red sandstone, with several later additions, dominated by the Heywood family's dates and initials..... Dovelies is now a Borstal called Riverside CentreThe summer house is a large detached brick building close to the house (no date) with external cement work or render above the windows. This render is carved out with the figures of animals and birds in a rather nursery style. Painted over white recently. Some of the figures are cut into the render (as the figure of the fox) while the others are cut in outline only (the hounds). Animals include fox and hounds, pheasants, large fishes, calves, two over each window.¹¹

A recent visit proved that the sgraffito is still there, hidden behind two 1960s' buildings and difficult to reach because of undergrowth that has taken hold now the house is vacant. Lewis's description is accurate, though the calves must be does as the adjacent panel is of two bucks locking antlers (figs. 3 – 4).

The work is notable on several counts; it is a rare domestic piece, external and built into the window frame, indicating that it was most likely applied to a mesh backing. If the latter is the case, it is the only known such



Fig. 3: 'Doveleys,' Staffordshire, garden house (1910), by Heywood Sumner. Sgraffito panel of two does.



Fig. 4: 'Doveleys,' Staffordshire, garden house (1910), by Heywood Sumner. A photograph taken in Autumn 2020 of the building and its sgraffito panels.

example by Sumner. There are eight wildlife scenes, still covered in white paint, spotted now with black lichen and peeling in places to show traces of red within the work and blue or black to the frame. A contemporary photograph suggests the animals and plants were executed in two colours with a dark upper surround, but detailed sample analysis and conservation would be needed to confirm this. The animals are well but simply defined and large within the panels, and carry echoes of a woodland hunting scene, the Chace, a tapestry which Sumner had completed two years before.

Doveleys marks the end of known sgraffito by Sumner and possible reasons for its disappearance in England were mooted in the last chapter. We saw too the older tradition in much of Europe where usage has continued to the present. At first

therefore it is surprising to discover Sumner's recurring presence in continental books on sgraffito, where his 1889 article about it is reprinted or paraphrased. This is probably attributable to his frequent display of work at many European and two American exhibitions; Coatts and Lewis listed ten in their chronology of Sumner's life:

- 1893 Antwerp and Chicago
- 1894 Brussels, 'La Libre Esthétique'
- 1900 Paris Exhibition
- 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition
- 1902 Turin International Exhibition
- 1904 St Louis International Exhibition
- 1913 Ghent International Exhibition
- 1914 Paris, Exposition des Arts Décoratifs de Grand Bretagne et d'Irlande, Palais de Louvre
- 1915 London, British Industries Fair¹²

One cannot always find Sumner in catalogues for these exhibitions and certainly not what he exhibited. He is named in a long list of artists in the 1894 Brussels' 'La Libre Esthétique' catalogue. At the 1902 Turin exhibition he is on page 304 of the catalogue in '*La section anglaise a l'Exposition de Turin 1902,*' grouped with '*Harry (Henry) Wilson, May Morris, Alex Fisher, Gerald Moira et autres.*'¹³ One infers that he showed the recently completed main apse decoration at St. Agatha's in Portsmouth, as it features in an article on the English Section of the Exhibition in The Studio of September 1902 by F. H. Newbery, wherein there is both a photograph of the work and a drawing of the apse design on pages 253 and 254 respectively.¹⁴ Sumner also exhibited the drawing for the Lady Chapel at St Agatha's as this can be seen at the extreme right of the lower photograph on page 258 of the same article (figs. 5 and 6). It is odd to note that Charles-Eduoard Jeanneret exhibited a pocket watch at Turin, for which he '*won the diploma of Honour – an international prize – ...it was an astonishing piece of work.*' Two two years later he and colleagues created a sgraffito frieze on the Villa Fallet at La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland in a repetitive stylised pattern of snow covered conifers; it has something of Sumner's



TURIN EXHIBITION

THE ENGLISH SECTION

Fig. 5: Turin International Exhibition (1902). Photograph from F. H. Newbery's article in *The Studio*, no. 114, September 1902, 258. Sumner's design drawings for the Lady Chapel at St Agatha's can be identified at the extreme right, boxed in red. Compare with figure 6. Sumner's window design for St Mary's Church Longworth is top left.

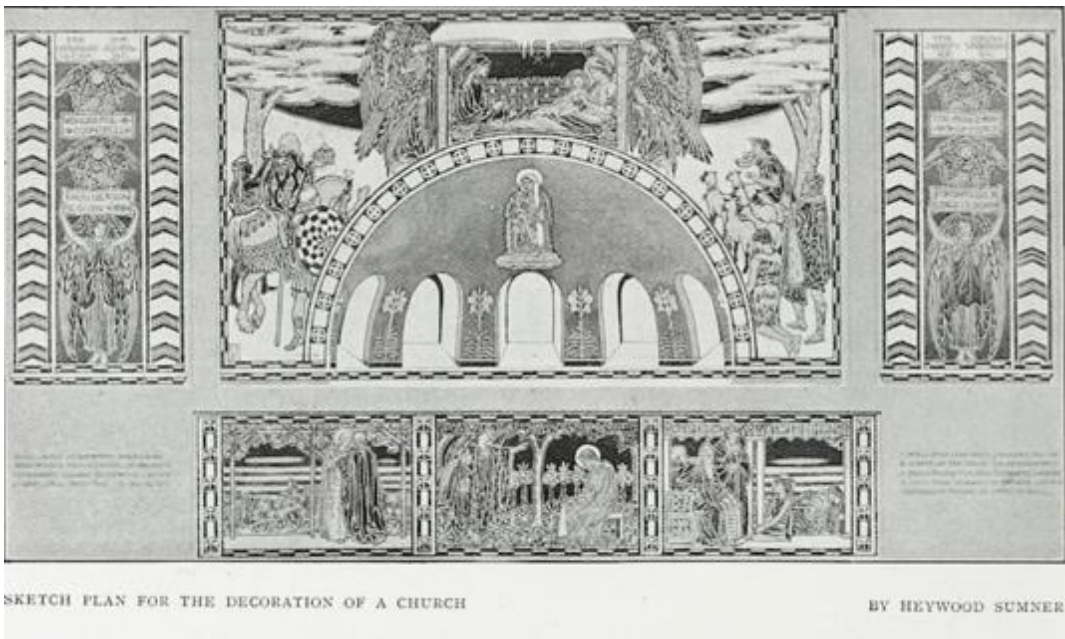


Fig. 6: St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, Lady Chapel (1895). Drawing exhibited at the A&CES in 1896; illustrated in *The Studio*, no. 46, January 1897, 274. The layout of the sheet and features such as the stable at the top and the array of windows in the semi dome make possible the panel's identification in the photograph in figure 5.



Fig. 7: Villa Fallet, La Chaux-de-Fonds Switzerland, (1904), by Charles-Edouard Jeanneret and colleagues. Sgraffito to gable.

style of repeating ornament. It is intriguing if unproductive to speculate on who saw Sumner's exhibits and was influenced by them (fig. 7).¹⁵ Impact there was however.

The authors of *'Les sgraffites a Bruxelles'* have no doubt of Sumner's influence:

At the end of the century, the best-known English artist on the continent is without doubt the painter and illustrator Heywood Sumner (1853-1940), who designed a number of stunning church interiors entirely covered with sgraffito. Influenced by the effect of paleo Christian mosaics and medieval tapestries.....His illustration and sgraffito work largely disseminated through the exhibitions of the Arts & Crafts, then by the journal, The Studio, had probably drawn the attention of all the Belgian decorators who were interested in sgraffito at the end of the XIXth century.¹⁶

The Belgian thread is pertinent, for this too was a country without a long sgraffito tradition, but it had been influenced by Semper and the neo-Renaissance revival, and government was involved in questions of design and in sgraffito in particular. Around 1887 Xavier Mellery (1845 – 1921) was *'charged by the*

government to undertake a study trip therewith into the possibilities of this new technique.¹⁷ He travelled through Germany, Bohemia, Austria, Switzerland and Luxembourg, visiting Dresden, Prague and Munich. His most telling visit for his eventual conclusions was to a frieze in Dresden by Adolf Wilhelm Walther (1826-1913) carried out in the Residenzschloss in Augustusstraße between 1869 and 1876. This was Urbach relates:

*one of the most powerful sgraffito designs of all time. It shows the princes of the House of Wettin in a long row. Heralds and minstrels open the procession, representatives of all estates close it.*¹⁸

It was also a technical disaster so that by the time Mellery visited it at the end of the 1880s it was already in poor condition and Urbach records that it was replaced with a replica of the design in ceramic tiles in 1906. Apparently Mellery also saw one or two other deteriorated works and thus condemned the whole process in his report.

Sgraffito owed its take up in Brussels and Belgium therefore to architects and artists such as Paul Hankar and Albert Ciamberlani, whose cooperation on the latter's house we have already noted. Although sgraffito in a neo-classical vein had begun to appear in Belgium as early as 1882 it was the newer artistic styles that drew designers; many chose to explore it.¹⁹ This must be partly attributable to the Studio magazine started in 1893. It was intentionally international in outlook, covering a wide range of arts with good quality illustrations; was attuned to modern developments in Europe and featured Sumner regularly in its reviews of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society shows. Joseph Gleeson White's article on Sumner's various sgraffito projects in magazine No. 61, of April 1898 was timely therefore. Gleeson White (1851 – 1898) was a sympathetic and supportive critic and it seems likely that he and Sumner would have known each other. His lengthy article reproduced Sumner's 1889 essay on how he executed his designs from the second A&CES catalogue, provided an overview and photographs of several of his schemes and made sgraffito an attractive decorative possibility. The title, *The Work of Heywood Sumner. – 1. Sgraffito Decorations*, suggests there was to have been

another article, on Sumner's other artwork perhaps, but this never appeared, presumably because of Gleeson White's early death from typhoid later that year.²⁰

The first European book found that features Sumner's methods is by Ernst Berger in 1909; he simply paraphrases Sumner's 1889 article and also does the same for Semper's from 1868. Urbach, whom we have referenced extensively, was far more ambitious. He wrote a history of European sgraffito, and of Sumner's work in the section on the nineteenth century in a way that suggests he has seen some of the examples he lists at the end of the book. He also mapped an inventory of sgraffito across Europe with Sumner's work marked out on England on the edge (fig. 8).²¹ He devoted the second half of his book to how to carry out the technique. Sumner's impact in his lifetime was considerable at home, and abroad his work is



Fig. 8: Hans Urbach's 1928 map cataloguing the location and density of sgraffito work across Europe, 'Sgraffito und Kratzputz in Mitteleuropa'. Each number relates to a directory in the book and the symbols give an indication of the numbers of sgraffito works in each location. All the numbers in England and Wales are for works by Sumner, except No. 264, which covers two examples, one of which is the South Kensington Museum scheme by Moody and his team. No. 269 should read 268 as this is the last one in Urbach's directory.

still being recorded in the late 1920s, but his subsequent footprint in England is sparser.

Pevsner mentions Sumner in passing in *'Pioneers of Modern Design'* in 1936 as the most interesting designer of a group who followed Mackmurdo's lead into proto-Art Nouveau in 1883.²² It seems to be only after the Second World War that Sumner's work is taken note of again, and perhaps more especially after the founding of the Victorian Society in 1958. The same year a beautiful set of photographs was taken of St John the Evangelist in Manchester for the National Monuments Record, though the reason for this has not been established.²³ The first modern, albeit short, paean to Sumner's sgraffito is an article about Llanfair Kilgeddin by Olive Philips in 1962 twenty two years after his death in 1940;²⁴ the first authoritative work is probably Nicholas Taylor's 1964 essay in the *Architectural Review* on St Agatha's in Portsmouth, when its survival was first called into question by proposed road widening. It displays a fine appreciation of both church and artwork and is the precursor for bursts of interest and action thereafter. Articles appear in *'Country Life'* in 1978 and 1989,²⁵ between which dates the Winchester exhibition was held. The 1990s saw further work on him; Jane Barbour wrote her first article on Sumner that year, 'Heywood Sumner, A Very Private Person'; Jane Lamb began her dissertation on English sgraffito and Michael Morris curated another exhibition in Winchester, both in 1998.

This growing renewal of enthusiasm is fortunate light against darker fates that overtook some of Sumner's sgraffito over the same period. The decoration at St Paul's in Winchester was covered over in 1962; most of the sgraffito and the Lady Chapel containing it at St Agatha's were destroyed in the same decade and St John's was felled in 1973. St Mary's at Llanfair Kilgeddin came close to demolition in the mid-1980s. Work in St Edmunds School chapel in Canterbury and Vicar's Close chapel in Wells has been covered over, possibly as late as the 1950s.²⁶ In summary, ten of Sumner's sgraffito schemes have survived all or in substantial part, six have been covered over offering possibilities that sgraffito lingers in limbo beneath. This is a better tally than looked likely thirty or forty years ago; and belated recognition means that all of Sumner's surviving sgraffito are today protected by listing with the exception of the panels on the Garden Room at Doveleys, which would benefit from

it. Two of the churches containing work are only grade 2, making internal decoration still vulnerable. These should be raised to 2*.

We have referred to several schemes of conservation on Sumner's sgraffito, which have secured the works for the foreseeable future. In the case of St. Paul's in Winchester this involved recovery of part of a scheme that had been plastered over: there should be a concerted effort to confirm whether all or any of the other covered schemes remain intact behind the white plaster that now covers them. This would provide information for future works in the buildings concerned where works are shown to remain and should affect any proposals for alterations to them, in particular the cutting of openings or the like in walls that carry Sumner's work. Part of this study though was set up because it was felt that there should, all the same, be a full catalogue of the sgraffito (indeed there should be a similar record of his stained glass, as only that installed in conjunction with sgraffito is dealt with here). Much information on the individual sgraffito installations is contained in the catalogue.

A small number of sgraffito schemes were executed in England after World War 2, in the 1950s and 60s, and with one exception are by European artists, who had settled here. The exception was Augustus Lunn (1905 – 1986), a painter born in Preston, who in the mid-1950s created a frieze of static sgraffito figures in the recessed arch over the entrance to St Mary's Church in Welling, south-east London. He also designed a work for the Festival of Britain, which was eventually rehoused at Woodberry Down, a London Primary School, depicting industry, engineering and science in a startlingly modern tapestry like panel (fig. 9).²⁷

In 1956, Theodor Kern (1900 – 1969), Austrian by birth, created a bold sgraffito panel as a backdrop for the font in the Anglican Church in Merstham, Surrey, (fig. 10). This has stylistic similarities to possibly the finest post war sgraffito in England, by Adam Kossowski (1905 – 1986), a Polish artist, who created a striking set of seven scenes based on the Revelation of St John that wraps two thirds of the way around the circular domed chapel at Queen Mary University in London. Kossowski, employing simple white on black plaster effects, uses line and mass to dramatic purpose in his telling of the story. There are lovely touches, delicate scraping to convey smoke rising from a censer, or the faces of the tortured souls,



Fig. 9: Sgraffito mural (1951), by Augustus Lunn. Designed for the festival of Britain.



