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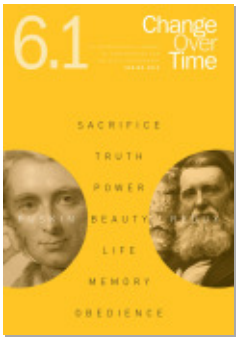

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Figure 1. Southwest aspect of Brantwood. The bargeboards on the gable end of the original cottage are clearly visible. Ruskin's addition of the dining room is on the left and the Severns' upward and outward expansion is visible to the right. The corner of the Linton Building on the extreme right shows the nature of the stonework underneath the rendered buildings. (Photograph by author; courtesy of the Brantwood Trust)

In reflection of the owner's personal circumstances, Brantwood, the home of Victorian critic John Ruskin (1819–1900), underwent radical and almost continuous development during the twenty-eight years in which he lived there. The equally complex history of Ruskin's legacy as a public figure has been reflected in changes to the house following his death and continuing to this day. A common feature to all these alterations is the way in which Ruskin's own, often trenchant, ideas have exercised a shaping influence. Even in periods when Ruskin's public reputation was at its nadir, apparently inconsiderate treatments of the building have reflected a commitment to promote Ruskin's legacy. As interest in Ruskin has rekindled, a substantial restoration of original fabric and contents has taken place. However, this process is not without challenge from Ruskin's own views on the subject. This paper explores the hierarchy of decision making that has been enacted to balance the respect due to original historical material with the demands of visitor engagement and the wider challenge of promoting Ruskin's ideas.

John Ruskin bought Brantwood on the eastern shore of Coniston Water in 1872 when he was fifty-three years old. He lived there for the final twenty-eight years of his life. Ruskin's initial vision for the two-story "yeoman villa" (a rather grand name for a cottage) and its sixteen acres was modest. However, when, in 1878, he suffered the first of the periodic mental breakdowns that plagued him for the rest of his life, the course of Brantwood's life changed with the course of his own. His cousin, Joan Severn, and her husband Arthur came to live with Ruskin and the house rapidly expanded. Ruskin continued to pursue his own vision for the property in parallel, and sometimes in conflict, with his cousin's agenda. In order to understand the rationale behind the presentation and development of Brantwood today, it is thus necessary to understand the nature of the change it underwent in his own lifetime and in the years following his death.

By 1900, Brantwood had grown like a crystal around its original eighteenth-century cottage, all but two of the additions having been made either by, or to accommodate, the Severn family (Ruskin himself added the turret and the dining room). Since it was first built in the early eighteenth century, Brantwood had already undergone several periods of change, but the twenty-eight years of Ruskin's occupancy saw by far the most dramatic alterations to its appearance. There would hardly have been a single year during Ruskin's tenure in which major building work of some sort was not in progress.

Just prior to Ruskin's passing and in the five years that followed, the last major structural additions that were to grace Brantwood were carried out. They comprised a large artist's studio for Arthur Severn on the upper hillside elevation at the rear of the

building and connected to it by an archway over the route for coaches to pass around the house to the stables; and an extension to the drawing room, together with a garden room annex, which provided the opportunity for a first-floor balcony overlooking the lake. Coincident with these building works, the Severns purchased land, doubling the size of the estate to five hundred acres, with rental properties at Lawson Park Farm and Thurston. By 1905, the last external additions to Brantwood had been made.

The appearance and fabric of the house and estate as they are today accordingly represent a survival of the house in its 1905 form (Fig. 1). Discounting the final additions referred to above, from many angles the view of Brantwood enjoyed by today's visitors is exactly the one that Ruskin knew. For all that has been restored, replaced, or refurbished by way of necessary maintenance, the relatively consistent use of traditional materials and techniques in an area where such building practices have retained their traditional skills has meant that very little of Brantwood's essential material character has changed and no architectural or structural features of Ruskin's Brantwood have been demolished. Since 1954, Brantwood has sat within a National Park and, together with its listing as a Grade II* property, this has imposed rigid planning restrictions on the alteration of its exterior appearance (Fig. 2).

