

of the Cotswolds for sheep farming and how this related to the vast open spaces and the lack of people.

Richard devoted much of the rest of his time to the way successful inventions had revolutionised weaving. He recognised that weavers were not especially keen on power looms and at first did not know how to use them. It was not until 1827 that there was a written study of weaving: well after the industrial revolution.

In a talk where digression was both welcomed and accepted, our speaker reminded his audience that specialisation was an important aspect of heritage. To this end he deplored the fact that Early's were not longer synonymous with blankets at Witney and that tanning of sheep skins at Bampton could only be discovered down Memory Lane.

B.L.

Thursday 13th October 2005.

Kelmscott before and after William Morris – Nicholas Cooper.

Nicholas Cooper, architectural historian and writer, took us on an architectural history tour of Kelmscott Manor. He called his guided tour 'Kelmscott before and after William Morris'. Those of you who know Kelmscott appreciate that the Manor House and its setting represents quintessential England and why it would attract any creative artist; particularly one of the calibre of William Morris.

The speaker sketched in the house's early history – a slide of the plan of a Tudor house (as it is now) showed that the core of the original house took the form of a medieval hall house despite it being built sometime between 1580 and 1630. The kitchen is to the south of the front door. The front door was directly opposite the back door with screens on either side of the passage so formed, with the larger hall to the north. The south facade of the house has a late sixteenth-early seventeenth century gabled front and the considerably enlarged north wing is twin-gabled with pediments over the top windows.

The house was probably built and lived in by a Thomas Turner: a member of a local family of wealthy yeoman farmers. The Turner family continued to live at Kelmscott until it was purchased by William Morris and his family in June 1871. Morris writing to his friend, C.J. Faulkner, in May 1871, said 'I have been looking for a house for the wife and kids, and wither do you guess my eye is turned now? Kelmscott....?'

Our speaker took us on a tour of some of Kelmscott's nooks and crannies; there were one or two rather esoteric items that looked as if they may have been recycled from some considerably older building. He also said that the house was built from the start using good quality timber and stone. He sketched in how the Turner family would have used the house and where it fitted in within the local community.