Fig. 10: Anglican Church, Merstham, Surrey (1956), by Theodor Kern. Sgraffito panel behind font.



Fig. 11: Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Panorama.



Fig. 12: Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Revelation panel, on extreme right in fig. 11.



Figs. 13 and 14: Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Detail of censer and souls of the damned respectively.



Fig. 15: Church of St Boniface, London (1960), by Heribert Reul. Figure of Christ on back wall of chancel.

(figs. 11 – 14). It too is now listed though only as recently as 2014. Both Kern and Kossowski use line, pattern and gesture in ways reminiscent of Sumner, albeit in a very different figurative style. All used the expressive qualities of the medium rather than trying to draw pictures and powerful works resulted.

There is one other piece from 1960 that is more sculptural, static, perhaps because it seems to fit into the German tradition of *'Putzschnitt'* of layered colours and depth. This is in the modern German catholic church of St. Boniface near Aldgate East tube station on the corner of a small square where Heribert Reul (1911 – 2008) created a monumental sgraffito reredos of Christ (fig. 15).²⁸

Only one, more contemporary, sgraffito has so far been located, confirmation perhaps of its rarity in England generally. In 2001 Kate Downie created a piece at the Scottish Lime Centre in Fife. Called 'Span' it is a large view of the Forth Rail Bridge, which arose from her etching work, and a long-held ambition to create a large public sgraffito work (fig. 16).

Fifty or so possible examples of sgraffito, in addition to Sumner's work, have been found in the UK, only some of which it has been possible to visit. Recordings of



Fig. 16: 'Span,' Scottish Lime Centre, Fife (2001), by Kate Downie.

'sgraffito' in listings, articles and books can sometimes mean niello, or another related technique and only close inspection on site can confirm this; an approximate list of nineteenth sgraffito works is contained in the appendices. It is likely that there are many more to be found, hidden, covered over or listed as something else. Sgraffito has been found in the most unlikely of places, such as a Christ figure on a gable outside a church on the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides (fig. 17), or fleeting glimpse of a roundel on the gable of a house near Aberaeron in West Wales (fig. 18). Small details on buildings, cut details in rendered gables on early twentieth century houses for example, stand as forms of sgraffito, even if stamped rather as Benjamin Ferrey was doing in the late 1850s (fig. 19).

We are fortunate to have Sumner's work, and indeed that of other artists in the medium. This study has shown the European scope of the technique and that English examples fit within this, part of a resurgence of interest in an ancient decorative process on buildings that swept the continent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is still widely used abroad, and should both affect the way in which we view architecture, its place in our communities; and encourage exploration, as this work has shown is possible, of the scope it offers in the UK to



Fig. 17: Gable to hall adjacent to St Barr's Catholic Church, North Bay, Barra, Outer Hebrides (date unknown), artist unknown. The precise technique employed is uncertain but the figure has been created by cutting into the render surface.



Fig. 18: South gable to house on main coast road south of Aberaeron, Ceredigion, Wales (date unknown), artist unknown. The north gable has an identical panel. This appears to be single coat sgraffito.



Fig. 19: South Drive, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester (c1910), artist unknown. Apparently stencilled or stamped sgraffito detail on the rear gable of early twentieth century house.

enhance the street scene as well as offering a durable, flexible and unusual way of adding meaning to the places we create to inhabit.

Henry Cole.... saw the potential in the link between art and manufactures, ...wanted to offer a reasonably economic yet individual solution to external wall decoration, which would be beautiful, available to all, would improve the dullness of stucco facades and would be sufficiently durable to last many years. And Cole, like Semper, wanted to integrate the decorative design, with the architecture and saw sgraffito as a means to this end. But Cole had overlooked the central principle of sgraffito, for it was a technique that depended not on machinery and mass production, but upon the skills and abilities of the individual artist or craftsman who carried out the work....²⁹

This extract from Jane Lamb's conclusions is quoted at length because it misses a vital point in the debate over hand- as opposed to machine- production. They are posed as mutually exclusive, but this is not the case. Their integration on projects is a matter of timing of trades on site and the organisation of a

construction programme.³⁰ Despite off-site fabrication of some buildings and of major components on others, much building still relies on the skills and abilities of the crafts- or tradespeople for bricklaying, roof-tiling, plumbing. In this respect applying artwork to a building is no different, if costed and allowed for in the building programme. The possibility of off-site fabrication of sgraffito panels in workshop conditions offers additional scope to compress construction periods and avoid bad weather issues around applying wet-trade operations on-site. Clearly this can be done, as the Spanish shop front examined in the last chapter illustrates and as does the German programme of artwork applied to mass housing after the second world war.

This examination of sgraffito and of Sumner has shown that this is a medium with huge potential for interpretation in myriad ways by different artists for different purposes.³¹ Work in the UK may benefit externally from care over its setting and some protection from the weather, but it will endure, as the example of the Dairy in Islington demonstrates.

Sumner developed a distinctive type and character of sgraffito that escaped the classical allusions that feature in so much other work both before and after him and created a style of decoration that fitted its period. In his working methods, executing a craft technique himself and his aspiration for art to be seen by all he was true to the Arts and Crafts ethos, though he remained an upper middle-class gentleman without the political imperative that drove some of his contemporaries. His work also arose from the social structures of the time:

*The highly interwoven and interdependent social network, common interests and links forged between one generation and the next, by one family and another, their mutual support and curiosity to try out new ideas.*³²

He was at the heart of the Arts and Crafts movement and as Margot Coatts says in her introduction to the Winchester exhibition booklet, he deserves to be better known.³³ He was a brilliant artist, more so with sgraffito and stained glass than with his works on paper: Barry Cunliffe maintains he was not a great one:

How then should we judge this prolific and versatile man? Certainly not as a great artist – his work, and indeed his temperament lacked the drive and arrogance so necessary to cross the threshold from competence to genius.³⁴

This is an odd judgement. Sumner manifests extraordinary drive in the execution of his sgraffito and the equation of genius with arrogance is deeply suspect. The best riposte to this comes from Ruiz Alonso's observation about Sumner:

Sumner developed the technique of sgraffito...each one of his achievements is a master work.³⁵

Decorating buildings is almost second nature to humankind, and although sgraffito does not have an established tradition in the country, it is still a practical technique waiting to be tried again. Sumner's work is a joy and valuable heritage in itself, but it also offers an example of what can be achieved with sgraffito and the opportunities it offers for the future to explore. Perhaps that is the main lesson of this project.

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- 1 Heywood Sumner, *Cuckoo Hill, the Book of Gorley* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1987). This is the version easily available second-hand today. Its publication followed the 1986 Winchester exhibition and has an introduction by Margot Coatts. The original, first volume, was published in 1910 by the Chiswick Press.
 - 2 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Julia Ady (née Cartwright), 24 July 1898, Northampton County Archives, Cartwright (Edgcote) Collection, CE121/22a, 2.
 - 3 Sumner, *Cuckoo Hill*, 3-4.
 - 4 I am grateful to Sir Peter Heywood for this extract, part of a sketch portrait of the Sumners, one of a number of members of the Heywood extended family, compiled by Effie.
 - 5 The photograph follows two pages of other pictures dated 1904, in which Agnes is wearing the same dress and hat. Her garden diary is in one of Heywood's sketchbooks held at the Hampshire Archives in Winchester.

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- 6 Gordon Le Pard, 'Cuckoo Hill-An Arts and Crafts House in the New Forest' *Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society, News* 23 (Summer 1995): 32.
 - 7 Letter from Heywood Sumner to Ernest Bell, 13 August 1908, 329/240, Reading University, Special Collections, George Bell & Sons collection.
 - 8 Manuscript notebook of Heywood Sumner containing a draft of a part of 'Cuckoo Hill: The Book of Gorley', and garden notes by Agnes Sumner. relating to the garden at Cuckoo Hill, Hampshire Archives, Winchester, 106M95_1_9-10.
 - 9 Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, *Catalogue of the tenth Exhibition MCMXII*, 1912, 75, entry no. 315, and *Catalogue of the eleventh Exhibition MCMXVI*, 1916, 237, entry no. 534 respectively. See Le Pard, Gordon, *The Trustworthy Mole-Heywood Sumner Archaeologist & Author*, Hampshire Field Club, 1995 for a detailed discussion of Sumner's archaeological investigations and publications.
 - 10 Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, *Catalogue of the ninth Exhibition MCMX*, 1910.
 - 11 Elizabeth Lewis, 'E. L's visits to Oxfordshire and Staffs, April 1985; April 20th Dovelies, Uttoxeter.' Notes of visit held in Alan Crawford's research folder for 1986 Winchester exhibition, loaned to the author. Margot Coatts and Lewis seem to have discovered 'Dovelies' from reference in a letter received from Sir Percival Heywood in February 1985, 'Moved from Arthur Percival Heywood Duffield to Doveleys.....Uncle Heywood decorated it.'
 - 12 List collated from Margot Coatts and Elizabeth Lewis *Heywood Sumner: Artist and Archaeologist 1853-1940*, ed. (Winchester: Winchester City Museum, 1986), 59-61. Alan Crawford's 'Story File,' on the Arts and Crafts, loaned to the author, contains numerous accounts of discussions about exhibitions abroad, at which members of the A&CES were very keen to show their work.
 - 13 Georg Fuchs et F. H. Newbery, *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs Modernes A Turin* (Darmstadt: Alexander Koch, Librairie Des Arts Décoratifs, 1902), 304.
 - 14 F. H. Newbery, 'The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art at Turin. The English Section,' *The Studio*, no. 114, (Sept 1902).
 - 15 Jeanneret was only fifteen in 1902. The supposition of influence from other exhibits in Turin is noted for emphasis of the design cross currents of the period. For Villa Fallet see Frank Russell, *Art Nouveau Architecture*, London: Academy Editions, 1979, 168 with picture on 163. Russell refers to sgraffito use by other architects of the period, notably Jan Kotěra in the Czech

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- Republic, 221. Information on Jeannert's watch design is from Stephen Gardiner, *Le Corbusier* (London: Fontana, 1974), 40 and plate 6.
- 16 Eric Hennaut, Liliane Liesens, 'Les origins et la redécouverte du sgraffite au XIXe siècle,' in *Les sgraffites à Bruxelles*, by Marie Demanet, Eric Hennaut, Walter Schudel, Jos Vandenbreeden and Linda Santvoort (Brussels: Fondation Roi Badouin, 1996), 35.
- 'A la fin du siècle, l'artiste anglais le plus connu sur le continent est sans doute le peintre et illustrateur Heywood Sumner (1853-1940) qui conçoit à partir de 1887 un nombre impressionnant d'intérieurs d'églises entièrement couverts de sgraffites. Influencé par l'effet des mosaïques paléochrétiennes et des tapisseries médiévales..... Son œuvre d'illustrateur et de sgraffitiste, largement diffusée par les expositions des Arts & Crafts puis par la revue The Studio, a probablement attiré l'attention de tous les décorateurs belges qui se sont intéressés au sgraffite à la fin du XIXe siècle.'*
- 17 Ibid, '*...est chargé par le gouvernement d'effectuer un voyage afin d'étudier les possibilités de cette nouvelle technique.'*
- 18 Dr – JNG Hans Urbach, *Sgraffito* (Berlin: Kalkverlag GmbH, 1928), 79.
- 19 Demanet, *Les sgraffites à Bruxelles*, 40-41, illustrates two neo-Renaissance examples, one by Octave Van Ryselberghe of 1882, and a design by Ernest Acker the following year.
- 20 Catherine Delyfer, *Gleeson, Joseph William White (1851 – 1898)*, The Yellow Nineties Online, 2013. Accessed 24 November 2020: http://www.1890s.ca/PDFs/white_bio.pdf . Delyfer provides a brief introduction to White and the Studio. Typhoid was a recurrent problem in late Victorian England There had been an outbreak of typhoid in Maidstone the year before that Sumner notes in a letter to Ady of 13 November 1897, CE121/20, 2; the most high-profile Victorian casualty had been Prince Albert.
- 21 Urbach, *Sgraffito*, after 184.
- 22 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Pelican, 1972), 91. Originally published by Faber and Faber while Sumner was still alive. In note 2 to this item Pevsner refers the reader to Sumner's design at Hill House, an odd choice one might think. Pevsner also refers to work by Sumner and others at an exhibition in Liege in the mid 1890s, which seems to be an error as the exhibition in question was ten years later. 1895 saw one in Amsterdam at which Sumner was represented.
- 23 Gerald Sanville (1881-1966) took these black and white images on 18 April 1958 in St John's, including three of the aisle decorations. These are held by the National Monuments Record, refs. BB98/14023 – 14025. Sanville was a

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- Manchester architect and keen amateur photographer who in later life started providing images to the National Building Record and worked for the Council for the Care of Churches.
- 24 Olive Philips, 'Song of Praise', *Church Illustrated*, 1962. The attribution is handwritten on a copy of the article in Alan Crawford's research file for the 1986 Winchester exhibition, loaned to the author. Internet search has failed so far to locate this magazine.
- 25 Respectively, Richard Bassett, 'A Legal Training but an Etcher's Eye,' *Country Life*, 28 September 1978, and Peter Howell, 'Winds and Whales,' *Country Life*, 7 December 1989 (on St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin, just after its transfer to the Friends of Friendless Churches).
- 26 This is supposition. Information on St Edmund's is scarce. Vicars' Close sgraffito is thought to have survived the Second World War; the latest photographs of the sgraffito were taken in 1943.
- 27 Jane Lamb, 'Sgraffito in England 1600-1950' (Diss., for part of course at Architectural Association, May 1998), 62-64. I am indebted to Lamb's lead on Lunn and Kern, although the information in this section has also been informed by internet searches. Lunn also designed a piece for the Building Centre in London, which Lamb records as destroyed.
- 28 Curiously Lamb seems to have been unaware of the sgraffito at St Boniface and Queen Mary University.
- 29 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 85.
- 30 The author has had experience of incorporating the work of an artist into a construction project, on large projects in Greater Manchester. Over several schemes various routes were used, Arts Council grant, 'per-cent-for-art' requirement, and integration of artist as part of consultancy team fee bid. Artworks have to meet the same deadlines as any other part of the building contract programme.
- 31 Urbach made this point almost a hundred years ago: *'The examples discussed provide enough inspiration as to how sgraffito can be applied to the exterior as well as the interior of the building. A building entrance can be unobtrusively emphasised by a frame, as it were a friendly greeting for the visitor. Inscriptions, numbers, company plates can be applied in sgraffito in a legible and dignified manner, without exceeding the role of decorative accessories, and promote the impression of the exterior..... In view of its cheapness and solid craftsmanship, hardly any other technique could be more called upon to fulfil its task in churches, crematoria, urn yards, memorials and memorial halls in an unostentatious and memorable manner.'* (*Die behandelten Beispiele geben Anregung genug, wie Sgraffito im*

Äußeren wie im Inneren des Gebäudes anwendbar ist. Ein Hauseingang läßt sich durch eine Umrahmung unaufdringlich hervorheben, gleichsam ein freundlicher Gruß für den Besucher. Inschriften, Ziffern, Firmentafeln können gut lesbar und würdig, ohne die Rolle schmückenden Beiwerkes zu überschreiten, in Sgraffito angebracht werden und den Eindruck der Schauseite fördern..... Kaum eine Technik dürfte angesichts ihrer Wohlfeilheit und handwerklichen Gediegenheit berufener sein, in Kirchen, Krematorien, für Urnenhöfe, Ehrenmale, Gedenkhallen prunklos und einprägsam ihre Aufgabe zu erfüllen). Urbach, Sgraffito, 140.