If the architectural integrity of the exterior has been largely kept intact, the story inside the house has been considerably more turbulent. During his lifetime, Ruskin and his more personal possessions occupied most of the rooms of the eighteenth-century dwelling, while the Severns and their domestic entourage used the larger modern additions (Fig. 3). Upon his death, the Severn family inherited the whole of his estate, including all of Ruskin's goods and chattels. With some notable exceptions, such as the Turner watercolors, they left most of Ruskin's personal possessions in situ for more than twenty years until a series of sales culminating in 1931 dispersed them. Today, the principal rooms that Ruskin occupied have been largely restored to an approximation of their former appearance. A great number of their original contents have been returned, in many cases to their exactly known locations.

Thus, in important respects, the Brantwood of today is a satisfying historical survival that speaks to the life of its most famous occupant; however, it is also the product of a complex twentieth-century history. In Ruskin's lifetime, it had the unintended experience, albeit modestly, of being both a place of pilgrimage and a tourist attraction; in our lifetimes, this is the explicit objective of Brantwood. The handfuls of visitors that included it in their journeys in the 1890s—and saw it only from the outside—have swollen today to thirty thousand, exploring every nook and cranny of its interior every year. For all that it invokes an earlier reality, and is assembled from many genuine surviving elements of that reality, Brantwood also has a new or evolved reality of its own that continues to change and grow.

Quite possibly more of the contemporaneous fabric and contents from Ruskin's years at Brantwood survive than is the case for any comparable house of a great historical figure. Visitors respond warmly to what they perceive to be the authenticity of its historic rooms

Figure 2. Arthur and Joan Severn in the garden at Brantwood facing west over Coniston Water, ca. 1900. Ruskin's bedroom window is in the middle; his study is immediately below. (Photographer unknown; courtesy of the Brantwood Trust)

and the objects on display. More commented on than any other quality, the atmosphere of the house seems to inspire "a sense of Ruskin" in visitors, preceding any intellectual evaluation. That this should be so is not by any means inevitable, and it is very much the case that for at least a large part of the intervening history of the house, it has not been so. We may ask the question therefore as to how much the Brantwood of today presents an illusion in the manner of a stage set, and how much it is the evolution of something genuine that preserves and sustains a complex of histories, values, and qualities associated with its famous resident. As director of Brantwood since 1996, it has certainly been my intention that the latter should be the case, but much that is largely invisible or goes unremarked upon has had to be done in order that this should be achieved.

In understanding the nature of what is currently presented to the public, it is helpful to trace some aspects of the journey of Brantwood from its "dissolution" in 1931 to my own arrival in 1996. Brantwood's first objective has been in place ever since John Howard Whitehouse acquired it "for the nation" to stand as a national memorial to John Ruskin.

