

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION • JANUARY 2014 • ISSUE 50



Making discoveries with a new piece of kit

Also in this issue

Debating Icon's future direction

The daguerreotype: alive and well

Needing the patience of a saint

conservation register

Are you thinking of joining the Conservation Register?

The Conservation Register is the recognised source for finding professionally qualified conservator restorers in the UK & Ireland.

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- An opportunity to showcase examples of work to potential clients;
- Provision of information on the accreditation and skills of you and your staff;
- Login access for feedback on how often your own entry is viewed
- Practices in which the lead member is an accredited conservator-restorer (ACR) of Icon, or ARA, or BHI, accredited through PACR (Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers) are eligible for a 15% discount with Heath Lambert insurance brokers.

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THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

JANUARY 2014

Issue 50



From the Editor

Happy New Year to all our readers!

I can hardly believe that this is our fiftieth issue. Seen from another perspective, however, it only marks Icon's embarkation on its ninth year and that makes us mere juveniles compared with many another body speaking for heritage protection or with the voice of a profession. To take an example of each for comparison: the Museums Association was founded in 1889 and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland in 1854. So the debate in this issue about the direction that Icon should be taking raises important and interesting questions about the nature of professionalism. It started when Icon member Lucia Scalisi ACR wrote an open letter to Icon, which she has kindly summarised to provide our Intervention column. Our CEO Alison Richmond has taken the opportunity to respond and reflect on the issues raised by Lucia. The discussion no doubt has a very long way to go yet before we become a venerable and secure body of a century's standing. Why not consider contributing to this important discussion of what it means to be a profession? Your views as members are important to shaping the positive future of Icon.

Elsewhere in this issue, there is plenty to entertain, with Paisley's grand fountain looking ever sorer for itself and heroic feats of working in public at Wimpole Hall.

Lynette Gill



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Cover photo:
A Nkisi figure from the Congo after treatment. Conservators at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery were able to make some interesting discoveries with the help of a new X-ray machine.
Image © BMAG

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professional update

From the Chief Executive

LETTER TO LUCIA

Alison Richmond ACR FIIC responds to Lucia Scalisi's Intervention column (on page 9), originally an open letter to Icon, in which Lucia takes Icon to task for lack of clarity and direction in moving towards becoming a profession



Photo: Matt Weford

Dear Lucia,

Thank you very much for your letter and for bringing up very important issues about members' expectations of Icon. You have done this at a very opportune moment. This month, Trustees will be reflecting on Icon's key purpose in preparation for drafting the next five-year strategy, and stimulating debate amongst members about what

Icon's future direction should be can only be a very good thing. Trustees will be able to listen and take into consideration members' views before setting a clear trajectory for Icon.

Supporting conservators after training

Let's start with Icon internships. You contrast the support that Icon gives to interns with the lack of support to 'qualified, formally trained' conservators. Icon has been facilitating the training of interns (we do not train them ourselves, the host supervisor does this) since 2005. We have been fortunate in receiving the largest grant of all the Heritage Lottery Fund Training Bursary Schemes, £2.45M. The funding has provided stipends and has meant that we have been able to put an end to unpaid internships in Icon. The funding has enabled us to develop a framework based on our professional standards that is available to everyone, and is now the industry standard for work-based learning. The HLF funding is coming to an end in 2015, and we will have trained 140 interns over nine years. This is the right moment to ask ourselves if internships will continue to be a central function of Icon.

Formal training versus 'no formal training'

Icon makes no distinction in membership categories or otherwise between conservators who have attended a degree course and conservators who have trained in the workplace. This is because when we developed the PACR we based it on an objective assessment of competencies rather than time served or qualifications. It was anticipated that this would be an inclusive route to the profession; anyone could get accredited who met the professional standards at a proficient level. It does not matter what the route is that you take to your assessment, whether it be formal training or work-based learning, as long as you meet the standards. We actively promote accreditation as the quality mark for conservation. We know that we can and will do much more in terms of promotion focussed on funders, employers, commissioners and insurers.

But your point was really about the lack of support for 'qualified, and formally trained conservators' after training. The support we give to conservators post training is mostly around accreditation: we have just launched the PACR Pathway for which any Full Member of Icon can sign up to get a mentor and a networking meeting once a year.