- 32 Lamb, *Sgraffito in England*, 85. We have noted the apparent family links between Sumner and some of his clients.
- 33 Coatts and Lewis, *Heywood Sumner*, 5.
- 34 Barry Cunliffe, *Heywood Sumner's Wessex* (Wimborne: Roy Gasson Associates, 1985), 10.
- 35 Rafael Ruiz Alonso, 'Fenomenos de Difusión y Asimilación del Esgrafiado en la Arquitectura Medieval, Moderna y Contemporánea' in *Ciudad y Artes Visuales*, ed. Miguel Ángel Chaves Martín (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2016), 29. 'Sumner desarrolló la técnica del esgrafiado...Cada una de sus realizaciones es una obra maestra.'

Chapter 9

Further Research

I have left out much material not directly related to the objectives of this study. It has been said that Sumner merits a biography: Jane Barbour lamented the relatively early death of his son, Humphrey *'otherwise there might have been a life of his Father....'*¹ There is a lot we shall never know, but this thesis shows that a significant body of information does exist, apparently in the papers and records of his contemporaries and scattered in many different places. Pulling together the threads of Sumner's background, and life in the 1880s to try and understand how he arrived at sgraffito it was sometimes difficult to not follow the siren call of other directions. In suggesting further research ideas, it is worth noting a few final points about Sumner, which in themselves merit more work.

Sumner was well and affectionately regarded by his contemporaries: Charles Ashbee records:

*My happiest memory of Heywood Sumner was hearing him sing the 'Besom Maker' at one of our Guild suppers. He sang it – old folk-song manner, – in a charming, muzzy sort of way, like one of his own drawings. There was always something human and lovable in his work....*²

He was known as the Shepherd, because of his care for friends and colleagues, although Jane Barbour records him acquiring the air of a patriarch later in life.³ One also catches sight of him letting his hair down; elsewhere in his memoirs Ashbee records:

*To [George] Frampton I and others remain grateful not only that he made our delightful Master's badge, but that he danced as an elephant in Clifford's Inn Hall allowing himself to be whacked by Heywood Sumner got up as Barnum the showman with a long whip, a Victorian top hat, and a large blue ribbon suggesting the Order of the Garter from Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, of blessed memory.*⁴

One is left with a sense of an attractive character,⁵ with the occasional hint of deeper waters, the history of his illegitimate child, a suggestion that he did not entirely approve or support his mother's Mothers' Union activity. There is doubtless more to be found but these matters are beyond the scope of the present work.

The following directions have though occurred to the author during preparation of this study. Readers will doubtless find other possibilities.

- 1 Location of further examples of sgraffito in the UK. Jane Lamb's study; research by Margot Coatts, Alan Crawford and Elizabeth Lewis; and this project have shown that there are likely to be further sgraffito to be found and recorded. Visits to some possible examples have been prevented by the covid pandemic restrictions
- 2 Sgraffito in Devon and its connections to the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, Lethaby and Sedding. There may be more sgraffito in churches in the south-west; this history needs unpicking. Bruce & Induni's article on Colaton Raleigh offers some insight into a rich cultural scene
- 3 The work of other artists in the medium; an initial shortlist includes:
 - a. George Thomas Robinson
 - b. Thomas Graham Jackson
 - c. Alexander Lauder
 - d. John Pollard Seddon (and George Frampton)
 - e. Francis Pepys Cockerell
 - f. Tito G. Ceasar Formilli
- 4 Tracking down letters from Sumner to others of his circle to:
 - a. Henry Scott Holland
 - b. W. A. S. Benson
 - c. William Lethaby
 - d. John Dando Sedding

- 5 Sumner's presence at European and American exhibitions from the late 1880s to the First World War. The Corbusier link is tenuous but shows the extraordinary range of artists, architects and designers exhibiting at these shows
- 6 Investigation of connections to related techniques: (in)tarsia, niello, opus-sectile etc.
- 7 Sumner's stained glass. Peter Cormack's book on Arts & Crafts stained glass examined this in detail, but there appear to be other and lost works. Alan Crawford also looked at Powell's archives for the 1986 exhibition, another source worthy of revisit
- 8 Sgraffito in England after the Second World War. There are probably other examples to be discovered, as the 2001 example by Kate Downie, found recently, suggests. The thread through European artists working in England is intriguing too
- 9 Tracing Sumner's team of assistants, to whom reference has been made

It is proposed to follow this research with an annotated set of Sumner's letters, interleaved with diary and other records from those who knew him. The present study has drawn on these extensively and they paint a picture of a rich life in addition to the sgraffito work but also provide an insight into late nineteenth century cultural life among the middle and upper classes.

One other strand to be continued, as hinted at in chapter 6, is to try out further panels of sgraffito using Sumner's technique.

1 Jane Barbour, 'Heywood Sumner: a very private person,' *The Hatcher Review* (1990), 440.

2 Alan Crawford records this comment by C. R. Ashbee in his Sumner folder lent to the author, noted as from '*Ashbee Memoirs, vol 7, pp275-6.*' ref AC notes. These were unpublished and most of them appear to be held in the Kings college Archive at the University of Cambridge, although so far reference has not been found to a 'volume 7.'

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- 3 Barbour, 'Heywood Sumner,' 440-441.
 - 4 Alan Crawford records this in another extract from the 'Ashbee Memoirs,' in an entry for George Frampton in his Arts and Crafts 'Story File,' copied to the author.
 - 5 A point arising from author's discussion with Wendy Armstrong's after a talk she and Barrie gave at High Peak Arts in New Mills, Derbyshire, 7 October 2016.

Appendix 1					
Nineteenth century timeline 1850 – 1914: sgraffito, intarsia and niello					
1850					
1851			St James, Brownhills *26		
1852					
1853					
1854					
1855					
1856		Doveleys, Staffordshire *27	St Martin, Lyndon, Rutland *33		
1857	Sheepshanks Gallery V & A *7				
1858		Maulden*14			
1859		Maulden			
1860	Lodge to Danemore Park, Speldhurst *37				
1861	St James the Less, Pimlico, London *10	Chapel/Mission House, Bedfordbury, Covent Gdn *22			
1862	Cottages, Great Budworth, Cheshire *36				
1863	Appleton le Moors *11	St Luke's, Warren Hill, Torquay *29	St Michael, Teffont, Wiltshire *34		
1864	Appleton le Moors				
1865	Appleton le Moors	St Augustine, Clutton, Somerset *32	Cottages, Great Budworth, Cheshire *36	House Norwood *28	
1866	House, Ascot *28				
1867	House porches, London *28				
1868					
1870		St Luke's, Warren Hill, Torquay *29			

1871	Winkleigh *2		All Saints, Calverton *15	Henry Cole wing V & A *8	Down Hall, Essex *17
1872	Winkleigh		All Saints, Calverton	Henry Cole wing V & A	Down Hall, Essex
1873	Winkleigh	Colaton Raleigh *1	Hornblotton *3	Henry Cole wing V & A	Down Hall, Essex
1874	Rattery *5	Colaton Raleigh	College of Organists *6	Windsor Castle Deans Cloister *13	St. Pauls Choir School, London *18
1875	Doveleys, Staffordshire *27	Colaton Raleigh	College of Organists	Down St Mary *9	St. Pauls Choir School, London
1876	Chudleigh Knighton *4		College of Organists		
1877					
1878					
1879					
1880				Villa, Hove *35	
1881		35-37 Harrington Gdns. London *20			
1882	Birchington-on- Sea *21	35-37 Harrington Gdns. Loondon	St Mark's Church, North Audley Street London *31		
1883					
1884	Theatre Royal, Portsmouth *30				
1885	1, The Close, Winchester				
1886					
1887	Vicars Chapel, Wells	St. Mary's Chapel for the Blind, Liverpool *25			
1888	St Mary's Llanfair Kilgeddin	Hill House, Chalfont St Peter			
1889	St Mary's Llanfair Kilgeddin				
1890	St Mary's Llanfair Kilgeddin	St Michael, Clane		Villa, Hove *35	

1891					
1892	St Mary's, Sunbury				
1893	Christ Church, Crookham				
1894					
1895	Lady Chapel, St Agatha's, Portsmouth		Friern Diary, Islington *24		
1896		Decoration in graffito of a Morning Room *23	Friern Diary, Islington		
1897	St Edmund's School Chapel, Canterbury	St Michael, Brereton	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London	Ravelin Manor *16	
1898 1898 contd.	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London	Decoration in graffito of a room in Walsingham House. *23	Friern Diary, Islington	Ravelin Manor	
1899	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London		Friern Diary, Islington	Ravelin Manor	
1900	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London	Theatre Royal, Portsmouth *30	Friern Diary, Islington	Ravelin Manor	
1901	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London				
1902	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London				
1903	All Saints, Ennismore Gdns, London				
1904	St Pauls, Weeke, Winchester				
1905					
1906	St John's, Manchester				
1907					
1908	Paignton Art School *12				
1909					

1910	Wolborough House Brixham *19	Doveleys, Staffordshire			
1911					
1912					
1913					
1914					

Heywood Sumner's schemes are in red type.

- *1 Colaton Raleigh. Church leaflet, listing notice and Lamb give 1875. Pevsner gives 1873 – 1875 and notes the scheme as directly contemporary with Cole's scheme at the V & A.
- *2 Winkleigh. Lamb gives the earlier date. Church leaflet, the later. Listing notice gives 1872 – 73, but Radford in his August 1872 talk describes the sgraffito as having already been carried out.
- *3 Hornblotton. Alec Hamilton identified the year and artists as Wormleighton and Gibbons from Somerset Archive records in 2010, see chapter 2.
- *4 Chudleigh Knighton. Lamb gives '1876' with '?'
- *5 Rattery. Listing notice merely refers to walls '*...entirely plastered and have circa 1860s incised and painted decoration.*' Pevsner 2004 merely says '*complete sgraffito scheme of c1870.*' R. Savery and J. Smerdon, *The Book of Rattery* (Halsgrove, 2001) give 1874.
- *6 College of Organists. Pevsner, 62, gives 1875 – 1876, BHO 1874 – 1875.
- *7 Sheepshanks Gallery. Survey of London, 97-123, specifically at: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol38/pp97-123#h3-0006>.
- *8 Victoria and Albert Museum. Attwood and Reczek, 35, give 1871 – 1873.
- *9 Down St Mary cottages. Lamb gives '1875?' in list at the end of her thesis but '*c1878 – 1880*' on page 50. Listing notice merely says '*circa 1870-1880*' but does note: '*They were undoubtedly built by W.T.A Radford who was squire, parson, patron and incumbent and also a founder member of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society (EDAS). He had a great interest in surface treatment and proposed a sgraffito plasterwork revival although this is the only C19 domestic example known in Devon.*' A mid-decade date has been ascribed, therefore.
- *10 St James the Less, Pimlico. By G. E. Street. Glass by Clayton and Bell according to church web site history. Lamb describes the work round the chancel apse as niello, a technique with its origins in metalwork, but sometimes mistaken for sgraffito. The author believes this work is by Clayton and Bell also, as it matches

work at Appleton le Moors in the same manner, which is positively ascribed to them.

- *11 Appleton le Moors, Yorkshire, by J. L. Pearson. Built between 1862 and 1866, when it was consecrated according to the Church guide, which also attributes the stained glass windows and 'sgraffiti' to Clayton and Bell. See note 10.
- *12 Paignton Art School. Listing notice uses date stone to give 1908. Lamb gives 1898 – 1910.
- *13 Windsor Castle Deans's Cloister. The work is dated 1874 by A. Y. Nutt, surveyor to fabric at Windsor Castle. Thomas George may have been the plasterer responsible for the work. There is some suggestion that Sir Giles Gilbert Scott was an influence as he had executed incised panels at Gloucester Cathedral, but these appear to be a form of niello laid on the floor of the presbytery. Information from C. Rider, 14 November 2016, supplied by Kate McQuillian at Windsor Castle. St George's Chapel contains Triqueti's intarsia panels.
- *14 Church of St Mary the Virgin, Maulden, Bedfordshire. The church website notes work as completed in 1859. It also refers to an article by architect for the alterations, Benjamin Ferrey, of 1857, about sgraffito.
- *15 All Saints Church, Calverton, Milton Keynes. Church restored in the 1850s, but decoration added later by local architect, Edward Swinfen Harris, 1871 – 72, including the sgraffito.
- *16 Ravelin Manor, Barnstaple. Works described as occurring between 1897 – 1901 during construction of the house, as described in Pauline Brain, *'Some Men who made Barnstaple and arts and Crafts in Barnstaple,'* 2010. Lamb allocates these panels an earlier date, but Brain's biographical sketch shows Lauder only built the house in the late 1890s. See Brain, 17-21.
- *17 Down Hall. Architect, Francis Pepys Cockerell; artist, Francis Moody. Cockerell spoke at Alan Cole's talk in 1873. See note 28 below.
- *18 St Paul's Choir School. Architect, Francis Cranmer Penrose.
- *19 Wolborough House. Architect unknown. Sgraffito pattern to curve under boldly projecting eaves. This is an unusual detail in England but quite common in central Europe.
- *20 Harrington Gardens. Buildings by Sir Ernest George. See Hilary Joyce Grainger, *The Architecture of Sir Ernest George and his partners, c1860 – 1922*, (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 1985), 95-96.