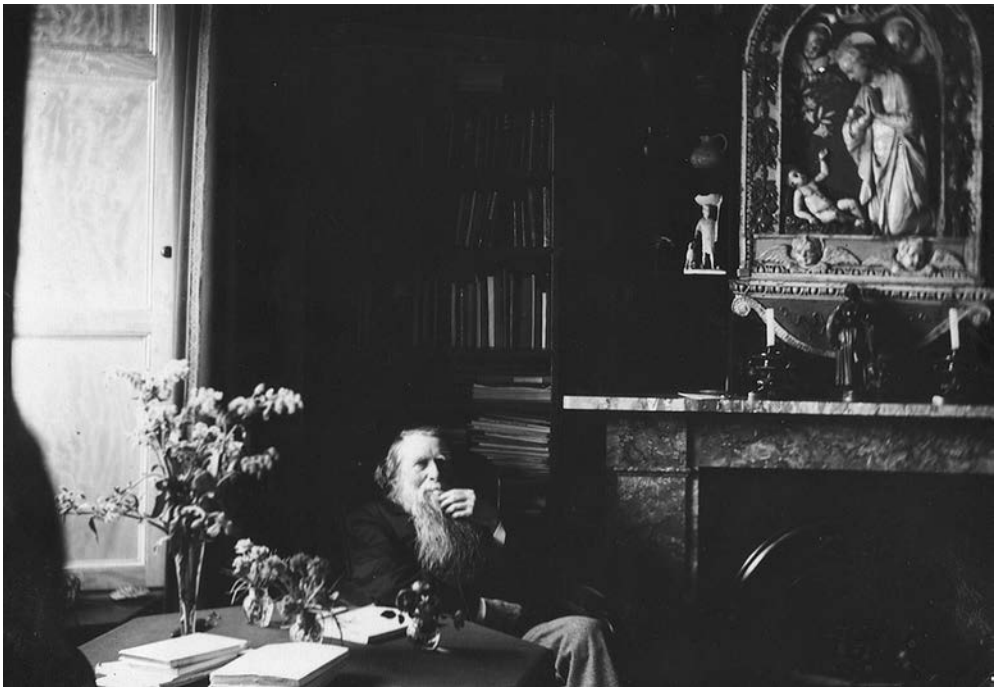

Figure 3. Ruskin seated in his armchair by the fire in his study, 1893. His Della Robbia is on the wall above the fireplace. (Photograph by John McClelland; courtesy of the Brantwood Trust)

However, no upholder of Ruskin's legacy can long ignore the imperative imposed upon them by Ruskin's own motto, "To-Day." Ruskin does not allow us to remain fixed in material history or biography. Whitehouse and his successors have understood that Brantwood has a meaning that transcends its fabric, which is to stand *for* the values that Ruskin upheld by promoting activities and experiences that stimulate the hearts and minds of its visitors and those with whom it deals. The story of Brantwood in the twentieth century has been a story of trying to interpret this mission against a backdrop of finding purpose and resources for the maintenance of the expensive physical reality that is Brantwood, its collection, and the estate.

In 1931, the last of the Severn family decided to sell the contents of the house and to put the property up for sale. A series of auctions saw a dispersal of Ruskin material around the world, but the largest portion was purchased by a single individual. John Howard Whitehouse, a Ruskinian, politician, and headmaster, shipped the bulk of Brantwood's contents to Bembridge School on the Isle of Wight. In the following year, he set about purchasing the house. With the house now dilapidated and stripped of all but the larger items of furniture, Whitehouse had it refurbished in a basic fashion to provide dormitory accommodations and a base for his pupils to use as a northern summer camp and field study center.

It was during this time that the exterior of Brantwood was painted white (even, at

one point, mint green!), losing its original ochre color. Whitehouse respected the layout of the rooms, thus preserving the architectural form of the building inside as well as out. He restored some Ruskin material to the front rooms, creating a set of displays and allowing public access for the first time, in accordance with Ruskin's will. However, the principal focus of Brantwood at this time was to provide residential educational facilities for visiting groups of schoolchildren and students with outdoor pursuits in mind. Aesthetically, the house became institutionalized; a lack of funds and domestic sensibility gradually degraded its sense of being a dwelling, least of all the home of such a person as John Ruskin. The soft furnishings disappeared, and practical fixes and make-do improvisations damaged the authenticity of its services and interior decor.

Regrettable as they might be from a purely historical point of view, none of these changes could be considered anything but the understandable evolution of an aging historical building in the mid-twentieth century. The demands of a large and exposed dwelling in the Lake District being what they are, Whitehouse struggled to keep Brantwood serviceable and to provide the funds necessary for its proper upkeep. In 1951, after failed experiments with Oxford University, he bequeathed it to a new charitable trust, the Brantwood Trust. There followed a number of projects establishing Brantwood as a field study center and even a film school. Displays were improved and visitors welcomed. However, Brantwood grew ever more distant from its life as Ruskin's home, an inexorable decline that mirrored the fortunes of Ruskin's own star in the world at large.

The tide in Ruskin's reputation began to turn slowly in the 1960s, and in the decades that followed, it became clear that Brantwood might be promoted more vigorously to the public as an attraction. As its educational viability declined in the 1970s and 1980s, the visitor experience became more important. Money was, however, in very short supply, and it was not until the arrival of Bruce Hanson as Manager in the 1980s that a concerted effort was made to address the serviceability of the building and its gardens for its emerging role as a significant tourist attraction.

At this point, I must declare my personal interest, for it was my good fortune to take over as the Director of Brantwood in 1996. From the start, I felt keenly that I was standing on the shoulders of my predecessor. It was clear to me that Bruce had laid the foundations for Brantwood to communicate with the world on a different basis from prior years. The chronology of the physical changes Bruce Hanson made to Brantwood is regrettably lost, although it might yet be reconstructed. Between his departure and my arrival, there was a six-month gap. Mysteriously, I arrived to almost empty filing cabinets. In many ways, this was a blessing for me, since I was unencumbered. From the archival point of view, it is a sad loss—perhaps one that future scholars will recover.