We do of course provide development opportunities for trained conservators through the groups who do this very well usually within their specialist areas. Icon also offers CPD courses from time to time. This year it was Health & Safety. We are also looking at providing business skills for conservators and are currently working with the Fitzwilliam Museum and English Heritage to do this. One question is whether Icon should be a training provider? Or should Icon be a 'clearing house' or facilitator for others to provide training? There are organisations out there already doing this, and some are very well equipped to do so. Should Icon be working with the universities to provide CDP courses for conservators?

A discerning public – distinguishing good from bad practice

We try to give clients the information they need to make the distinction between accredited and non-accredited members. The Conservation Register lists practices that are led by an ACR. This has bedded in now, and it might be the right time to require that all of the conservator staff are either accredited or are formally working towards accreditation. As you know, maintaining your CPD record is a requirement to keep your accreditation, so all staff would therefore be undergoing CPD.

How should we stop 'bad' practice? I think we could be doing more to check that criteria on the Conservation Register are being met and that records are up to date. This is something that we need to put more resource into. How much of Icon's role is to police the membership? We do this in a passive way through a robust disciplinary process. Complaints are rigorously followed up and, if the complaint is upheld by the Disciplinary Committee, the member is sanctioned. We are currently working on a new Code of Conduct that will be the basis for a new, improved disciplinary process. All of this work is being undertaken with the help of volunteers who are contributing to the development of our profession on behalf of all of us.

Support for training courses

I agree that we have not supported the training courses enough and we are working on that. Currently, Kenneth Aitchison is updating our directory of higher education courses, and will be asking courses to confirm whether they map against the professional standards. If they do, it will say so on our website. We are working to support the QAA's (Qualifications Accreditation Authority) exploration of the potential to develop a subject benchmark statement for higher education conservation courses. These will provide ways of indicating quality to students, conservators and clients.

A mature profession?

You say we are not moving towards becoming a formally realised profession. I would agree with you that we are not

there yet. We are an 'emerging' profession and have already achieved a lot for a small profession like ours. We work in the public interest, we have our own professional standards, we have objective ways of measuring our competence, we have an identified body of knowledge, and we have a code of ethics (albeit borrowed from ECCO) and will soon have our own code of conduct.

How far down the road of becoming a profession we have reached depends on where we are trying to get to. There are many different models of professions and of professional associations. For example, do we want to become a chartered profession, with 'accredited conservator' a legal term? It is worth pointing out that even if we were to become chartered, only the term 'accredited conservator' would be legally defined, it would not stop anyone setting themselves up as a 'conservator'. It would still come down to marketing, promotion and advocacy to those four key groups: funders, clients, commissioners and insurers.

No, I don't think we are deluding ourselves by talk of being a profession. I think this is a long, slow process. If you look at the history of other professions, it took centuries for some of them to reach that status and we are only sixty three years old (if you consider the birth of modern conservation dates from 1950 with the formation of IIC). We can certainly learn from others around us who are doing it now. The Institute for Archaeologists will be submitting its application to the Privy Council to become a chartered institute and I will be tracking their progress closely.

Getting out and about

Appearing at trade fairs and other events is one part of what we do to market Icon, PACR and the Conservation Register. We also advertise, link to other websites, print and distribute leaflets, handle a large volume of enquiries, and go out to meet all kinds of people. Next year we are allocating more resources to marketing. It is expensive to attend events, either because charges for stands are high or because we have to pay travel expenses for staff. We can normally only afford

them through what is known as a 'contra deal'. This means we will take advertising from the event organiser in return for a discounted stand. It also works really well when members share a stand with Icon and we split the stand fee and cross market to visitors. We carefully consider the loss of opportunity if we are sending staff out of the office for a day. We may make a few contacts, but other critical work gets postponed.

Restorer vs conservator

What's in a name? Let's face it, 'restorer' is still more familiar to most people than 'conservator'; 'conservator' requires an explanation. If I have to describe myself in one word to someone I meet, I say 'restorer of works of art' and then launch into what conservation is all about. 'Restorer' can be the key that unlocks the mind to listen to the next part. Icon receives calls from production companies who are pitching programmes on the conservation of heritage to television stations. I always spend time on the phone with them, telling them about conservation and about conservators, but in the end we have to live with what they call us and get on with it. After all, 'Restoration Roadshow' was used as a communication vehicle by professional conservators. But let's by all means get a debate going on whether 'restorer' should continue to be part of our professional language.

Decentralising the London office

We started Icon in a central London office at a prestige address because this was one of the motivations and benefits of convergence: we could afford a London office. But Icon has grown and the world has changed, and it is definitely time to consider alternative arrangements.