- *21 Birchington. Architect, John Pollard Seddon; artist, Sir George Frampton. A set of bungalows with towers set on the coast near Margate. Rossetti lived here for a while.
- *22 Bedfordbury, Covent Garden. Architect, Sir Arthur Blomfield. Lamb located reference to this in 'the Builder' 23 November 1861. She notes this to have been *a mission house in Covent Garden designed in the gothic manner where "the sacarium [was] plastered to a height of six feet and decorated in somewhat novel manner in sgraffito."* There are no records of the sgraffito design and the building was demolished.... Lamb, 38.
- *23 Cesare Formilli arrived in London in 1894. These dates are from Algernon Graves, *Royal Academy of Arts; a complete dictionary of contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904, vol. III* (London: Henry Graves and Co. Ltd. and George Bell and Sons, 1905), 140.
- *24 Friern Diary, Islington. Lamb gives 'c1895 – 1900' in her case study, 77.
- *25 St Mary's Chapel for the Blind. G. T. Robinson. This is the specific work by Robinson, located in an article in the Church of Ireland Gazette of 15 October 1887, describing the decoration of a new chancel: *'one division is occupied by a choir of angels executed in sgraffito bearing emblems of our Lord's passion. This sgraffito work is described as cameo cutting in coloured cement – a species of decoration exceedingly durable and greatly in vogue in the 16th century...'* No other location of work by Robinson has been identified, except perhaps as below note 26. See chapter 2.
- *26 St James, Brownhills. G. T. Robinson. Bold chancel arch decoration of 1850-1852; could be a form of sgraffito, akin to Ferrey's stamped process from later in the decade, although the date would suggest not. Probably impossible to prove as now covered over. Not included in chapter 2 discussion for this reason.
- *27 Doveleys, Staffordshire. The home of Sumner's sister and brother-in-law. The incised or stamped work is curious, and unattributed.
- *28 Houses, Ascot and London. Lamb records these in a *'List of Buildings with Sgraffito from C17 to C19'* in appendix 1 to her study recording them as either demolished or obliterated. F. P. Cockerell seems to cover two of these in remarks after Alan S. Cole's talk in 1873 although he dates Ascot after Norwood, see chapter 2.
- *29 St Luke's Church, Warren Hill, Torquay. Architect, Arthur W. Blomfield, Cockerell's companion on a trip to Italy. The listing notice records traces of repaired sgraffito and seems to suggest this was part of a scheme by Heaton Butler and Bayne in 1870, whether in furtherance of Blomfield's designs is not made clear.

- *30 Theatre Royal, Portsmouth. C. J. Phipps, 1884, remodelled by Frank Matcham in 1900. Sgraffito on frontage would appear to date to one or other of these works. My thanks to Rafael Ruiz Alonso for pictures of this. Shows use of shading and benefits of protection, work is under front canopy across theatre entrance.



- *31 St Mark's Church, North Audley Street London. Architect, Sir Arthur Blomfield. Font decorated with sgraffito according to the History of London.
- *32 St Augustine's Church, Clutton, Somerset. 'Nave has C19 stone pulpit with trefoil arcading and sgraffito saints' according to listing notice. Lamb describes it as painted but picture 101 in her thesis suggests niello. Subject to confirmation.
- *33 St Martin, Lyndon, Rutland. Architect and artist not known, but photographs suggest this is intarsia. Very detailed and look similar to Triqueti's work at Windsor Castle, but several years earlier.
- *34 St Michael of all Angels, Treffont, Wiltshire. Relevant work here described in listing notice as 'semi-circular sgraffito panel on east wall by de Triqueti.' This will be intarsia as the 1863 date fits with Triqueti, though no photograph has been found to confirm this.
- *35 Porch, 4 Third Avenue in Hove, near Brighton. Listing notice says 'c1880,' Lamb 'c1880– 90.' Lamb records the work as 'may have been sgraffito, but porch completely painted over.' Lamb, 101. Earlier she records these works as 'reflecting the style of the arts and crafts movement,' as a footnote to discussion of Alexander Lauder seeming to suggest the work is by him (56) but usefully includes a picture of one of the panels, which apparently has been subject to redecoration (Fig. 91a). The listing notice says: 'very ornate recessed porch: pointed arch opening with decorative inset to soffit, foliate capitals, frieze of unglazed and now faded blue and white tiles with cherubs and foliage, sgraffito panels on reveal walls with figures in Aesthetic Movement costume - one panel is inscribed "Come unto these yellow sands".' (List entry no. 1209868). Recent photographs from 4 August 2021 show the works are in good condition. They

show scenes from the *Tempest*, ‘*Come unto these yellow sands,*’ (Act 1, scene 2), and *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ‘*Hand in hand with fairy grace, will we sing and bless this place,*’ (Act 5, scene 2). The artist is unknown, but the technique and style are similar to that of the Cauchie House in Brussels, see chapter 7; a date nearer 1900 may be more appropriate. See pictures below.

- *36 Cottages, Great Budworth, Cheshire. Probably Dene cottages, ascribed to Nesfield and Shaw by Pevsner 1864 — 65 (378); Lamb gives 1862 (101), dismissive of ‘*incised pargetting.*’ Pevsner elaborates a bit more: ‘*Timbered above, brick below with pargetting in swirling patterns and improving inscriptions.*’ No images found so far and visit has not been possible.
- *37 Lodge to Danemore Park, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Listing notice gives ‘c1860,’ and is categorical about the work being sgraffito. Lamb ascribes no date but is again dismissive of this as ‘*incised decoration,*’ (101), although it looks like single coat sgraffito.



Note 35: Porch, 4 Third Avenue in Hove, near Brighton

Left: *The Tempest*, ‘*Come unto these yellow sands,*’ (Act 1, scene 2).

Right: *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ‘*Hand in hand with fairy grace, will we sing and bless this place,*’ (Act 5, scene 2).

This timeline was a working document, compiled to aid understanding of sgraffito use in England between 1850 and 1914. New examples were added as they were located so the notes are not ordered chronologically.

Appendix 2

Heywood Sumner exhibits at A&CES 1888 - 1916

Transcribed from catalogues to the exhibitions

Blue – known sgraffito or design

Yellow – unknown sgraffito

Grey – decorative painting?

1 A&CES 1888

P14 Committee: Heywood Sumner

P98 HEYWOOD SUMNER.

23. Panels for door of corner cupboard.

24. Panel: "St. George and the Dragon."
Both panels incised by C. H WATTON.

P100

35-36. Pair of finger plates: in copper repousse.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by J. MURTHWAITE,
Eyot Metal Works,

PP126-127

North Gallery.

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

156. Drawings explaining sgraffito decoration.

157 & 158. Symbols in polychrome sgraffito: specimens of the sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin Church, Abergavenny.

HEYWOOD SUMNER-continued.
Designed and cut by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

Plastered by JAS. WILLIAMS.

159. Drawings explaining sgraffito decoration.

160. Cartoon design for sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin

Church, Abergavenny. Subject, "O ye mountains and hills."

161. Cartoon design for sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin Church, Abergavenny. Subject, "O ye Winds."

162. Photographs explaining the sgraffito decoration of Llanvair Kilgeddin Church.

P130

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

187 a. Roundel in gesso for a screen in a church at Newcastle: silvered and tinted with lacquers. Designed and lacquered by H. SUMNER: modelled by HEYWOOD SUMNER and OSMUND WEEKS.

P132

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

190 b. Roundel in gesso for a screen in a church at Newcastle: silvered and tinted with lacquers. Designed and coloured by HEYWOOD SUMNER: modelled by HEYWOOD SUMNER and OSMUND WEEKS.

P139

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

245. Gesso panel: painted: "Judith."

P171

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

424. Headings for English Illustrated Magazine: in black and white.

425. Illustrations and proofs for "The Besom Maker": in black and white.

426. Illustrations for "Undine": in black and white.

P205 Index of Exhibitors, Artists and Craftsmen SUMNER, HEYWOOD, The Hill House, Chalfont, St. Peter's, Slough, Bucks. 23, 24, 35, 36, 156-162, 187a, 190b, 245, 424-426.

2 A&CES 1889

The Society

P19 *HEYWOOD SUMNER [name asterisked, indicating he was on Committee]

P116

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

66. Cartoon for sgraffito: "The sure revolving test of Time Past and Present."

P118

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

73. Part of cartoon, No. 66: in sgraffito and mosaic.

P162

W. A. S. BENSON.

282. Music cabinet, decorated with incised work: "The Charm of Orpheus." Cabinet designed by W. A. S. BENSON. Decoration designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER. Cabinet by C. ROGERS. Incised-work by G. H. WALTON.

P175

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

380. Stencil pattern for a white, washed frieze. "Birds and Vine." Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER. Cut and stencilled by GEORGE MALLALIEU.

P194

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

497. Part of a gesso memorial tablet erected in Kemerton Church, Gloucestershire (replica).

P225

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

658. Book illustration.
659. Head-piece: "Will, will have wilt, though will woe win."

THE PROPRIETORS OF
"ATALANTA."

661. (a) Illustrations to "Aslauga's Knight": "The carrying away of Hildegardis."
(b) A design for a heading to the Atalanta Scholarship and Reading Union.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P226

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

664. Tail-piece for Arts and Crafts Catalogue.

P226

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

666. Headings for book decoration.

P242

HEYWOOD SUMNER

761. Design for sgraffito decoration of outside stairs to a house in Chalfont St. Peter.
Stairs by W. A. S. BENSON.
Sgraffito by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P243

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

- 775a. Stencil pattern for a white-washed frieze.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Cut and stencilled by GEORGE MALLALIEU.

- P285 Index of Exhibitors, Artists and Craftsmen
Sumner, Heywood, I, Notting Hill Square,
W. 66, 73, 282, 380, 497, 658, 659, 661,
664, 666, 761. (Note 775 not in index)

3 A&CES 1890

The Society

P13 *HEYWOOD SUMNER [name asterisked, indicating he was on Committee]

P139 SOUTH GALLERY

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

2 Cartoon for sgraffito in Clane Church, county Kildare, Ireland. Subject: "The Baptism."

3 Photograph of sgraffito work executed in Clane Church. Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER. Executed by HEYWOOD SUMNER, C. H. WALTON, GEORGE MALLALIEU, J. BYRNE (plasterer).

P146

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

54 Cartoon for sgraffito work executed in Clane Church, county Kildare, Ireland. Subject: "The Resurrection." Vide Nos. 2, 3.

P148

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

77 Replica of gesso panel erected in Belvedere Church, Kent.

P159

MARY AUGUSTA SMITH.

127 Wall-hanging. Subject: "Earth, Air, Fire, and Water." Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER. Executed by MARY HENRIETTA GILLETT and MARY AUGUSTA SMITH.

P173

MARY AUGUSTA SMITH.

208 Three cushions. Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER. (a) Carnations. Executed by MRS. WARD. (b) Open-work design. Executed by MARY AUGUSTA SMITH. (c) Daisies and clover. Executed by MRS. WARD.

P233

HEYWOOD SUMNER.

- 553 Original drawings for " The Labours of the XII. Months." Four frames.

P234

THOMAS HUGHES.

- 556 a. Design for book-cover by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P276

Sumner, Heywood, 1, Notting Hill Square,
W. 2, 3, 54, 77, 127, 208, 553, 556a.

4 A&CES 1893

The Society

- P8 *HEYWOOD SUMNER [name asterisked, indicating he was on Committee]

PP22-24

- 110 u. ENAMELLED PLAQUE.
By CONSTANCE BLOUNT, from a design
by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P26

NORTH GALLERY.

- 114 ARMCHAIR. Mahogany and embroidered Langdale linen.
Chair designed by REGINALD BLOMFIELD. Executed by A. G. MASON.
Needlework designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER. Executed by UNA TAYLOR.

P27

- 122-28 SCHOOL PICTURES. Printed
in colours by James Akerman, and
issued by the Fitzroy School Picture
Society.
- 122-24 "Moses," "The Four Seasons,"
and "David and Goliath."
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
- 129 ST. GEORGE. Original design for
school picture, to be issued with the
above.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P29

145 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S
DREAM. Peas-blossom, Cobweb,
Titania, Moth and Mustard-seed. Silk
embroidery.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by UNA TAYLOR.

148 FOUR CUSHIONS. Hyacinths,
Pansies, " Ring a ring of roses," and
Tulips.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by MRS. WARD (Langdale
Linen Industry).

149 CHRYSANTHEMUMS. Sofa back.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by HILDA F. WARD.

PP37-38

202 CASE OF EMBROIDERED
LANGDALE LINEN.
d. TEA-CLOTH.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by MARY AUGUSTA SMITH.

P42

235 "THE VINE." Printed wall decoration,
in tinted lacquer.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by W. BOTTOMLEY (Jeffrey
and Co.).

P54

314 FLORA. Sgraffito panel.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by HEYWOOD SUMNER and
GEORGE MALLALIEU.

P59

350 HEADPIECES AND TAILPIECES.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P60

354 DESIGN FOR HEADING of a
magazine.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P73

433-3 DESIGNS FOR SGRAFFITO
 DECORATION in the parish church,
 Sunbury-on-Thames.
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P96 INDEX

Sumner, Heywood, 2, Notting Hill Square, W.
 110, 114, 122-24, 129, 145, 148, 202-35, 314, 350,
 354, 433-36

5 A&CES 1896

The Society

P8 *HEYWOOD SUMNER [name asterisked, indicating he was on Committee]

P41

57 "PLAY: CRICKET."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed by C. H. WALTON.

58 "WORK: THE PLOUGH."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed by C. H. WALTON.

P42

59 "WORK: THE CITY."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed by C. H. WALTON.

60 "WORK: THE RAILWAY
 TRAIN."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER
 Executed by C. H. WALTON.

P84

331 'THE THICKET.'
 WALL-PAPER
 frieze printed in lacquer.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed (printed) by WILLIAM
 BOTTOMLEY.
 Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.
 All the examples shown by this firm
 have been coloured and printed under
 the direction of METFORD WARNER.

332 "FLORAL TRELLIS. Wall-paper.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed (printed) by W. JACKSON.

- 333 Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.
 "THE FIG AND VINE." Wall-paper.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed (printed) by W. JACKSON.
 Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

P117

- 471 CARTOON FOR SGRAFFITO DECORATION of wall space over apse of Lady Chapel, St. Agatha's, Portsmouth.
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

- 473 SKETCH PLAN for decoration in sgraffito and mosaic of North Clerestory wall, all Saints', Ennismore Gardens.
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P129

- 541 SKETCH PLAN. For sgraffito and mosaic decoration, St Agatha's, Portsmouth.
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

- 542 APSE OF LADY CHAPEL, St. Agatha's. Portsmouth. (Photograph.)
 Designed by J. HENRY BALL and (decoration) HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by HEYWOOD SUMNER

P140

- 642 DRAWINGS FOR "JACOB AND THE RAVEN."
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by GEORGE ALLEN.
- 644 DRAWINGS FOR "JACOB AND THE RAVEN."
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by GEORGE ALLEN.

