

Lost Treasure of Kelmscott Manor Revealed:

'The Homestead and the Forest' Cot Quilt

Exciting new 'Lost Treasure' charting Kelmscott Manor's fascinating past has been rediscovered. Although originally designed and made at the Manor, for more than a century, this exquisite children's cot quilt, with finely embroidered representations of Kelmscott Manor and the River Thames has been in private hands.

Kelmscott Manor is the former Cotswolds retreat of William Morris, designer, poet, writer and pioneer of the Arts & Crafts Movement. Morris took a joint lease on the house in 1871 with Pre-Raphaelite artist, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Some of Morris's greatest designs and ideas were inspired by living in this rural retreat, which he referred to as his 'heaven on earth'.

This beautiful silk-on-silk textile depicts a charming array of animals including a porcupine, giraffe, crocodile and tiger. It was designed by William Morris's daughter, May, who grew up at the manor; and embroidered by his wife, Jane, circa 1900.



May Morris was both an outstanding embroiderer and talented designer; in 1885, aged only 23, she was appointed Director of Morris & Co.'s embroidery department. Under her leadership it executed some of the finest embroidered work of the day.

The cot quilt was acquired by May Morris's friend May Elliot Hobbs (1887-1957) and has remained in the Hobbs family ever since passed down the generations to the present day. Together, the two women became the leading lights of Kelmscott village life and social activities.

William Morris originally leased the Manor in 1871, from local farmer Charles Hobbs, who in 1873 was succeeded by RW Hobbs, May Elliot's husband. Over the years the Morris and Hobbs families became good friends. May Morris mused: *'how much common interest and common understanding the two Kelmscott neighbours had, the owner of a famous herd of cattle and the poet...'*. It was from Robert Hobbs that Jane Morris was later able to purchase the Manor in 1913.



Kelmscott Manor is now launching a public appeal to help raise the **£40,000** needed in order to purchase the cot quilt to keep it on public display at the Manor and to keep it within the UK.

Kelmscott Manor Property Manager, Sarah Parker, commented: *We are very excited to have this wonderful opportunity for the cot cover to be on public display after being in private hands for so many years. It is a significant rediscovery of Morris family art-embroidery. It's lovely to see our younger visitors pointing out the fascinating creatures depicted including whales, honey bees and flamingos. There is so much intricate detail; the more you look, the more tiny animals and insects jump out at you. My personal favourites are the peacock and regal-looking tiger, with a line underneath embroidered from William Blake's poem 'The Tyger'. We very much hope we can raise the funds needed to acquire it, especially as it has so much relevance to Kelmscott Manor: it was designed and embroidered here and incorporates the Manor and River Thames as central motifs in the design. We hope that now it is back at the Manor, it can be kept on permanent display for all to see. It is such a special piece.*

The embroidery is currently on display at Kelmscott Manor on the very four-poster bed where William Morris was born in 1834 in Walthamstow. The Manor is open to the public every Wednesday and Saturday until the end of October. Kelmscott Manor currently attracts approximately 21,000 visitors annually. The cot quilt would add a new dimension to existing collections; its playful animal designs have great visual appeal for younger visitors. Kelmscott Manor also hopes it will inspire future exhibitions, education and outreach sessions and life-long learning.

The Manor has launched a public appeal to raise the £40,000 needed to purchase it and keep it on public display in the UK.

Online: Go to www.don8.to/TSAL002 to give any amount

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Thank you for your support!

Notes for Editors:

Kelmscott Manor:

Kelmscott Manor was the former summer home of William Morris, his family and his circle. It is owned by the Society of Antiquaries of London with its headquarters in Burlington House, Piccadilly (registered charity no. 207237), of which William Morris was a Fellow. Kelmscott Manor is open to visitors Wednesdays and Saturdays (11am to 5pm) from April to October. For more information, please visit

www.kelmscottmanor.org.uk

For further information about this or forthcoming events, photographs or queries relating to this press release, please contact

Sarah Parker, Property Manager at Kelmscott Manor on 01367 252486 or sarahparker@kelmscottmanor.org.uk