This correspondence has reinforced for me how important it is to identify where we are trying to get to as a profession. Icon has finite resources. We cannot do everything. Let's have the conversations and debates to help us focus our resources and prioritise the things that will get us there.

With best wishes for the New Year, *Alison*

THE BOARD ELECTION RESULTS



Siobhan Stevenson

The results of the recent elections to our Board of Trustees were announced during the course of the December AGM. The two national seats, reserved for candidates from Northern Ireland and Scotland, were filled unopposed by Siobhan Stevenson and Ylva Dahnsjo respectively. Voting to fill the three unrestricted seats saw Adam Webster, Pierrette Squires and Caroline Peach elected. (Caroline will be familiar to many of you from her role in Icon in its earlier years and you can read more about her on page 10.)



Ylva Dahnsjo

In a departure from past practice, three new Trustees have been co-opted from outside the conservation profession to broaden the range of skills available on the Board and bring new thinking and expertise to Icon. As a result, Nigel Dacre will start immediately whilst Iain Boyd and Christopher Sutton will start on 27 March when Gill Keay and David Leigh retire from the Board.

Welcome to all the newcomers, especially those who have yet to learn about the quirks and foibles of conservators, and we look forward to bringing you more information about them in future issues of Icon News.

OUR 9TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM took place at the beginning of December and was hosted by the University of London at Senate House. Thanks were given to Angela Craft, Senior Conservator at Senate House Library, who kindly facilitated our use of the venue and also arranged a small display about book conservation to accompany the event. Icon Chair Juergen Vervoort conducted the proceedings with help from Business Manager Simon Green and Chief Executive Alison Richmond. Nearly a hundred people attended and were in fine debating form when it came to the discussions at the end of the formal proceedings. Before that though, annual reports were delivered, auditors appointed, elections results announced and a small amendment made to the constitution.

From the Chair

Juergen reminded us all of how very busy the year has been for Icon, from the lively Glasgow conference in early April to the publication of the workforce research in mid-May, giving new and revealing insights into the profession, the continued success of the internship programme, the quinquennial review of the accreditation framework and, still in progress, the review of the *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, the drafting of a code of conduct and the governance review, which he had promised on taking office a year previously. Juergen thanked our sponsors, all the staff and the trustees for their hard work and the many members who engage with the organisation. Twenty percent of our members are actively involved one way or another, he noted, twice the number that other professional bodies are able to mobilise.

From the CEO

In her report, Alison Richmond elaborated on many of these topics, drawing out some telling details such as the fact that the Glasgow conference had covered its costs, whilst noting that the question of funding for speakers has been taken on board for the future. She expanded on the contribution of the many bodies – including the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Clothworkers' Foundation, Tru Vue and the Radcliffe Trust – whose support and sponsorship make it possible to deliver so many programmes and projects. She also reported good progress on Icon's financial situation and the build up of its reserves.

Questions and debate

Questions covered a wide range of issues from funding for internships, the job situation for emerging professionals, queries about financial details, the future of the *Journal* and the fate of the Chantry Library, this last a topic where some unhappiness was expressed about its proposed closure in 2015. Most of the evening's discussion, however, was reserved for the draft Code of Conduct, which was led by Trustee Lizzie Neville, who chairs the working group that has developed the Code over the past year. Comments ranged widely, from detailed points about the order and wording of certain clauses to broader issues of context and tone.

Particular concern was voiced about its perceived admonitory sternness as a guide to behaviour, coupled with the lack of

any accompanying ethical guidelines or guide to good practice. Lizzie Neville noted that scrutiny of the document by a lawyer had seen a considerable firming up of the wording and that a link to the Professional Standards will help meet the need for an ethical framework. These Standards, currently embedded in the PACR accreditation context, are to be re-written to bring out their applicability to all and enable them to be read in conjunction with the Code. Overall the tone of the contributions was thoughtful and serious as befits a weighty subject which has exercised a great many minds this last year.

THE AWARDS ARE BACK!

Welcome news brought to us at the AGM is that another round of the Conservation Awards is planned for October 2015. Discussions are currently underway with a corporate sponsor and a further announcement is expected in the Spring. It may be worth starting to think about the projects you might submit now....