PP153-154

- 758 CASE OF NEEDLEWORK on Langdale Linen.
 Exhibited by MISS M. A. SMITH.
 r. CUSHION-SILK on Langdale linen.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by MRS. WARD.

s. SOFA BACK. "Wild Geranium."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by HILDA WARD.
 v. CUSHION. "Christmas Rose."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by HILDA WARD.

P176 INDEX.

Sumner, Heywood, 2, Campden Hill Square, W.
 57, 58, 59, 60, 331, 333, 471, 473, 541, 542, 642,
 644, 758r, 758s, 758v.

6 A&CES 1899

The Society

P8 *HEYWOOD SUMNER [name asterisked, indicating he was on Committee]

P29

51 NEEDLEWORK: "St George and
 the Dragon."
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed BY MISS SOPHIE HEY-
 WOOD.
 Exhibited by MRS HEYWOOD.

P73

173 WALL-PAPER.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Printed by JEFFERY AND CO.

P90

257 TWO PANELS OF WALL-PAPER.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

P113

425 WALL-PAPER.
 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
 Executed and exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

P120

465 THREE FRAMES OF THE
 SGRAFFITO DECORATION AT
 THE CHAPEL OF ST. ED-
 MUND'S SCHOOL, CANTER-
 BURY.
 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P124

488 CARTOON FOR STAINED
GLASS.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P127

510 CARTOONS FOR SGRAFFITO
WORK. [not credited, nor location given]

P128

512 CARTOONS FOR SGRAFFITO
WORK. [no location given]
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

7 A&CES 1903

The Society

P8 *HEYWOOD SUMNER [name asterisked, indicating he was on Committee]

P19

1,2 TWO ORIGINAL DRAWINGS
for Fitzroy School Pictures: "The
Months."
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P21

14, 15 TWO ORIGINAL DRAWINGS
for Fitzroy School Pictures: "The
Months."
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P28

59 NEEDLEWORK PANEL: "Gold-
en Pheasants."
EXHIBITED BY MISS SMITH.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by MRS. WARD. £5 5s

P90

239 NEEDLEWORK PANEL: "The
Woodside."
EXHIBITED BY MISS M. A. SMITH.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by MRS. WARD. £5 5s

P94

- 270 "THE FOREST." Decorative Painting.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

PP149-150

- 393 RECESS NO. 11.
I. WOODBINE WALL-PAPER.
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Executed by JEFFERY AND CO.

PP159-160

- 396 RECESS NO. 14.
EXHIBITED BY JEFFERY AND CO.
All the examples of wall-papers exhibited by this firm have been coloured and printed under the direction of METFORD WARNER.
b. "THE FLYING HEARTS."
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Printed by E. JOSEPHS.
c. "THE WILD HYACINTH."
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Printed by J. VASBENTER.
g. "THE BRAMBLE."
Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Printed by J. VASBENTER.

P169

- 441 CARTOON FOR WEST WHEEL WINDOW: all Saints', Ennismore Gardens executed in 'Prior's Glass.'
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P199

- 621 PHOTOGRAPH of central apse of St Agatha's, Landport.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
- 622 SKETCH DESIGN of sgraffito decoration executed in the central apse of St Agatha's, Landport.
By HEYWOOD SUMNER.

8 A&CES 1906

The Society

P8 HEYWOOD SUMNER [name not asterisked, indicating he was not on Committee]

P18

5 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
DECORATIVE LANDSCAPE
PANEL: "New forest."
Exhibited by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P37

105 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
CARTOONS FOR WINDOW.
Exhibited by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

106 By the same.
CARTOONS for the church of St.
Mary the Virgin, Great Warley.

107 By the same.
CARTOON for Sgraffito: "The good
Samaritan."

108 By the same.
CARTOONS for Great Warley.

109 By the same.
CARTOONS FOR WINDOW.

110 By the same.
PHOTOGRAPH of Sgraffito decoration at St. Paul's Church, Winchester.

P39

119 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
SKETCH DESIGN for sgraffito
decoration.
Exhibited by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P87

305 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
DESIGN FOR THE "MAY-DAY"
WALLPAPER.

Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

307 b. By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
WALLPAPER: 'Daisies.'
Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

P91

327 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
WALLPAPER: "Heartsease."
Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

P96

342 Designed by HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Printed under the direction of METFORD
WARNER.
Exhibited by JEFFERY AND CO.

P171

608 By HEYWOOD SUMNER.
SKETCH FOR GLASS, GREAT
WARLEY CHURCH.
Exhibited by HEYWOOD SUMNER.

P202 INDEX.

Sumner, Heywood, Cuckoo hill, South Gorley,
Fordingbridge. 5, 105-110, 119, 305, 307b, 327.
342, 608

9 A&CES 1910

P9 SUMNER, HEYWOOD [as member of Society only]

P22

9 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
"The Bee Garden." Original Drawing
for Fitzroy School Picture. £10 10s

P30

67, 68 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Cartoons for Sgraffito. Decoration
In St. John's Church, Miles Platting,
Manchester.

69 HEYWOOD SUMNER.

Cartoon for Sgraffito. In a garden
House at Doveleys, Staffordshire.

P112

329 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Wall-paper" "The Wild Iris." Printed
under the direction of METFORD
WARNER. Exhibitors, JEFFERY AND
CO.

P122

- 372 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Arras Tapestry, "The Chace." EDx-
hibitors, MORRIS AND CO.

P161

- 608 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Photograph of decorative painting, Al-
bion Church, Hammersmith.

P201 INDEX

- Sumner, Heywood, Cuckoo Hill, South Gorley
Fordingbridge, Hants. 9, 67, 68, 69, 329, 372
608

10 A&CES 1912

- P9 SUMNER, HEYWOOD, F.S.A [as member of Society only]

P75

- 315 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
(a) A map showing the ancient Earth-
works of Cranborne Chase
(b) Illustrations for "The Book of Gor-
ley." £4 4s.
(c) Fitzroy School Picture, "The Shep-
herd." Coloured by C. H. WALTON.
12s. 6d.
(d) Thickets—bury.
(e) (f) (g) Illustrations for 'The Book
of Gorley.' £4 4s each

P200 INDEX

- Sumner, Heywood, Cuckoo Hill, South Gorley,
Fordingbridge, 315a-g.

11 A&CES 1916

- P10 SUMNER, HEYWOOD [as member of Society only]

P51

- 3 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Wall-paper: "the Rosa." Manufactured
by JEFFERY AND CO.

P70

76 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
"The Arbutus" Wall-paper. Manufactured by JEFFERY AND CO.

P237

534 HEYWOOD SUMNER.
Plans and Illustrations for "Stonehenge, To-day and Yesterday." Exhibited by C. E. Chubb.

P306 INDEX

Sumner, Heywood, Cuckoo Hill, South Gorley, Fordingbridge, Hants. 3, 76, 534.

Appendix 3

Glossary

This short list of specialist terms is provided for ease of reference. It covers the main decorative methods discussed in this thesis, and materials used in sgraffito or related techniques.

It provides more information than is sometimes provided in the text. Sources are given with quoted extracts.

This glossary covers only decoration based on plastering in some form and is not exhaustive. The late Victorian and Edwardian periods saw a wide range of decorative media used apart from those listed here, such as Opus Sectile and mosaic. A method was also developed for bonding paintings on canvas to walls in lieu of applying fresco or other painting techniques directly to plastered walls as a way of dealing with the perennial issue of dampness which is discussed in books and articles of the period (See for example: Alfred Lys Baldry, *Modern Mural Painting* (London: George Newnes Ltd., 1902), 37-39).

DECORATIVE TECHNIQUES

Sgraffito

The origins of the work are complicated. Online dictionaries define 'graffiare' as 'scratch sb./sth.' See: <https://www.linguee.com/english-italian/search?query=graffiare>. This seems to be the root, probably from an earlier Greek source. For a detailed analysis of source and usage see Thomas Danzl, and Carola Möwald, 'Graffito or Sgraffito? – It's more than this!' in *Sgraffito im Wandel- Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, eds. Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018), 78-79.

'Rinzaffo', 'Arrciato' and 'Intonaco'

These are the Italian terms for the base, first and second, or top, coats of render respectively, and are still used in conservation discussion about sgraffito.

'Rinzaffo' means 'rough coating.' See: <https://www.wordreference.com/iten/Rinzaffo>.

'Arrciato' seems to derive from 'arricciarsi' meaning 'to curl, frizz' or 'roll up.' See: <https://www.wordreference.com/iten/arricciarsi>. M Sargent Florence suggests this arises because of the wavy lines left by the plastering technique adopted as part of preparation for painting fresco' (See M Sargent-Florence, 'Frescoes at Oakham,' in *Papers of the Society of Painters in Tempera, vol. 1. 1901 – 1907 Second Edition* (Brighton: The Dolphin Press, 1928), 45-46).

'Intonaco' means 'plaster.' See: <https://www.wordreference.com/iten/intonaco>.

Intarsia (or Tarsia)

A method of inlaying materials into another surface, commonly veneers of timber into a wooden frame. It is another ancient technique:

*The process of inlaying is of the most remote antiquity, and the student may see in the cases of the British Museum, at the Louvre, and in other museums, examples of both Assyrian and Egyptian inlaid patterns of metal and ivory, or ebony or vitreous pastes, upon both wood and ivory, dating from the 8th and 10th centuries before the Christian Era, or earlier. The Greeks and Romans also made use of it for costly furniture and ornamental sculpture; in Book 23 of the "Odyssey," Ulysses, describing to Penelope the bride-bed which he had made, says—"Beginning from this head-post, I wrought at the bedstead till I had finished it, and made it fair with inlaid work of gold, and of silver, and of ivory" (F. Hamilton Jackson, *Intarsia and Marquetry* (London: Sands & Company, 1903), 2.*

It has also been adapted to work in marble, with the base carved to a design and then infilled with coloured pastes based on marble dust, as was noted in chapter 2 and the work of Triqueti.

Niello

A decorative technique based around the filling of an engraved metal base, often silver, with a black metallic alloy. The term is also used to describe stonework carved to receive a black mastic paste to create pattern or scene, an effect that is sometimes mistaken for sgraffito.

Fresco

Fresco shares characteristics of preparation with that for sgraffito, in particular the eventual working on wet or damp plaster. It is a method of painting that binds the finished work into the wall surface, plaster and paint bonding as they dry. M Sargent Florence says of it:

*It is important to realise that fresco is practically water colour; a stain rather than a paint, and it should be treated as a liquid body. The moist ivory like surface of the intonaco absorbs the colour causing it to spread in soft gradations which no re-touching can improve (M Sargent-Florence, 'Fresco Painting,' in *Papers of the Society of Mural Painters & Painters in Tempera, Second Volume, 1907 – 1924* (Brighton: The Dolphin Press, 1925), 63).*

Some artists used a mixture of sgraffito and fresco. Two noted during this research were George Thomas Robinson and Tito G. Cesare Formilli. Robinson, quoted in

William Millar's book *'Plastering Plain and Decorative'* describes doing most of the sgraffito cutting first, saying:

You can also wash over certain parts of your upper coat with a watercolour if you desire, combining fresco with sgraffito, both of which manners are used in the Southport rétable; but, as a rule, the broader your design and the simpler your treatment of it the better (Millar, 221. The rétable is also shown in volume 1, chapter 2, figure 24, 63).

Egg tempera

Egg tempera is an old painting technique using a glutinous water soluble material such as egg yolk or white as a binder for painting on wood or other backing. It was largely superseded by oil as a binder, which did not dry so quickly and allowed the artist more time to work the paint.

Spirit Fresco

A painting system using wax devised by T. Gambier Parry in the 1860s to enable frescoes to be painted without the need for a wet plaster surface. The Romans had used wax as part of decorative fresco schemes but:

What Mr. Gambier Parry did was to devise a way of applying wax to the plaster surface, and of mixing it with the colours, without any use of heat for the purpose of solidifying the painting. He chose as a solvent for the wax a volatile oil which would evaporate as the work dried, and would leave the solid substances blended into a uniform mass (Baldry, *Modern Mural Painting*, 30).

Pargetting and stucco-duro

These are related techniques of applying raised mouldings, figures and complex designs to buildings. Pargetting is arguably a vernacular version of stucco-duro common in England, especially externally on rendered timber framed structures in the south and east. Jane Lamb observes though that it was stucco-duro that was the *'principal interior decoration in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries'* (Jane Lamb, 'Sgraffito in England 1600 – 1950,' Diss., Architectural Association, 1998, 11).

Both techniques used lime, but stucco-duro was also formed from gypsum-based plaster. Pargetting mixes were often more rustic, based on lime but including horse fat and hair and cow dung (Lamb, 'Sgraffito in England, 11).

Scagliola

Lamb provides an explanation of this:

technique of illusion, scagliola is a material that imitates marble. It is composed of pulverised selenite mixed with pigments and other inert fragments, applied to a wet gesso ground, fixed under heat and highly polished, sometimes called stucco lustro. Applied to surfaces to simulate the decorative effect of variegated marble and other stones, the final result has a shiny decorative finish. This imitation stone effect can be seen most often on columns or pilasters inside many houses, especially those of the eighteenth century. (Lamb, 'Sgraffito in England, 11).

