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## Arts & Crafts Movement – a brief introduction

**The planning application by Linden Holmes – Phase 3 – Millbrook Park (2013) prompted the Society to look at the history of the Arts & Crafts Movement and to relevant examples in Mill Hill. These notes were used in our assessment of the scheme.**

The Arts and Crafts movement that initiated the Domestic Revival reached its golden age at the turn of the century and continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Garden City movement also did so; it was essentially a confirmation of a trend that existed decades before the turn of the century, when many well-to-do families abandoned their homes in the city for new ones in the countryside.

During the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the style in fashion was Greek Revival, which gradually gave way to Gothic Revival, which in turn was replaced by Queen Anne style. In England, Queen Anne style was characterised by a blending of elements borrowed from picturesque country houses and cottages. The introduction of a rational style of English domestic architecture characterised by beauty and fitness for purpose, is primarily attributed to architects Norman Shaw (1831-1912), Philip Webb (1831-1915), and the craftsman William Morris (1834-1896). English domestic architecture was renowned during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for its pursuit of simplicity and harmony with nature, and exerted a profound influence upon housing developments in the UK, Europe and America into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

So the Movement was not an Edwardian development, but instead, was born of the Gothic Revival, and was at the peak of its power by the time Edward VII came to the throne. By 1880s the Arts and Crafts movement had emerged, advocating a non-copyist architecture (one not based on copying other styles) that emphasised the importance of craftsmanship and high standards of design. Central to the architectural thinking of the movement's founders was an interest in the English Vernacular. The vernacular in architecture means the local language of building, using local materials and working within a local tradition of building methods that reflect local conditions.

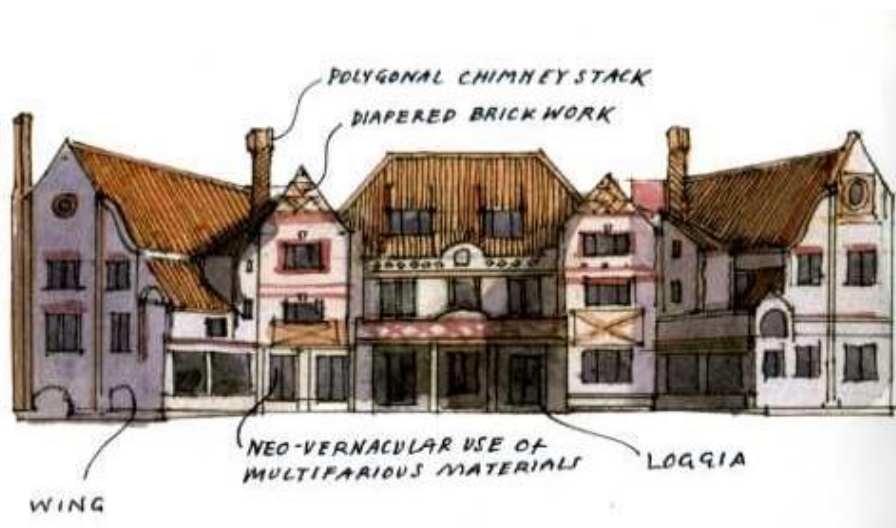
The use of clay tiles fell from grace until the Queen Anne Revival and tile cladding crossed into polite architecture from vernacular building with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Open timber roofs, with powerful timber trusses and carved hammerbeams were also revived in the Arts and Crafts Movement. The Movement is characterised by simplicity, informality, wholesomeness, good craftsmanship, honest use of materials, and a healthy respect for the physical environment. Gabled and half-hipped tiled roofs, high chimney stacks, tile hung walls, dormers, oriels and windows with glazing bars were some typical design features borrowed from indigenous rural cottages.

It is worthy of note that as a young man, Norman Shaw, an exponent of the Queen Anne Style, worked in the offices of G. E. Street, as did William Morris. In 1884 a group of 15 talented young designers, including 6 architects (5 of whom were pupils of Norman Shaw) - all devoted to the prophets of the Arts and Crafts movement and committed to the improvement of domestic design, formed the Art Workers' Guild. Instead of following classical and medieval architectural styles, they sought design inspiration from indigenous rural buildings in Britain and they became known as "free-style" architects.



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The practice of free-style architecture was not limited to members of the Guild, as exemplified by the work of Charles F. A. Voysey (1857-1941), M. H. Baillie Scott (1865-1945), Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928), and Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869-1944). These names are inextricably linked to the development of early 'modern' architecture in the UK.



Voewood, Norfolk, built by E.S. Prior in 1905 – a unique Arts and Crafts house.

This house was built by the architect E S Prior for the Rev Percy Lloyd between 1903 and 1905, and cost the staggering sum of £60,000 to construct. The house, originally named Voewood – a word of Scandinavian origin, is known in architectural histories as Home Place. Pevsner describes Voewood as "...far and away the most interesting building in Holt...seen by few and can only be seen if one looks for it...a most violently idiosyncratic house...the inventions sometimes remind one almost of Gaudi". Dan Cruickshank wrote in *The Architects' Journal*, that Voewood "...is an expression of Prior's key thoughts on the theory and practice of architecture. It reveals his attitude to the use of architectural history and precedent in contemporary design, and is a powerful demonstration that the process by which a building is constructed is as important as the way in which it is designed".

With Philip Webb, Morris was a leading light of the Arts and Crafts Movement. A reaction to the accelerating industrialisation of Britain, this movement was a complete rejection of mechanised manufacturing. They glorified the medieval mason's skill, and sought to rekindle those abilities. Morris & Co was established not only as an architectural firm, but also as the maker of all domestic goods, from the textiles and wallpapers with which the name is still associated to furniture and ironwork. The designs were of flowing line with sophisticated and varied sources of inspiration from as far afield as Japan. The Arts and Crafts Movement continued in various forms until the Second World War, and its influence remains.

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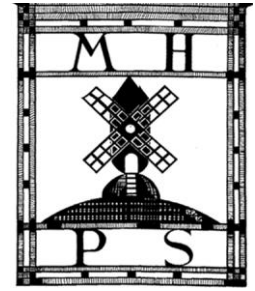


The Red House – original image.

The Red House, Bexley Heath (1859-60) by Philip Webb for William Morris – so named for its use of red brick and tiles. It is a simple, stylistically anonymous house, for which William Morris did his own interior designs. This house was revolutionary in its time. Its rustic materials, local bricks, tiles and timber, produced in its simplicity a sensational contrast to the previous Italian-style stucco of Neo-Gothic. Bannister Fletcher says...”Although its high-pitched roofs and occasional pointed arches are faintly reminiscent of English Mediaeval architecture, it is informal and novel in its arrangements, intimately domestic in appearance and convenient to the requirements of the day.”



Modern photo of the Red House



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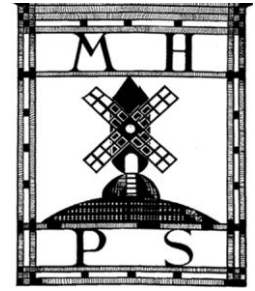
This is a modern house in Berkshire in the Arts and Crafts style built in the 1920's

**The London Borough of Barnet Mill Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal Statement (adopted April 2008) references Wills Grove, and particularly Winterstoke Gardens as local areas with buildings following the Arts & Crafts tradition in NW7.**



Winterstoke Gardens NW7

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## Sources

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