A SAD DEPARTURE

Less good is the news of the departure of Wiebke Morgan, our Membership and Marketing Manager. Wiebke has had an offer she can't refuse and starts a great new job this month as Corporate Services Manager at the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn. We shall be sorry to lose her and in case you missed Alison Richmond's words of tribute in December's Iconnect here is an extract:

Wiebke has made a huge difference at Icon, taking on the management of membership when it was at a very low ebb and raising standards of service to a level that Icon can really be proud of, along with growing the numbers at a difficult time for professional bodies. She has raised our profile via social media, on Twitter and Facebook, and has enthusiastically taken Icon out on the road. She has also ensured that the Conservation Register is well managed. The whole Icon team has benefited enormously from her experience and advice. She will leave Icon a much stronger organisation than it was when she started two years ago.

Wiebke says she will miss us and of her time at Icon comments:

I have enjoyed working with and for Icon – after all, Icon is its members! I hope that during my time here I have been able to make a positive impact. My work wasn't done alone and I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people for their kind and generous support, and without whom my work wouldn't have been possible.

In particular I'd like to thank Alison Richmond, Chief Executive, for her guidance throughout, and all the Specialist Group chairs and committee members as well as the Board of Trustees – each of whom are so committed and devote hours of volunteer service to Icon. I can't name all but – in no particular order – Francis Downing, Victoria Stevens, Kostas Ntanos, David Leigh, Kate Frame, Pieta Greaves, Deborah Phipps, Helen Hughes, Clare Finn and so many other members have freely shared their knowledge

and passion with me and made my work life easier and fun. My sincerest thanks also go to all my colleagues. I feel privileged to have worked with such an extraordinary group of people. Part of my new role is an annual audit of the Inn's 'Chattels', e.g. paintings, silverware and furniture, so I won't be losing touch with conservation completely. And so my dear members and colleagues, I say thank you, good luck for the future, and 'Auf Wiedersehen'.

A TERRIFIC TAKE-UP FOR THE PATHWAY!

Icon's PACR Pathway has enrolled one hundred and thirty nine members with even more showing interest at two recent Icon events aimed at conservators looking to become accredited members of Icon in the future. The Pathway offers an opportunity to work with an Icon trained mentor and because of the high demand there has been an extra training workshop to enlist fourteen new mentors.

It also provides network opportunities and at the Pathway event on 2 December there was a full complement of Pathway attendees to hear about brainstorming and mind mapping tools; writing for Icon's Journal and putting an application together for a job or internship. There was also time to meet each other and exchange experiences. Feedback indicated that it was a successful event: 'a really interesting afternoon jam packed with information'. 'It felt reassuringly relaxed and open and was not at all as daunting as I expected it might be!'

The presentations will be available on the Icon website soon.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP FROM WEST DEAN



Lorna Calcutt ACR

A welcome new scholarship has become available for students wanting to study at West Dean from 2014. *The Edward James Foundation Anniversary Scholarship* is named after the founder of the College, who was a strong supporter of young and emerging artists and craftspeople, and celebrates the fiftieth anniversary this year of the founding of his eponymous Foundation.

The scholarship will help to improve the accessibility of postgraduate study. Since undergraduate fees were increased in 2011, West Dean

has seen a marked uplift in students needing financial support to continue in Higher Education.

'Without additional funding, many students will decide not to study at postgraduate level', says Lorna Calcutt ACR, Conservation of Ceramics programme leader at West Dean. 'Unless postgraduate study becomes more accessible, the



West Dean College

impact on our heritage – nationally and internationally – will be felt in years to come, when the lack of conservators trained to the highest standard will really be felt.'

West Dean College offers several other scholarships and bursary funding for potential students and is also reviewing the structure of its programmes to encourage more students into postgraduate study, for example, partnerships with potential employers or the feasibility of offering part-time study.

More details about the various scholarships and bursaries and the West Dean study programme can be found on www.westdean.org.uk/collegechannel. Application forms are also available from the same address. The deadline for all scholarship applications is **30 April 2014**.

HISTORIC SHIPS CONSERVATION

At the beginning of December National Historic Ships UK (NHS-UK), together with the International Boatbuilding Training College (IBTC), announced a new course, the only one of its kind in Britain: Level3 BTEC Diploma in Historic Vessel Conservation. Available at the College's Lowestoft hub, the course offers practical hands-on training in the specialist skills required to build and conserve traditional wooden boats and is described as being available to the managers of conservation projects, amongst others. It consists of seven modules which can be taken concurrently or spread over a period of time. To help the scheme get a good start, NHS-UK is offering two £1000 bursaries to be awarded in conjunction with IBTC. For more information go to: www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/news.php/554/new-level-3-btec

YORK BURSARY

Applications are invited from craftsmen and conservators for financial support. Since 2002 the York Foundation for Conservation and Craftsmanship has helped over ninety individuals across a very broad range of heritage skills. Based in York, the Foundation will consider applications from across the UK. Awards are available of up to £1500 to support training and development and up to £3000 to help established experts take on an apprentice or trainee.

