

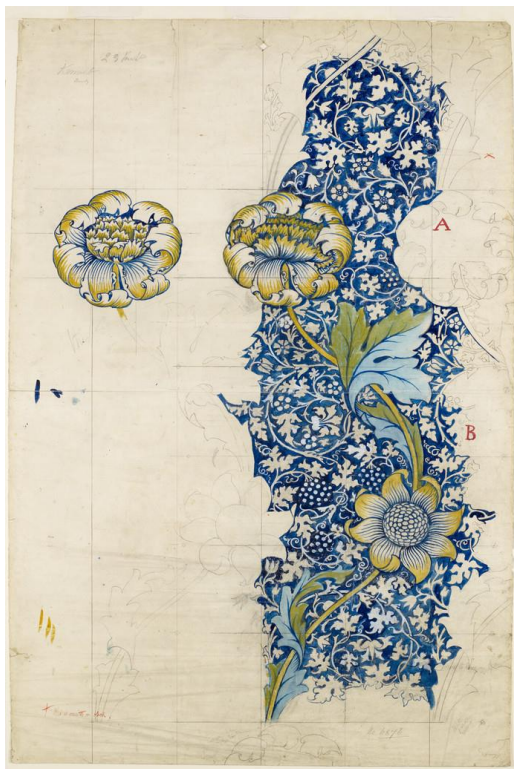
Catalogue of Friends' Acquisitions

By Margaret Lister, Friends Committee Member and Volunteer (who has since retired)

Written for 'Artefacts' magazine in November 2017

I was manning the Friends' table at an exhibition in the Gas Hall when I started leafing through a folder containing a few of the paintings which the Friends had purchased for the Museum. This led me to wondering just how many Artefacts we had bought or helped to finance over the years. So, when an opportunity arose to help Margaret Boniface, the Friends' Archivist, to make a catalogue of everything, I jumped at the opportunity.

Now the list is as complete as we can make it, and contains over 2,500 items, many of which have been photographed. We are hoping to print a Catalogue soon, so that members can look through it or access it via the Friends' website. These range from tiny items like the portrait pendant of King Charles I on a peach stone, to contributing to large items such as the 1935 Armstrong Siddeley car held in the Museum Collections Centre, and 'Transporter', the beautiful Mobile which is suspended from the ceiling at the top of the stairs leading to the History of Birmingham gallery. This was commissioned by the Friends to commemorate our 80th birthday in 2011.



Left: 'Kennet', Wallpaper design by William Morris, 1883; 1941P404.
Above: 'Kennet', William Morris, Morris & Co, 1883; 1941M405.
Both presented by the Friends of Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, 1941.
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Among my favourite items of the many which I have come across is the collection of William Morris drawings of his designs with the accompanying fabrics and wallpapers. These were, incredibly, purchased in 1941. The Museum must have had faith that we would win WW2!

There are also many collections of objects. The more interesting examples which I have come across are the rather strange collection of whips purchased in the year of the founding of the Friends, 1931; and a broken Roman pot full of coins which was found by builders in 1941 in Coleshill and contained 2,000 Roman coins. Presumably they were

clearing a bomb site. Unfortunately we also helped to buy an object in 1933 which turned out to be a fake!

The Friends have given substantial amounts of money over the years to support the Museums in many ways. For example a large donation was made towards the refurbishment of the Gas Hall in 1992/93, which is why the Friends are now granted free access to Exhibitions held there. Also, more recently, the Friends contributed to the setting up of the Birmingham History Gallery 2008/11; and to the Mini Museum in 2015/16, which was situated near the Edwardian Tearooms.

With the support of our Members I hope that the Friends continue to assist the Museum in as many ways as possible in the future. But we can only do so if we can recruit more Members, and persuade more people to join the Committee. Being a Committee member is interesting and not an arduous task. At the meetings we are given regular updates from Birmingham Museums staff, and are invited to the private openings of new exhibitions. We would love you to come and join us. Please contact the Friends office to find out more about how you could be involved!



BMAG's Mini Museum