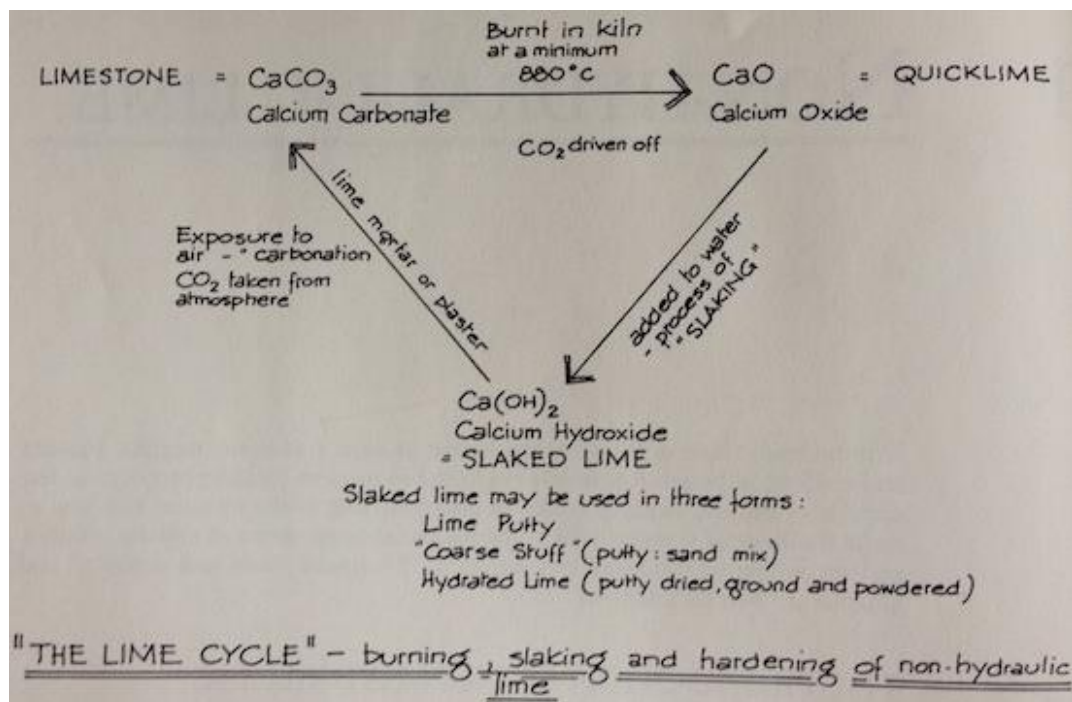
MATERIALS

Limes

The sections on lime are largely from the author's notes paraphrasing parts of chapters 1 and 2 in John and Nicola Ashurst, *English Heritage Technical Handbook: Mortars, Plasters and Renders, Volume 3* (Aldershot: Gower Technical Press, Practical Building Conservation, 1988), 1-8. The diagram of the lime cycle is from Ashurst, 2.

Non-hydraulic lime

Non-hydraulic lime is the principal binder in most traditional mortars, plasters and renders, although widely neglected in modern building practice.



Lime for mortar is created from a process of burning limestone to create quicklime adding this to water to form slaked lime, which when used in masonry pointing carbonates over time to return to a form of limestone. Carbonation can be seen as a very slow process of setting, by taking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; it is not a chemical set such as that associated with hydraulic lime or cement. This effect allows masonry built with a lime mortar to move without the cracking associated with shrinkage in cement mortars.

If no clay is present in the original limestone or chalk, the resulting lime is said to be 'non-hydraulic'... (Jonathan Taylor, 'Lime: the Basics, BuildingConservation.com, 2019.

<https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/limebasic/limebasic.htm>).

Hydraulic lime

The source material is limestone (as for non-hydraulic limes) but limestone which naturally contains a proportion of clay in addition to calcium and magnesium carbonates. Such limestones will yield 'hydraulic' lime after calcination (heating a substance so that it is oxidised or loses water). The impurities in the limestone provide a more complex chemical makeup that means the material sets or hardens by chemical reaction with water.

Adrian Adswood and Kimberley Reczek, 'Sgraffito Conservation at the Henry Cole Wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum.,' *Association for the Study of Conservation in Historic Buildings (ASCHB)* 38 (2015): 35, discuss this: '*While historic sgraffito is often based purely on non-hydraulic lime mortars, English sgraffito from the 19th and 20th centuries often employed harder mixtures of Portland or selenitic cement and hydraulic lime.*' It is these materials to which Sumner refers.

Aberthaw lime

Aberthaw lime was hydraulic lime from Aberthaw Lime works established in 1888 in south Wales. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Mounments in Wales notes: '*Aberthaw lime had been famous for centuries, particularly for its qualities of setting under water, essential for harbour works, lighthouses. &c.*' (See: <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/40673/>).

Selenitic lime

Selenitic lime is usually described today as lime cement to which 5 – 10% of Plaster of Paris has been added. Plaster of Paris was the original common form of gypsum (calcium sulphate hemihydrate) and its addition to the lime plaster would give a very hard surface and seems to have improved the set to give a very hard finish. It would also have speeded up the set.

Barra clay

An additive used by Sumner and others about which information is scarce. Sumner seems to have used it as a fine aggregate or filler in his colour layer mixes. It is thought that the original form must have originated on the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides.

Distemper

This definition still stands:

*Distemper, or destemper, from tempera, a term used in fresco painting, is applied to water-colours or pigments ground in water, beer, &c. Painting scarcely comes within the category of plastering, but distemping (also whitewashing) was a part and parcel of the plasterer's craft in ancient times. Even at the present time this kind of work is done by plasterers in many parts of the country (William Millar, *Plastering Plain and Decorative* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905), 585).*

Pigments can be mixed with a variety of carriers including glue. In Britain, the term also covers whitewash, although this is normally a suspension of lime or whiting in water, often with other substances (*Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, ed., Patrick Hanks (London: Collins, 1983).

Parian cement

Sumner gives 'fine Parian' as his preferred finish, defined by John and Nicola Ashurst as a high strength finishing plaster, patented by J. Keating in 1846. It was made by soaking Plaster of Paris in 2.75 litres (12 gallons) of water in a solution of:

*1.2 Kg [2.5lb] borax (sodium borate) and
2.2 Kg (5lb) cream of tartar (potassium hydrogen tartrate)*

which was subsequently calcined (heated to a high temperature to leave a burnt residue or calx). The Ashursts go on to say:

Parian was free working and possessed good tensile strength. It was frequently used neat for mouldings over a float coat of 1 Part Portland cement to 3 parts sand.

Portland cement

Portland cement is 60 – 67% lime with 17 – 25% silica and much smaller amounts of alumina, iron oxide, magnesia, sulphur trioxide and soda or potash, which change when burnt to form complex compounds. These give Portland cement based mortars and renders different characteristics to lime ones. For more detail see: <https://theconstructor.org/concrete/ordinary-portland-cement/23181/>.

1811 saw the first patent for an artificial cement obtained by lightly calcining ground chalk and clay together.... The first Portland cement was patented by Joseph Aspdin of Leeds but the quality is not thought to have been high. Cements produced by the late 1850s were close to those produced by modern methods, grinding chalk and clay together in a wet mill and firing the screened slurry at temperatures of 1300 to 1500°C. the chalk is converted into quicklime, which unites chemically with the clay to form a clinker of Portland cement. After regrinding and firing, the white-hot clinker is allowed to cool and a small amount of gypsum is added to lengthen the setting time (Summarised from Ashurst, *Mortars, Plasters and Renders*, 9).

Reliable consistent Portland cement was available by the time Sumner was carrying out his sgraffito. What difference Sumner implied by his reference to 'Old Portland' has not been established: he may have been referring to different producers with whom his readers would have been familiar, but the distinction is lost to us today.

Trass

A type of volcanic ash used to aid water resistance in mortars and renders, '*a variety of the volcanic rock tuff, used to make a hydraulic cement*' (Collins Dictionary, 1983).

Borax, Cream of Tartar

Technically sodium borate, borax is a white powdery substance, commonly known as a household cleaner and added to Plaster of Paris in the creation of Parian cement to apparently accelerate the set time.

Cream of Tartar is potassium bitartrate or tartaric acid, another white powdery substance, often used in cooking. Its addition to Parian Cement is apparently to slow the set.

It has not been possible to clarify this mixed information as part of this project, but aside from their setting effects one suspects they also helped achieve the hard Parian cement finish that can be highly polished.

RELATED INFORMATION

Hawks, or mortar boards

A hawk is a flat 30-35 cm square board with a tubular handle at right angles from one plane, traditionally held in one hand and laden with plaster from which the plasterer transfers the wet mix to the wall with a trowel held in the other hand,

Pouncing

The technique for transferring a design from a full-size cartoon to the wall surface. The design lines are pricked through with a fine point to leave holes at centimetre intervals. A fine muslin or gauze cloth, held in a ball, and containing powder, often cement, or in Sumner's case Parian cement, that will contrast with the surface of the wall, is patted against the cartoon transferring dots of colour to leave an imprint of the design which can be used to place colours on the base coat or the pattern for cutting on the topcoat.

Traces of Sumner's pouncing can still be seen in one or two of his schemes. See chapters 4 and 5 and discussion of St. Mary's, Sunbury.

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2 A short history of sgraffito: origins

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- 20 *'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque' (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Illustration, 25.*

- 21 *'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque' (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Header to chapter 12.*
- 22 *'Sintram and his Companions: A Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouque' (1883), illustrated by Heywood Sumner. Header to chapter 15.*
- 23 *'Fog & Filthy Air (1889), by Heywood Sumner.*
- 24 *'Will, will have, wilt tho' will woe win' (1892), by Heywood Sumner, in 'English Pen Artists of To-Day' by Charles G. Harper, 97. Illustration of panel described as executed in clay board coated in lampblack.*
- 25 *Cantoria in Basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence (1432 – 38), by Luca della Robbia. The use of symmetry in these designs is noteworthy as a device used regularly by Sumner.*
- 26 *Cloister of the church of Santo Stefano, Bologna, Italy (c1875). The patterned decoration could be sgraffito in a tradition of such courtyard decoration that goes back to medieval times. This could have been what Sumner saw.*
- 27 *Cloister of the church of Santo Stefano, Bologna, Italy (2021). This surviving detail appears to match that shown in the 1875 engraving in figure 26. It appears quite crude suggesting it is either applied stucco detail or very early sgraffito. It has similarities to Moorish work in medieval and early Renaissance Spain.*
- 28 *Doveleys, Staffordshire (probably 1856), artist unknown. Detail of incised plasterwork on west elevation. The underlying render can be seen through the letters.*

4 Sgraffito 1892 – 1906

- 1 *'And Ahab said to Elijah...,' Fitzroy Picture Society (1895), by Heywood Sumner.*
- 2 *St Paul's Church, Winchester (1904), by Heywood Sumner. South wall of the chancel, the Return of the Prodigal Son.*
- 3 *Christ Church, Crookham (1893), by Heywood Sumner. Chancel. The Adoration of the Shepherds by Heywood Sumner is on the right.*
- 4 *Christ Church, Crookham (1893). South side of the chancel. Oblique view of the Adoration of the Shepherds showing the compositional relationships to its surroundings.*
- 5 *Christ Church, Crookham (1893). South side of the chancel, Adoration of the Shepherds: Virgin and Child.*

- 6 *Christ Church, Crookham (1893). South side of the chancel, Adoration of the Shepherds.*
- 7 *St Mary the Virgin, Sunbury (1892) by Heywood Sumner. North wall of the chancel: Adoration of the Kings.*
- 8 *St Mary the Virgin, Sunbury (1892). South wall of the chancel, Annunciation.*
- 9 *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, Lady Chapel (1895), by Heywood Sumner. Chancel arch, coloured drawing of the Adoration of Shepherds and Kings.*
- 10 *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, Lady Chapel (1895). Scenes in the apse.*
- 11 *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, Lady Chapel (1895). This scene was created three years after the one at Sunbury in figure 8 and is a reworking of the idea, a standing angel for a kneeling one contrasted with a sitting Virgin.*
- 12 *Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), Ennismore Gardens, London (1897-1903), by Heywood Sumner. South clerestory, 'Via Crucis' roundel.*
- 13 *Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), Ennismore Gardens, London (1897-1903). Section of north clerestory, 'Dolor Animae.'*
- 14 *St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888) by Heywood Sumner. North-west corner of nave, 'O, all ye green things upon the earth...'*
- 15 *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1902). Main apse, vine and grape pattern*
- 16 *'The Triumph of Dionysis,' The Louvre, Paris. Resist dyed textile assigned to the fifth century with an upper border of vine and grape pattern very similar to what Sumner used.*
- 17 *St Marks Basilica, Venice (artists unknown, originally thirteenth century with later restorations). This slightly fuzzy image does convey the mystical and other worldly quality of the decoration.*
- 18 *Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), Ennismore Gardens, London (1897-1903). Detail of panel to the right of the crucified Christ on the chancel arch, showing both vine and grape pattern, similar to that in figure 16, and other stylised plant forms but also the complex mix of sgraffito, mother of pearl and tesserae at this focus of the decorative scheme. The letter cutting is very skilful.*
- 19 *St. Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1902). Main apse seen from nave.*
- 20 *St. Agatha's Church, Portsmouth (1902). Main apse with original baldachino.*
- 21 *St Paul's Church, Winchester (1904). Heywood Sumner's sketch of The Good Samaritan.*

- 22 *St. Paul's Church, Winchester (1904). South wall of the chancel, The Good Samaritan panel as executed. The photograph from which this was copied was slightly out of focus.*
- 23 *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, c1895. Colour study for nave decoration.*
- 24 *St John the Baptist, Miles Platting, Manchester (1906), by Heywood Sumner. The discovery of Christ's empty tomb.*

5 Sumner's technique: The influence of Ruskin

1. *Trinkhalle, Bad Kissingen, Germany (1834-1838), by Friedrich von Gärtner'... the first major German iron and glass public building.*

Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration

2. *George Bankart's 1908 detail for lining damp walls to receive sgraffito*
3. *St Michael's Church, Brereton, Staffordshire (1897), by Heywood Sumner. South aisle, east angel 'Not my will but thine be done.'*
4. *St Michael's Church, Brereton, Staffordshire (1897). Detail of angel's foot in figure 3.*
5. *St Michael's Church, Brereton, Staffordshire (1897). Layout for second layer of abutting panels of coloured plasters.*
6. *St Mary's, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. Detail from left hand spandrel below the Annunciation showing extensive remains of pouncing through from the design and the extent to which Sumner varied from this. This detail is just visible in the bottom left-hand corner of figure 10.*
7. *St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888), by Heywood Sumner. 'O ye Whales and all that move in the water...,' detail.*
8. *Christ Church, Crookham (1893), by Heywood Sumner. Adoration of the Shepherds, detail of Christ child and Virgin's robe.*
9. *Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints Church), London (1897 – 1903), by Heywood Sumner. Detail of hare from St Giles' panel, north clerestory.*
10. *St Mary's, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. Daywork joints in the Annunciation are defined by black lines.*

6 Trying out sgraffito

- 1 *Design of test panel 1, the 'sampler.'*
- 2 *Design of test panel 2, pricked through. Source location shown at right, from 'O all ye green things upon the earth.....' at St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin.*