Applications are invited by the end of March 2014 and shortlisted applicants will be interviewed in early May. Further details and application forms are available at www.conservationyork.org.uk.

RESTORING ANCIENT BRONZES

A new digital publication is available free of charge from the Getty: *The Restoration of Ancient Bronzes: Naples and Beyond*. Edited by Erik Risser and David Saunders, respectively associate conservator and assistant curator in the Department of Antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum, this is a collection of essays and case studies which examine the evolving practice and history of bronze restoration from the eighteenth century through to today.

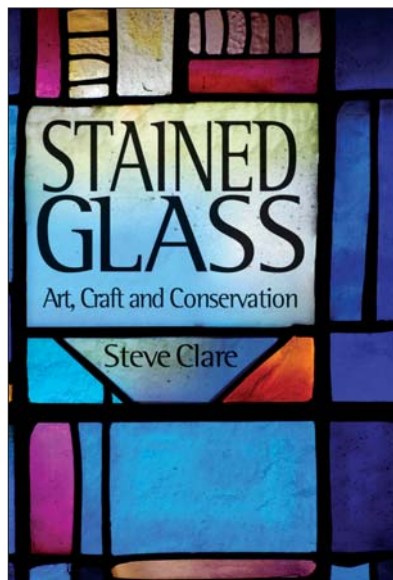
The essays were written following a series of presentations at a one-day conference, 'Restoring Ancient Bronzes in the Nineteenth Century', held at the J. Paul Getty Museum on May 6, 2011. The contributors address the contexts in which the restorations took place, the techniques and materials used, the role of specialists, and changing attitudes to the display of these statues.

Each illustrated essay is accompanied by a separate gallery of large-format images to facilitate study and analysis. The complete volume and associated gallery can be downloaded or each chapter is available as a separate PDF, as is its accompanying gallery of full-colour images.

The publication is available via open access through the Getty's website on http://www.getty.edu/museum/symposia/restoring_bronzes/index.html

Making resources such as *The Restoration of Ancient Bronzes* widely available at no cost is part of the Getty's ongoing mission to support conservation of the world's greatest cultural treasures, as well as a facet of the Getty-wide movement towards open content.

WISE UP ON STAINED GLASS



It's always good to welcome a new book by an Icon member and the latest to come to our attention is *Stained Glass. Art, Craft and Conservation* by Steve Clare ACR of Holy Well Glass Ltd, published by Hale Books (ISBN 978-0-7090-8818-9) at the end of November.

According to Steve, the book is very much targeted at the encouragement of young professionals and

is not an academic work. We suspect he is being modest. He brings more than thirty years of experience to the task and a background that includes being National Stained Glass Adviser to The National Trust; in recent years acting as a consultant to St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, to King's College Chapel, Cambridge, to the cathedrals at Winchester and Gloucester, and currently involvement with Wells Cathedral. From this hinterland, the author is well-placed to cover not only the territory of technical know-how but also his 'personal views about the creative process'.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Book & Paper Group

In a change from the arrangements announced in November's Icon News, Isabelle Egan has stepped into her role as Chair of the Book and Paper Group Committee with effect from the beginning of this year.

The new Chair and the Committee wish all members a happy New Year!

Ceramics and Glass Group

'Tape and pillage. Interventive treatments in a preventive climate': CGG are delighted to announce that booking for the next conference opens 24 February 2014. This two day conference will be held 16 - 17 May 2014 in York, one of England's most beautiful and historically rich cities.

The conference aims to revel in the variety of interventive treatments and the ethical decisions that may go along with these within our profession, regardless of whether we work alone in private practice or in large institutions. The conference will be set in York which has an exquisite history from the Romans through to the Saxons and more notably the Vikings who called the city Jorvik. Tours of various historically significant buildings and collections are planned for Friday 16 May followed by a conference dinner and then a full day of talks and posters arranged for Saturday 17 May.