My own arrival was timed to a major shift in the Ruskin world. In 1997, Bembridge School was closed and the Whitehouse Collection as it was and is known had to be rehoused. The manuscripts, drawings, daguerreotypes, photographs, books, and archival material were placed in the newly constructed Ruskin Library at Lancaster University, while the memorabilia, furniture, and other personal items were returned to Brantwood.

This considerable addition of new material set in motion a complete rethink of the presentation of the rooms in the house. Over the next ten years, a room-by-room project of restoring the furnishings, fabrics, and display systems was carried out.

The return of so many of Ruskin's possessions to Brantwood all at once presented quite a challenge. Unexpectedly, it seemed to trigger further returns, a phenomenon that has continued to this day. It has felt at times as if Brantwood is rebuilding itself! To adapt to this, it is necessary to have an underlying approach. Both inside the house and out, we have a tiered approach to change in order of priority: retain, restore, renovate, add, and remove. We are seeking to pay the greatest respect to that which is authentically Ruskin's surviving material legacy while weighing in the balance the need to engage with our visitors and communicate the contemporary relevance of Ruskin's ideas to them.

Where we have surviving Ruskin-contemporaneous fabric, objects, and/or known configurations of the above, we retain, and where necessary and desirable within the bounds of good conservation practice, we restore them. The rule here is to bring back to life what once had life in as close a way as possible to its original form. No changes are made that are not reversible. Remarkably, much of the original historic fabric is still present, sometimes covered up or disregarded. Records of Brantwood's contents and their disposition in the house are numerous and detailed, so in many instances we are able to piece together the jigsaw of the past with a great deal of accuracy.

Everything in this process is about detail, because each item, each part of the fabric—a wall, a chimney, a window—has a history to unravel and understand. The end goal is to restore vitality to objects that in their life with Ruskin were active and deployed in his life and the life of his house. Where possible, a window should rattle like a window, a door latch should sound like a door latch!

It has always been clear that because so much of the house was given over to the Severns and their domestic needs, the house itself is much larger than the amount of surviving Ruskin material, and that full restoration of the historic interiors would sensibly be confined to the core of rooms that Ruskin occupied on a daily basis. Fortunately, these form a coherent whole and follow the plan of the bulk of the eighteenth-century cottage. Five rooms meet the criteria for this level of authenticity: the hall, study, dining room, drawing room, and turret bedroom. Three other rooms make up the coherent architectural space: the chamber known today as the ideas room (a former second bedroom), blue gallery (a former dining room, then library), and the drawing room annex (Joan Severn's 1905 garden room).

In addition to these eight rooms, visitors today enter not through the front door, but through the former rear door, into the area that comprised the kitchen, parlor, and washroom. Today, these form the video room, visitor reception, and bookshop. Once again, the layout and structure of the rooms has been retained, but it has been necessary to repurpose this area to receive and orient visitors. By retaining and reusing features, it is possible to give a sense of the historic by way of preparation for the experience to come. For instance, displays of Victorian bottles and jars retrieved from the lake line shelves in the former kitchen. Even though bookcases and video equipment mask some of the features,

it is clear to visitors that the space is an old space and that they need to adapt to the building—it has not been adapted to them; they are required to fit themselves to its earlier logic. Since this is a domestic logic, the sense of being in someone's home rather than a museum or institution quickly takes over.

It would take substantially more room than is available in this paper to iterate the detail of what we call the historical rooms and the changes they have undergone. In broad terms we may say that 75 percent of the contents are authentic to Ruskin (90 percent of the structural fabric is authentic). A further 10 percent of contents are accessioned artifacts that have Ruskin relevance—for example, a William Morris fabric Arts and Crafts chair. Ten percent consist of soft furnishings and support services for visitors. Where these can be suitably in keeping, they are so—for example, a Turkish rug, damask curtain, or an antique oak table for a display—but while sympathetic, they are chosen or displayed with the intention of complementing rather than misleading. A final 5 percent are the cables, sensors, lights, dehumidifiers, heaters, and visitor information that have no lineage in relation to the historic environment and which we make no attempt to disguise in a pseudoantiquity, even if we make them as unobtrusive as is practicable.

