



BEDFORD LEMERE & CO.

'Intérieurs Anglais', a catalogue of 86 cyanotypes of British house interiors, 1880s–1890s

86 cyanotypes, each approximately 9½ x 11¼ inches (24 x 29.5 cm.) or the reverse, printed on paper 9¾ x 11⅞ inches (24.7 x 30.2 cm.), each numbered (from 1 to 86) in the negative, three signed *B.L. & Co*, titled and numbered in the negative, some others with company catalogue number in the negative (a little foxing and tiny tear to left margin of the first print only, not affecting image, otherwise fine and all other images good); missing the original two portfolios which bore the title on spines, but preserved in polyester sleeves within a modern folding blue cloth box.

SOLD

This collection of cyanotypes presents an overview of architectural and decorative interiors in fine houses of late nineteenth-century Britain – through the dramatic Prussian blue of the cyanotype process.

This series, titled *Intérieurs Anglais* and presumably compiled for the French market, was originally presented in two portfolios and is a good example of the use of the cyanotype to make catalogues for distribution to dealers and booksellers, in this case abroad. The manner in which the photographs are presented – renumbered (1–86) in a themed series – suggest that all the views would have been carefully selected from Bedford Lemere & Co's stock to fulfil a request for a certain subject catalogue or supply a demand for images of new architectural fashions. Visible in the corners of some of these images is the tape sticking the original print down while the copy print was made.

'From 1881, and possibly earlier, he produced a printed catalogue of available photographs, with annual supplements thereafter. Individual photographs could be ordered from these catalogues, while for customers who needed illustrations of particular themes, separate lists were available of photographs selected from the existing stock to meet their needs. In 1881 these specialised lists included 'Old-Half-timbered and Stone Mansions' and 'Old and Modern Queen Anne Residences, Schools etc.', and over the

next 20 years many more selections would be available including 'Town and Country Houses and Mercantile Buildings', 'England's Homes: Blenheim, Hatfield, Haddon, Hardwicke [sic] etc.' and several series of furniture and woodwork' (Nicholas Cooper, *The Photography of Bedford Lemere & Co* (Swindon, English Heritage, 2011), p. 15).

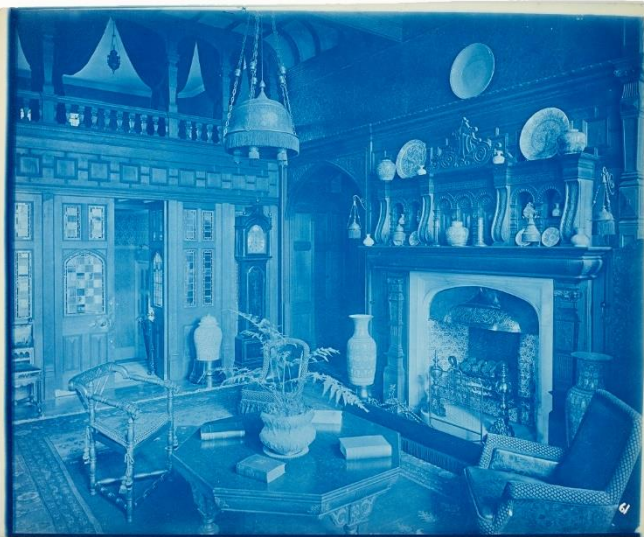
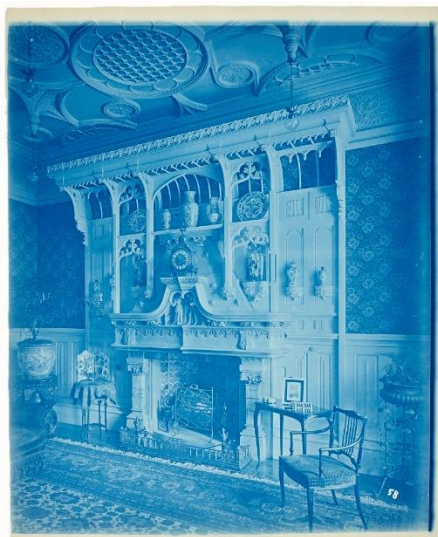
Making cyanotype copy prints from a series of reference or 'master' prints to compile a catalogue would have been practical: the material was low cost and the processing relatively simple. However, the ease of production lessened the apparent intrinsic value of the print: rarely do cyanotypes appear in such number and quality. Their perceived inferior artistic value, contribute to their rarity in comparison with albumen prints.