- 3 *Two A3 and three A2 frames made up for sgraffito tests. The difference in backing was to see if there was any impact on drying of the base coat but none was observed.*
- 4 *A2 frame under construction showing spacers to receive mesh sheet and battens on top of the frame to define backing and topcoat thicknesses as suggested by William Millar.*
- 5 *Test panel 1. Application of cement sand base coat.*
- 6 *Test panel 1. Base coat complete. View at gap in frame edges showing thickness and guide battens for depth of later coats.*
- 7 *The various tools tried for pricking through designs. The blue handled bradawl was the author's preferred option.*
- 8 *Test panel 1. Detail of base layer surface with blue pounce line on roughened surface of the base layer.*
- 9 *Test panel 1. Colour area boundaries painted in.*
- 10 *Test panel 1. Blue colour areas applied.*
- 11 *Test panel 1. Blue colour coat complete. View at gap in frame edges showing thickness and guide battens for depth of later coats.*
- 12 *Test panel 1. Application of red colour. Irregularity of boundaries and smudging of colours can be seen as well as the difficulty of applying the coating without suitable tools.*
- 13 *Test panel 1. Colour block layer complete.*
- 14 *Test panel 1, with design pounced through. Note the variation in registration and lack of transfer in the centre*
- 15 *Test panel 1. Starting to cut the large letter 'H' with a scalpel blade in a proprietary handle.*
- 16 *Test panel 1. Starting to clean off the residual plaster on the colour surface.*
- 17 *Test panel 1. Extent of cutting after 2 ½ hours through crumbly stage with colours cleaned up. Note the loss of plaster above the small 's', and the rough edges, especially where the curve of the 'H' meets the upright. The large 'S' was cut as a freehand experiment without a pounced line to follow.*
- 18 *Test panel 1, completed. The group of shapes across the middle of the panel, from left to right, fish; triangle in square; eye and brow, figure '1' and at top right a notional date, were cut in the 'tough' stage using a combination of scalpel and pointed but round ended metal-working tool.*
- 19 *Test panel 2. Larger pounce holes for base coat outline.*
- 20 *Test panel 2. Blue powder outline on base coat.*

- 21 *Test panel 2. Colour zones painted in and lettered.*
- 22 *Test panel 2. Colour blocks in place. Wetting of the base coat did not occur for the application of the green and this began to dry and crack very quickly. Extensive repeated wetting and working over the surface was needed to mitigate this failure in the process.*
- 23 *Test panel 2. Waiting for topcoat to dry sufficiently. Damp sheen is still visible.*
- 24 *Test panel 2. Pouncing through with cement in muslin bag: cement can be seen picking up moisture from the plaster below.*
- 25 *Test panel 2. Starting to cut using scalpel blade in a handle. Panel moved to upright position. Note plaster residue left on colour layer over tree trunk as main bulk of material removed. It peeled off with little pressure.*
- 26 *Test panel 2. Cleaning off plaster residue with a wire potter's tool.*
- 27 *Test panel 2. Continuing cutting. Note the various stages of cleaning out residue.*
- 28 *Test panel 2, completed. Colour to cutting discrepancies very visible. Marks on the white surface have been cleaned off as far as possible without causing damage. Note repair – refixed dislodged piece at centre top-left, see also figure 30.*
- 29 *Test panel 2. Initial cutting out of leaves and fruit on test panel 2 before cleaning off the coloured surfaces.*
- 30 *Test panel 2. Enlarged detail of completed panel. Scraping of colour coat can be seen clearly as can the repair near the centre top. Such working marks are visible in Sumner's sgraffito upon close inspection.*
- 31 *The three main tools used in cleaning off remaining plaster from colour areas. From left: pottery wire loop, blunt ended bradawl and dished pewter working tool.*
- 32 *Test panel 3. Detail from 'O all ye fowls' panel from St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin, with the area for replication highlighted. The small red areas on the right-hand bird can be seen.*
- 33 *Test panel 3. Template of birds positioned by the register nails with reinforced holes in the tracing as Sumner recommends, and the design pricked ready to be pounced through.*
- 34 *Test panel 3. Base coat with colour block outlines pounced through with blue colour powder and painted in. Mask for green visible at bottom right.*
- 35 *Test panel 3. All colour masks in place. Pins holding small central masks are just visible.*

- 36 *Test panel 3. Blue colour coat completed with mask for red removed. Despite being covered in blue plaster the masks were effective.*
- 37 *Test panel 3. Red infilled. This was an inexact process and looked unsatisfactory but once dried and cut through proved very successful.*
- 38 *Test panel 3. Colour layer complete. Photo taken morning after and just before white top layer applied. Note the roughness of the surface, as a result of which no further keying had been applied. This looks messy but once cleaned after topcoat cutting most of this disappeared and although the register nails did locate the colours in the shapes wanted in the design there was still a bit of blue within the space of the smaller red panel in the finished work.*
- 39 *Test panel 3. Pouncing onto topcoat. Checking transfer of the design was possible because of the register nails.*
- 40 *Test panel 3. Completed pouncing through. The image conveys the variation in transfer of the design to the plaster but there was enough registered to make working the design accurately possible. An experiment is needed doing this with the panel vertically as Sumner would done onto church walls.*
- 41 *Test panel 3. Cutting problems. The two wing blades in the right-hand box were cut 45 minutes after starting and the division came away and was refixed, a repair that has held. The large blue section in the larger box was cut about two hours into cutting, so just into the 'crumbly' stage, while the four incompletely cleared blades were cut after four hours without problem. This view also shows the pounced pattern very well.*
- 42 *Test panel 3. Finished panel with damage. This is very noticeable in the letters but also in sections ringed on the left-hand bird where creative liberties had to be taken to rescue the design, merging two feathers into one. The same problem is evident on the right-hand bird. The letters were cut at roughly hourly intervals and all except the 'Y' and 'L' presented difficulties; they should probably all have been cut in the late 'tough' stage.*
- 43 *St Mary's Church, Sunbury (1892), by Heywood Sumner. Annunciation. Apparent repair to top layer ringed.*
- 44 *Test panel 3. Post completion repair recreating the 'W'.*
- 45 *Test panel 3. Panel after repair. The effect is enhanced by the repairs, which are only visible by looking closely.*
- 46 *St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin (1888), by Heywood Sumner. 'O ye children of men...' Detail showing colour difference of blue surrounding butterfly from main blue ground. A similar colour discrepancy is discernible around the child's head.*

- 47 *Frieze design. Small scale pattern grided and divided for scaling up on computer. Colour blocks with key listed below left. Six colours were proposed.*
- 48 *Frieze design. Detail of figure 47, panel 3.*
- 49 *Frieze design. Coloured maquette of panels 2 and 3.*
- 50 *Frieze design. Coloured mock-up of frieze in position.*

7 Other sgraffito artists and external use in England and Europe

- 1 *Sgraffito with fresco (c1890s), by Cesare Formilli. Compare this with Sumner's two pheasants at Doveleys in catalogue entry in volume 2.*
- 2 *Ravelin Manor Barnstaple (c1897), by Alexander Lauder. Part of hall and staircase decoration on the theme of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'*
- 3 *Giggleswick School Chapel (1897 – 1901), by Thomas Graham Jackson. Section of dome and arched support with sgraffito leaves and grapes.*
- 4 *Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900), artist unknown. Composite elevation of whole scheme.*
- 5 *Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900), artist unknown. The street scene.*
- 6 *Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900). 'Grazing.'*
- 7 *Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900). 'Country Delivery.'*
- 8 *Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900). End of word 'Grazing.'*
- 9 *Friern Dairy, Islington (c1895 – 1900). And milk maid's head from 'Old Style Delivery'*
- Roughness and ragged edges of the lettering compared with the assuredness of figure 9 suggest the hands of different artists. Surface cracking is visible in both, but the overall condition is excellent.*
- 10 *Former Paignton Art College, Devon (probably completed 1908), by Arthur George Wallis. Sgraffito to gable.*
- 11 *Former Paignton Art College, Devon (probably completed 1908), by Arthur George Wallis. Detail in top right-hand corner.*
- 12 *Wolborough House, Brixham, Devon (1908), artist unknown. Detail of sgraffito on the heavily coved eaves, which is well protected from the weather.*
- 13 *Antigua Farmacia Gayoso, Madrid (2007), artists unknown. Elevation before sgraffito application.*

- 14 *Cutting the pounced design.....*
- 15 *Partially cut design.*
- 16 *The finished shop front.*
- 17 *Casa Punt, Valencia (1906), by Manuel Peris Ferrando. Front elevation.*
- 18 *Casa Punt, Valencia (1906), by Manuel Peris Ferrando. Sgraffito detail.*
- 19 *Maison Cauchie, Brussels (1904), by Paul Cauchie. Frontage from the park opposite.*
- 20 *Maison Cauchie, Brussels (1904), by Paul Cauchie. Section of sgraffito decoration in dining room.*
- 21 *Maison Cauchie, Brussels (1904), by Paul Cauchie. Sample of sgraffito and tools.*
- 22 *Hotel Ciamberlani, Brussels (1897), by Paul Hankar and Albert Ciamberlani. Restored front elevation.*
- 23 *House entrance and bay window in the settlement of the Civil Servants' Settlement Association of the Reichspost in Berlin-Zehlendorf, Teltower Strasse (c1927). Architect: Prof. Franz Seeck; Sgraffito by Paul Thol.*
- 24 *'Menschen und Pferde' (1929), by Prof. Lois Gruber, Exhibition of German Art, Düsseldorf.*
- 25 *Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Woman with bird.*
- 26 *Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Figure of woman.*
- 27 *Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Scene of construction workers. The depth of sgraffito using 'Putzschnitt' is easy to see.*
- 28 *Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Birds in a nest, The layers of different coloured plasters can also be seen in this detail.*
- 29 *Nürnberg sgraffito (date unknown), artist unknown. Flying birds on gable.*
- 30 *House in Tel-Aviv (1970), by Dan Livni and Ora Livni. 'Floral Sgraffito.'*
- 31 *Hotel in Bialowieza, Poland (2015), by Art Mur. Celebrating one of the last reserves of the European Bison.*
- 32 *Berlin, Germany (2012), by Alexandre Farto, known as 'Vhils'. Sgraffito portrait of a Berlin nightclub owner on an old rendered wall.*

8 The last of Sumner's sgraffito, his influence in Europe and the twentieth century in England

- 1 *'Cuckoo Hill', South Gorley, Hampshire. Agnes Benson with three of her children (it is assumed, the small boy in the wide brimmed hat is Humphrey, the youngest son, born in 1896) on the front steps at Cuckoo Hill. From the start of her garden diary. The photo seems to date from 19042*
- 2 *'Cuckoo Hill', South Gorley, Hampshire, 2019.*
- 3 *'Doveleys,' Staffordshire, garden house (1910), by Heywood Sumner. Sgraffito panel of two does.*
- 4 *'Doveleys,' Staffordshire, garden house (1910), by Heywood Sumner. A photograph taken in Autumn 2020 of the building and its sgraffito panels.*
- 5 *Turin International Exhibition (1902). Photograph from F. H. Newbery's article in The Studio, no. 114, September 1902, 258. Sumner's design drawings for the Lady Chapel at St Agatha's can be identified at the extreme right, boxed in red. Compare with figure 6. Sumner's window design for St Mary's Church Longworth is top left.*
- 6 *St Agatha's Church, Portsmouth, Lady Chapel (1895). Drawing exhibited at the A&CES in 1896; illustrated in The Studio, no. 46, January 1897, 274. The layout of the sheet and features such as the stable at the top and the array of windows in the semi dome make possible the panel's identification in the photograph in figure 5.*
- 7 *Villa Fallet, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland (1904), by Charles-Edouard Jeanneret and colleagues. Sgraffito to gable.*
- 8 *Hans Urbach's 1928 map cataloguing the location and density of sgraffito work across Europe, 'Sgraffito und Kratzputz in Mitteleuropa'. Each number relates to a directory in the book and the symbols give an indication of the numbers of sgraffito works in each location. All the numbers in England and Wales are for works by Sumner, except No. 264, which covers two examples, one of which is the South Kensington Museum scheme by Moody and his team. No. 269 should read 268 as this is the last one in Urbach's directory.*
- 9 *Sgraffito mural (1951), by Augustus Lunn. Designed for the festival of Britain.*
- 10 *Anglican Church, Merstham, Surrey (1956), by Theodor Kern. Sgraffito panel behind font.*
- 11 *Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Panorama.*
- 12 *Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Revelation panel, on extreme right in fig. 11.*

- 13 *Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Detail of censer.*
- 14 *Chapel to University Chaplaincy, Queen Mary University, London (1964), by Adam Kossowski. Souls of the damned.*
- 15 *Church of St Boniface, London (1960), by Heribert Reul. Figure of Christ on back wall of chancel.*
- 16 *'Span,' Scottish Lime Centre, Fife (2001), by Kate Downie.*
- 17 *Gable to hall adjacent to St Barr's Catholic Church, North Bay, Barra, Outer Hebrides (date unknown), artist unknown. The precise technique employed is uncertain, but the figure has been created by cutting into the render surface.*
- 18 *South gable to house on main coast road south of Aberaeron, Ceredigion, Wales (date unknown), artist unknown. The north gable has an identical panel. This appears to be single coat sgraffito.*
- 19 *South Drive, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester (c1910), artist unknown. Apparently stencilled or stamped sgraffito detail on the rear gable of early twentieth century house.*

Appendix 1

- N30 *Theatre Royal, Portsmouth – under entrance canopy.*
- N35 *4, Third Avenue, Hove – figures in entrance porch.*

Picture Credits

All photographs by author except:

Chapter 1

Fig. 9.

Identification of Sumner at:

<https://hampshirearchivesandlocalstudies.wordpress.com/2020/08/29/heywood-sumner-art-archaeology-and-common-place-history/>.

Image: Sir Peter Heywood.

Fig. 10.

Jane Barbour, 'Heywood Sumner; a very private person,' *Hatcher Review* (1990): 447. The picture is undated, and no source is given. Accessed at:

http://www.alderburyhistory.org.uk/Hatcher_Index.htm.

Chapter 2

Fig. 1

Fig. 7b in article by Josef Wegner at <https://doi.org/10.1111/1095-9270.12203>

Fig. 2

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Segovia>. Image attributed here via Tin Eye but not located specifically during compilation of image credits.

Fig. 3

Rafael Ruiz Alonso.

Fig. 4

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/content/dam/Travel/2017/March/fairytale-Alcazar%20of%20Segovia.jpg>.

Fig. 5

https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palazzo_Lapi#/media/File:Via_michelangelo_bapiuona_roiti_palazzo_lapi_graffiti_03.JPG. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

Figs. 6 – 8

Gunther and Christel Thiem, *Toskanische Fassaden-Dekorationen in Sgraffito und Fresko: 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (München: Kunsthistorischen Institut in Florenz, 1964): 188, 294, 290 respectively.

Fig. 9

Thomas Danzl, and Carola Möwald, 'Graffito or Sgraffito? – It's more than this!' In *Sgraffito im Wandel-Sgraffito in Change: Materialien, Techniken, Themen und Erhaltung*, edited by Angela Weyer and Kerstin Klein (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2018): 78-79.

Fig. 10

Dr – JNG Hans Urbach, *Sgraffito* (Berlin: Kalkverlag GmbH, 1928): 14.

Fig. 11

Adrian Attwood, and Kimberley Reczek, 'Sgraffito Conservation at the Henry Cole Wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum,' *Association for the Study of Conservation in Historic Buildings Transactions* 38 (2015): 34.