Paintings and drawings are at the heart of our displays. They are hung in domestic Victorian fashion with chains on rails. Since watercolors are susceptible to light, these occupy the darker corners and the rooms farthest from those with larger windows overlooking the lake (Fig. 4). It is possible thereby to keep the views that are so important to the aspect of the house, while avoiding visibly obvious museum conditions in the bulk of the historic rooms and maintaining the same conservation standards. One room, the blue gallery, retains its fine features and fire surround, but is otherwise given over to controlled lighting and secure display systems for rotating shows of high value or environmental sensitivity. Contemporary as well as historical exhibitions are hosted here, allowing artists the opportunity to address Ruskin's legacy directly and upholding the relevance of new work that Ruskin continuously championed.

Understanding the process in the core historic rooms helps to explain the rather wider-ranging changes that have taken place elsewhere in and beyond the building. These changes relate primarily to use and are mostly reflected in the decorative schemes, contents, furniture, and fittings rather than structural alterations. One reason for this is Brantwood's own physical resistance to alteration. Because of the way in which it grew, the house would be extremely difficult to remodel, even if it were desirable. Heavily built lime-mortared slate walls rise up throughout the interior of the building. These were once exterior walls and are up to three feet thick. Where additions were made, levels change, creating lots of small steps in corridors. The building boasts a total of twenty-two fireplaces with attendant chimneys, taking up valuable wall space. Earlier attempts to block these off and fill the chimney voids resulted in substantial problems with damp. It is usually best to respect the integrity of earlier building systems and the logic behind them. As a result, we have opened up the chimneys, unblocked or vented fireplaces, and restored breathable lime mortar. The damp has retreated. Most plasterwork is original lath and

Figure 4. West-facing elevation of Brantwood house ca. 1900, prior to the extension of the drawing room and construction of the drawing room annex. Ruskin's turret and the French doors to the dining room can be seen at the far end of the building. (Photographer unknown; courtesy of the Brantwood Trust)

lime plaster; the exterior and some inner walls are rendered in varying degrees of refinement with lime mortar. All of these materials and finishes are kept or restored when maintenance is required. The improvement is thus built into the quality of care for the fabric rather than something that has been visited upon the property in a once-only makeover. This allows a culture and tradition of workmanship to become part of the Brantwood way of doing things—it retains a committed, motivated workforce and makes much greater economic sense.

Most of the changes to Brantwood in recent years have, by their nature, been incremental. However, in 2000, one stood out. By way of marking the centenary of Ruskin's death, we made the decision to restore the exterior of Brantwood to its original color. For nearly seventy years, Brantwood had been white, and the move was not uncontroversial. Ample evidence existed of the color that Ruskin chose to paint it, and we consulted with English Heritage in order to prove our case and gain permission. Paint sampling at the time revealed that the paint Ruskin had used was not a lime wash but a type of oil-based paint. This was something of a surprise, since lime wash was the traditional finish to rendered buildings in the area. It did, however, in effect give us permission to consider a more resilient exterior paint than a lime wash, which would have needed repainting at least every five years. We selected an Austrian siliceous paint system called Keim, which has the breathable properties of lime wash but is resilient to the abrasive effects of the high levels of wind-driven rain in mountain climates.

Brantwood has, of course, both a prior and an ensuing history to the Ruskin years, and this includes the responsibility to add judiciously to that history. At an early stage, I decided to refurbish the Severn Studio to make it a gallery fit to show high-quality exhibitions and to house events and activities that the historic rooms in the house could not encompass. We elected to highlight the Edwardian features of the room with color, consciously opting for a style opposite to the neutral white space of most contemporary galleries. Artists love it.