'Regarding the pictorial use of cyanotype, many connoisseurs experienced aesthetic difficulty with its ineluctably blue images. In Britain, Peter Henry Emerson set the tone with his acerbic dictum: "No one but a vandal would print a landscape in Red, or in cyanotype." The English photographic establishment deemed cyanotypes to be inferior, and unworthy of acquisition or exhibition.... As a consequence, 19<sup>th</sup>-century pictorial cyanotypes are almost totally absent from all the major UK collections' (Mike Ware, 'Cyanotype', in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, volume 1*, edited by John Hannavy, p. 360-61).

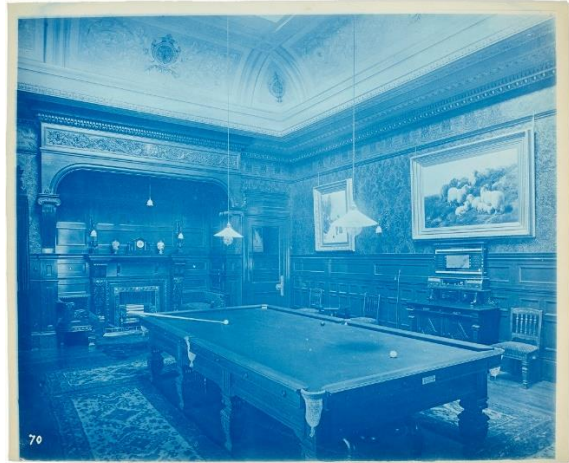
The views comprise entrance halls, reception rooms, stairwells and fireplaces, with key details such as paintings, furniture, panelling and tiling clearly recorded.



Rossetti's *The Loving Cup* (1867) stands prominently in the picture gallery at Dawpool, Thurstaston in Cheshire (visible in image nos. 1, above, and 2, left). Thomas Henry Ismay, chairman of the White Star Line, purchased the painting at the sale of Frederick Richards Leyland's estate at Christies, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1892 (lot 58) and is now held at The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo (<http://collection.nmwa.go.jp/en/P.1984-0005.html>). Dawpool was designed by the renowned architect Richard Norman Shaw for Ismay and his wife Margaret. The couple also worked closely with John Aldam Heaton on the decoration, which was inspired by contemporary fashion. They moved in to their new home in 1884 but after Ismay's death in 1899, the family were unenthusiastic about continuing to live there and sold it to F. W. P. Rutter. Having served a stint as an officer's orthopaedic hospital during the First World War, the house was demolished in 1926 or 1927.



Other designs by Richard Norman Shaw are seen in nos. 58 and 61 (possibly 58-61?), above, which depict a fireplace and a reception room in a town house in Queen's Gate, Kensington in London.



The library and billiard room of Seafield House in Ayrshire, Scotland are depicted in images no. 67 and no. 70. William Watson's *Sheep in Landscape* is visible hanging by the billiard table. Seafield House was built by architects Clarke & Bell, Glasgow and R. A. Bryden in 1888–90. However the design, which included a heated sea-water supply for curative saline baths, was much influenced by the owner, Sir William Arrol – the engineer responsible for the construction of the Tay Bridge (1883–1887), the Forth Rail Bridge (1883–1890), and London's Tower Bridge (1886–1894). Arrol was an art collector who amassed approximately 300 paintings. We have not identified the second painting visible in the billiard room, but it is probable that it is one of those listed in a 1906 catalogue of Seafield art (provided by the Friends of Seafield House) which lists paintings by room. William Watson's *Sheep* is included in this list. J. & R. Edmiston Auctioneers, Glasgow made a sale of Arrol's collection in 1913 (*Catalogue of the ... Collection of Valuable Pictures, Exclusively the Property of the Late Sir William Arrol, of Seafield, Ayr, and to be Sold ... by Auction ... May, 1913*). The house is now on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.

Other houses identified among these images are: Parham Park, Sussex; Astley Hall, Lancashire; Standish Hall, Lancashire; Swan House, Chelsea, London; Monkams, Woodford, London; Curling Hall, Ayrshire, Scotland; and The Cottage, Walton Heath, Surrey.

English Heritage have the largest holding of Bedford Lemere & Co's surviving photographs: 21,800 large-format glass negatives and 3,000 unique prints, which comprises one quarter of the firm's estimated total output of 100,000 images.

Worldcat lists one other complete set of *Intérieurs Anglais*, at the Stiftung Bibliothek Werner Oechslin, Switzerland. The Getty Research Institute holds 82 of the set of 86 cyanotypes (lacking nos. 10, 65, 67 and 81).

The Royal Institute of British Architects have eight photographs from this series also in cyanotype, with the same numbering 1–68 (nos. 1, 7, 37, 49, 58, 61, 66 and 67), presumably made at the same time as those offered here. See <http://www.ribapix.com>, items RIBA7372–RIBA7379.

Special thanks to the Friends of Seafield House and English Heritage.