Figs. 12 and 14

Thiem, 228 and 274 respectively.

Fig. 13

Roland Zumbuehl - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28527292.](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28527292)

[https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en)

Fig. 16

[https://www.e-pics.ethz.ch/index/ethbib.bildarchiv/ETHBIB.Bildarchiv_C25-117-016_250691.html.](https://www.e-pics.ethz.ch/index/ethbib.bildarchiv/ETHBIB.Bildarchiv_C25-117-016_250691.html)

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Fig. 17

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

Eidenossische_Sternwarte_(ETH_Zurich)_2011-08-06_18-01_32_ShiftN2.jpg.

Fig. 18

Max Lodhe, Atlas of the journal *Zeitschrift für Bauwesen*, 17, ed. by G. Erbkam, 1867.

Fig. 19

[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophien-Gymnasium_und_Realgymnasium.](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophien-Gymnasium_und_Realgymnasium)

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>

Fig. 20

Emil Lange, & Josef Bühlmann, *Die Anwendung des Sgraffitos für Fassaden Dekoration* (Berlin: E. A. Fleischmann & Gropius, 1867). Page unnumbered, ref. T1 at top right.

Figs. 21 and 52

Google Streetview.

Fig. 21. Gatehouse, Danemore Park Lodge, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells: Image capture: June 2016 © Google 2021.

Fig. 52. 11 Castle Street, Buckingham: Image capture: Aug 2015 © Google 2021.

Fig. 22

Header to: 'History of Down Hall Hotel, Spa & Estate in Essex.'

[https://www.downhall.co.uk/history.](https://www.downhall.co.uk/history)

Fig. 23

William Millar, *Plastering plain and decorative* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1905): 221.

Fig. 30

http://media.vam.ac.uk/media/thira/collection_images/2009CH/2009CH8391.jpg.

Fig. 32

Walter Field, *Stones of the Temple or Lessons from the fabric and furniture of the Church* (London: Rivingtons, 1871): 121-122.

Fig. 56

British history On-line, 'The Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2,' Survey of London: Volume 40 (1980), 105-108, Plate 27d. University of London/History of Parliament Trust. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol40/pt2>.

Fig. 57 – 60

Bob Hinge, Birchington Heritage Trust.

Chapter 3

Fig. 2

Somerset Archives and Local Studies, 'Wells Theological College Collection,' ref. A/BBR/6. <https://somerset-cat.swheritage.org.uk/records/A/BBR>.

Figs. 3, 7.1 and 8.1

Elizabeth Lewis, 'Heywood Sumner's Decorations in No. 1, The Close Winchester Cathedral' (Winchester: Cathedral Record no. 56, 1987): 26.

Fig.4 – 5.2, 7.2 – 7.3

Winchester Cathedral archives, Winchester.

Fig 6.

Joseph Gleeson White, 'The work of Heywood Sumner. – 1. Sgraffito Decorations,' *The Studio* (1898), 152.

Fig. 10 and 14

Prof. Ian Hamerton, ed., *W A S Benson: Arts and Crafts Luminary and Pioneer of Modern Design* (Antique Collectors' Club, 2005), 263.

Fig. 13

Hampshire Archives, Winchester. Ref. 106M95-9.

<https://calm.hants.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=95106%2f9&pos=35>.

Fig. 15

Heywood Sumner, *The Itchen Valley from Tichborne to Southampton: Twenty-Two Etchings* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1881), introduction to plate 1

Fig. 16

Sumner, Heywood. *The Avon From Naseby to Tewkesbury, twenty-one etchings*, (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1881), introduction to plate 5.

Figs. 17 – 18

John R. Wise, *The New Forest: Its History and its Scenery* (London: Henry Sotheran & Co. Ltd., 1883), pages unnumbered.

Figs. 19 – 22

Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Sintram & his companions: a Romance translated from the German of De La Motte Fouqué*, illustrated by Heywood Sumner (London: Seeley Jackson & Halliday, 1883). Frontispiece, 25, headers to chapters 12 and 15 respectively.

Fig. 23

Hampshire Archives, Winchester, 'Michael's Book, 1885 – 1889, 106M95-4.
<https://calm.hants.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=95106%2f4&pos=24>.

Fig. 24

Charles George Harper, *English Pen Artists of Today* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 97.

Fig. 25

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luca_della_Robbia#/media/File:Cantoria_of_Luca_della_Robbia_2009.JPG. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>.

Fig. 26

'*Picturesque Europe*,' T. G. Bonny and others (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, c1875-76), vol. 4, 161. Recently hand coloured print from Steve Bartrick Antique Prints & Maps.

Fig. 27

Fr. Paolo, *Fraternità Francesana*, Basilica di Santo Stefano, Bologna.

Chapter 4

Fig. 1

Susan Melanie Price, 'The Fitzroy Picture Society: pictures for schools, mission-rooms and hospitals in the 1890s' (PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 1996): 377.

Fig. 2, 21 and 22

Hampshire Archives, Winchester, 62M81W-PZ85_Exhibition Panels_1998_The Chancel Sgraffito.
<https://calm.hants.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=81062%2f15%2f84>.

Figs. 9, 10, 23 and 24

Portsmouth Museums and Visitor Services. Copies provided by curator, Susan Ward, Curator of Art, Portsmouth Museums and Visitor Services, Portsmouth City Council

Figs. 11 and 20

Historic England, refs. 138-021 and 138-032 respectively.

[https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/gallery/5015?place=Portsmouth%2c+City+of+Portsmouth+\(Place\)&terms=Portsmouth&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=1&wm=1&bc=0%7C1%7C2%7C3](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/gallery/5015?place=Portsmouth%2c+City+of+Portsmouth+(Place)&terms=Portsmouth&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=1&wm=1&bc=0%7C1%7C2%7C3).

Fig. 16

David Talbot Rice, *Art of the Byzantine Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 30.

Fig. 17

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mark%27s_Basilica.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>.

Chapter 5

Fig. 1

Wolfgang Hermann, ed., *In What Style Should We Build? The German Debate on Architectural Style* (Santa Monica: The Getty Centre Publications Programme, 1992), 44.

Fig. 2

George Bankart, *The Art of the Plasterer* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 40.

Fig. 5

Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito as a method of wall decoration,' *Art Journal* (January 1902): 22.

Figs. 6 and 10

Tom Organ, *Arte Conservation*.

Chapter 7

Fig.1

Alfred Lys Baldry, *Modern Mural Decoration*, (London: George Newnes Ltd., 1902), 102.

Fig. 2

Pauline Brain, *Some men who made Barnstaple and Arts and Crafts in Barnstaple* (Minehead: Roundabout Devon Books, 2010), 23.

Fig. 3

Barbara Gent, *Giggleswick School Chapel: A guide in support of the Chapel Fund* (Giggleswick School with Hollingwood Design and Print, June 2005), 34.

Figs. 13 – 16

Francisco González Yunta.

<https://www.ibercampus.es/i-jornada-nacional-de-investigacion-en-edificacion--2726.htm>.

Figs. 23 and 24

Urbach, 101 and 103 respectively.

Figs. 25, 31 and 32

Rafael Ruiz Alonso.

Figs. 26 – 29

Sgraffito - Die Kratzputzkunst der Nachkriegszeit, Medienwerkstatt Franken e. V, Rosenaustrasse 4, 90429 Nürnberg. <https://www.medienwerkstatt-franken.de/mediathek/>.

Fig. 30

Shay Farkash and Mika Tal. From exhibition panel at 1st International Sgraffito Conference in Hildesheim, Germany, November 2017.

Chapter 8

Fig. 1

Hampshire Archives, ref. 106M95-1, sketchbook 1-22.

<https://calm.hants.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=95106%2f1&pos=21>.

Fig. 5

F. H. Newbery, 'The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art at Turin. The English Section,' *The Studio*, no. 111 (September 1902): 258.

Fig. 6

The Studio, no. 46, January 1897, 274.

Fig. 7

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_Fallet.

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Fig. 8

Urbach, facing 184.

Fig. 9

James O Davies, English Heritage, Historic England (19 September 2013).
<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/the-festival-of-britain-1951-remarkable-survivals-historic-england/gAlYOIIC3eAELQ?hl=en-GB>.

Fig. 10

Theodor Kern exploring the life and work of the Austrian-born artist who lived in Hitchin, England. <https://theodorkern.wordpress.com/2019/05/09/336/>.

Fig. 16

Roz Artis, Scottish Lime Centre. <https://www.scotlime.org>.

Appendix 1

Note 30

Rafael Ruiz Alonso.

Note 35

Hannah Prescott.

Appendix 3

John and Nicola Ashurst, *English Heritage Technical Handbook: Mortars, Plasters and Renders, Volume 3* (Aldershot: Gower Technical Press, Practical Building Conservation, 1988), 2

Catalogue – Volume 2

1 The Close, Winchester

Fig. 1

Joyce Coombs, *George and Mary Sumner: their life and times*, (London: The Sumner Press, 1965), opp. 115.

Figs. 2 - 5

Alan Crawford.

Fig. 6

Lewis, 'Heywood Sumner's Decorations in No. 1...' 29.

Fig. 7

Heywood Sumner, 'Sgraffito as wall decoration,' 1902, 26.

Fig. 8

Hampshire Archives, Winchester, 62M81W-PZ85_Exhibition Panels_1998_The Chancel Sgraffito.

<https://calm.hants.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=81062%2f15%2f84>.

Figs 9 – 11.

Slides PWCM_18767, 18771 and 772, prepared for 1986 Winchester Exhibition about Sumner, located and copied for the author by Ross Turle at Hampshire Cultural Trust, Curatorial Liaison Manager, Hampshire Cultural Trust, Chilcomb House, Chilcomb Lane, SO23 8RD. <http://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/>.

Vicars' Close, Wells

Fig. 2

Anne Crawford, *The Vicars of Wells; A History of the College of vicars Choral* (Winchester: Close Publications, 2016), 94. Annotated by author.

Figs. 4 – 7 and 11.

Wells Cathedral Archives, Wells; digitised by SW Cultural Services, Taunton.

Figs. 8 – 10

Historic England, 5249/2 and 5249/3. <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/gallery/10447?place=Wells%2c+SOMERSET+%28Parish%29&terms=wells&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=7&wm=1&bc=3%7C4%7C39%7C42%7C43>.

Fig. 12 and note 5

Wells Cathedral Archives.

Hill House

Figs. 1 and 3, 8 - 13

Rik Edwards.

Fig. 2

Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 1UU. Plan from sale particulars of Hill House at Gravel Hill in Chalfont St Peter, with about 3½ acres of land (including a plan), which was due to be sold in 1906. Ref. D/WIG/2/4/45.

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/culture-and-leisure/centre-for-buckinghamshire-studies/>.

Figs. 4 – 7

British Architect, 1890, 33, 26-27. Plan annotated by author.

St Mary the Virgin, Llanfair Kilgeddin

Fig. 1

Gwent Archives, Ebbw Vale, ref. DPA108/26. From Llanfair Kilgeddin Parish Church Records compiled for the author by Angela Saunderson, Archivist, Gwent Archives, Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6AA. enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk.

Fig. 22

Photo in church.

The sure revolving test of Time Past and Present

Fig. 1

P. J. Putnam. 'The Apartment-House.' *The American Architect and Building News* 27 (January – March 1890): 3.

St Mary's Sunbury

Figs. 4 and 5

Historical photographs provided by Phil Beauchamp for article 'St Mary's Church, Sunbury, by S. S. Teulon (Interior)' by Jacqueline Bannerjee on The Victorian Web. <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/teulon/5.html>. "This image may be used without prior permission for any scholarly or educational purpose."

Crookham

Fig. 1

<https://www.christchurch-crookham.com/gallery>.

St Agatha's

Figs. 2, 3 (plan extract), 5 – 9, 15, 29 – 35

Portsmouth Museums and Visitor Services.

Figs. 3 (Lady Chapel extract), 11 – 14

Historic England, 1738-030, 021, 023, and 048 respectively.

Fig. 4

Repeat of chapter 8, figure 4.

Fig. 15

Susan Ward.

Fig. 28

Portsmouth Record Office, photographed from *Set of five exhibition panels titled 'The Glory of Heywood Sumner's Sgraffito', including...*, Hampshire Archives, Winchester, 1998, panel 4, ref. 62M81W/PZ84.

St Edmund's School

Fig. 1

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Edmund%27s_School_Canterbury#/media/File:St_Edmunds_School_Canterbury2.jpg. E.A.Gow, in public domain.

Fig. 2

Image forwarded to author by Tina Machado, from: S. Evans & F. Bennett-Goldney, *The Ancient City of Canterbury/Views of Canterbury* (Canterbury Chamber of Trade and the Corporation of the City: Cross and Jackman, c1903)

Fig. 3 and 4

Joseph William Gleeson White, 'The Work of Heywood Sumner – 1 Sgraffito Decorations,' *The Studio*, no. 61 (April 1898): 157, and unnumbered between 160 and 163 respectively.

St Michael's, Brereton

Fig. 8

Harry Thornton. Annotated by author.

Russian Orthodox Cathedral (formerly All Saints' Church), London

Fig. 1

Andrea Bertozzi,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_San_Zeno,_Verona#/media/File:Basilica_di_San_Zeno_01.jpg. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.

Fig. 26

Source not located.

St Paul's, Winchester

Figs. 2 – 4

Hampshire Archives, 21M65/443F/11B.

Figs. 5 – 9

Hampshire Archives, 62M81W/PZ84.

St John's Miles Platting

Figs. 1 and 9

Revd. Arthur J. Dobb and Derek Ralphs, *Like a Mighty Tortoise: A History of the Manchester Diocese* (Manchester: Arthur J. Dobb and Derek Ralphs, 1978), 258.

Figs. 2, 4 and 13

Archives Local Studies, Manchester Central Reference Library, St John's Miles Platting, photograph collection. Fig. 2 unreferenced, figs. 4 and 13, M194-4-15-3.

Fig. 3

The Diocese of Manchester, Diocesan Office. Archive for St John the Evangelist.

Fig. 5 and 8

George Bankart, *The Art of the Plasterer*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, 180.

Figs. 6 and 7

Portsmouth Museums and Visitor Services. See under chapter 4.

Figs. 10 – 12

Historic England (formerly under National Monuments Record), BB98-14023 – 14025.

Doveleys

Fig. 1

Historic England. <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/SC00941/25A>.

Figs. 3 and 6

Elizabeth Lewis, notes from site visit 1985.

Fig. 5

Staffordshire Past Track,
<https://www.search.staffspasttrack.org.uk/Details.aspx?&ResourceID=6477&PageIndex=8&SearchType=3>.

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