The small vernacular stone barn closest to the house is known as the Linton Building, named for the occupant of Brantwood from whom Ruskin purchased the house. The top floor was the location for William Linton's printing press and retains his republican legend written large upon the upstairs wall, "God & the People." This allows us to retain a piece of the larger story of Brantwood. Today, the room is given over to a geological interpretation of the county surrounding Brantwood, the centerpiece of which is a modern lithophone (a type of stone xylophone) made from the stones of Cumbria (Fig. 5). It is thus possible for visitors to hear the sound of the rocks around them and to begin to understand some of the underlying perceptions and inspiration that fueled Ruskin's love of mountains and geology. Downstairs in the same building, we have kept to the rather more utilitarian purpose of this former animal house, as this is our toilet and laundry block. In spaces such as this, we are prepared to take certain liberties! In 2011, we commissioned disabled members of the Martinshoff community in Germany to design and make tiled interiors for the toilets. The resulting joyous design, coupled with a high degree of craftsmanship, has made an inspiring addition to Brantwood in the most unexpected of places.

The substantive changes to Brantwood in the last ten years have been driven by the necessity for it to become much more resilient. A historic estate is all too easily in danger of becoming a liability rather than an asset. To prevent this happening, it is vital that every part of it lives; that is, that it contributes actively and effectively toward the sustaining of the place and its purposes. Three key areas of activity were targeted as central to Brantwood's future development: education, accommodation, and catering. To provide these effectively, we had to look at our buildings and repurpose redundant or poorly utilized space and invest in transforming it.

The first project targeted the top floor of the main house, formerly accommodation for servants and a nursery and schoolroom for the Severn children. Its emergence from a tenancy in 2006 allowed us to reconsider its future. The former schoolroom had been divided at some point, severely disfiguring the shape of a once large and attractive room. Here we realized the opportunity to unify the space and give back a historic purpose with a new interpretation. The schoolroom, as it is once again known, has quickly become the central delivery point of our courses. On the same floor was the making of a stunning apartment. This we refurbished and started to rent. It has been a runaway success.

The beauty of bringing people into residence at Brantwood is that it attracts visitors with a considerable interest in Ruskin—or at least they develop one while they are here! As a result, the accommodation is more than a money-spinning holiday business; it integrates with the educational activities and serves to build a community, akin to alumni, of

Figure 5. "Ruskin's Seat." A riven slate throne made for Ruskin in his gardens at Brantwood. (Photograph courtesy of the Brantwood Trust)

Brantwood friends around the world. In order to provide more accommodation for groups coming to study, we decided to refurbish the lodge. Built in 1876 by Ruskin for his valet, the lodge had traditionally been the home of the warden or caretaker of Brantwood. Since 1996, it had been my family home, but in 2012, Pamela and I made the decision to swap it for an apartment in the main house that we constructed out of historically underutilized rooms on the first floor. The lodge now provides accommodation for up to nine people and is being rented both for holidays and for student course accommodations.

The third part of our jigsaw puzzle is imminent as I write. This year we are to completely overhaul the coach house to make it fit for use as a center for arts and education. The large open space of the hay loft will provide Brantwood with facilities to host conferences and symposia, larger or messier course activities, talks, music, dance—whatever the future suggests. The former coachman's quarters will provide another small area of

accommodation. The restaurant below, which occupies the former stables, has been fully refurbished this year and its management has been brought in-house after a long period of tenancy. As the range and hours of our activities grow, so too do the support needs in the service area.

By way of a concluding note, no description of the changes that Brantwood has undergone in recent times would be complete without discussion of the gardens and estate. Fortunately, I can refer readers to an excellent book that was published last year. In *The Gardens of Brantwood: Evolution of a Lakeland Paradise* (Pallas Athene Publishers for the Ruskin Foundation, 2014), Professor David Ingram traces the evolution of Brantwood's gardens and estate across the same timeline that I have ventured above. Suffice it to say that since the 1990s, Brantwood has enjoyed the vision and commitment of an extraordinary estate team, headed up by Sally Beamish. They have in equal measure restored, renovated, and innovated Brantwood's mountain gardens in an environment as challenging as any gardener might face.

Brantwood's physical survival, and the retention of its fabric in reasonable condition and at reasonable levels of authenticity, is ultimately less remarkable to me than the fact that one hundred fifteen years after Ruskin's death, the place is still so firmly shaped by and directed toward his character and ideas. It has changed, both by necessity and inevitability, but more importantly, it has also changed on purpose—because Ruskin's legacy endows it with a purpose. As Ruskin himself reminds us, it is purpose that gives life to the stones.