Booking opens February 24 – please visit our group page on the Icon website for further details and booking forms – we hope to see you there!

Nigel Williams Prize: This year's Nigel Williams Prize will be awarded at the conference's dinner on Friday 16 May. The bi-annual Prize is the result of the collaboration between Nigel Williams' family and the Icon Ceramics and Glass Group. It was created to serve both as a memorial to Nigel's work and to encourage continuing high standards within the profession generally.

The winner receives £1000, together with a 'virtual' presentation of a gilded ceramic copy of the Portland Vase (kindly donated by Wedgwood and kept on permanent display in the Museum). In addition, and at the judges' discretion, a secondary prize of £400 may be awarded to any application considered to be a close runner-up. And for an application completed while the applicant was still a full-time student, a student prize worth £250 has recently been made available.

The application deadline for the next Award is Monday 14 April 2014. For further details refer to our group's page on the Icon website or contact the Nigel Williams Prize Co-ordinator Ronald Pile by email: ronaldpile37@btinternet.com

Exciting opportunity!: Do you want to be more involved with Icon? Meet new people and forge new contacts? At our next AGM we will be looking for a new CGG Chair and Treasurer. If you are interested in possibly filling either one of these roles or require further information please email me kswales82@gmail.com

Kathleen Swales

Stone and Wall Paintings Group

The Group is holding a one day conference on innovative wallpainting conservation techniques at St. Brides Hall on 27 March 2014. 'Fresh Brush Strokes' will include presentations on infrared thermography, lasers and nanolime as well as current research into 19th century wall painting techniques and Street Art. Registration details will be available in the New Year.

Textile Group

This year's Textile Forum will take place at Birkbeck College on Monday 31 March. We have an interesting programme of speakers, covering a range of aspects on the theme 'Joined up Thinking: Textiles and the Historic Interior.' We are looking at the possibility of a drinks reception following the speakers. Look out for further details on the website and through iconnect.

A successful visit took place to the Leather Conservation centre on 11 October. Thank you to the organisers of this event.

The committee are thinking ahead to events in 2014. There will be a visit to the factory and showroom of Proportion London Mannequin makers. More details will be available when this visit is finalised.

Leanne Tonkin, our group secretary, has taken up an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in Textile Conservation at Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio, America. (See page 10) We thank Leanne for her hard work, energy and commitment to the Textile Group and her work as secretary will be missed. However, this is an exciting opportunity for her and we wish her all the best in her new role.

DAGUERREOBASE

An opportunity for everyone to contribute

The existing website 'Daguerreobase', set up and maintained by the Stichting Nederlands Fotomuseum in order to bring the information revealed during active conservation work to a wider audience, may be familiar to members of the Photographic Materials Conservation Group. If not, treat yourself to a look at www.daguerreobase.org. Clearly this is a useful resource and, excitingly, one that is going to develop significantly over the next eighteen months.

After the 2010 meeting on the conservation of



daguerreotypes at the Artesis Hogeschool in Antwerp, a consortium of conservators, curators, daguerreotypists, librarians, archivists and technical specialists lead by Herman Maes and Ann Deckers (both from the Stichting Nederlands Fotomuseum) was established to extend and enhance Daguerreobase. The complex process of applying to the European Commission for support was successfully completed late last year.

Work has been underway since then on developing a vastly superior database. From the total of a few hundred entries last year the current total is more than two thousand three hundred and the aim is to dramatically expand it to include a minimum of twenty five thousand daguerreotypes from European collections. Not only this, but selected equipment and many thousands of sheets of daguerreotype-related literature and ephemera will be added.

The project managing this vast expansion is scheduled to run until April 2015 with a new membership organisation, The European Daguerreotype Association, dedicated to daguerreotypes, taking the work forward thereafter.

Alongside the work on the database will be a regular publication and, around April 2015, an online exhibition. Both of these should be well worth looking at as we have been finding some spectacular plates.

The transformed Daguerreobase website will be multi-lingual and have improved functionality. The end result will be an incomparable resource for research into European daguerreotypes, daguerreotypists and our early photographic heritage. Through its size Daguerreobase will provide an invaluable tool for cataloguing, dating and ascribing daguerreotypes to particular photographers and localities. It will digitally reunite the scattered work of individual photographers. Via integration with Europeana, the European Union's internet portal to cultural resources, Daguerreobase will reach a spectacularly wider audience than at present. The first transfer of data to Europeana is scheduled to be available early in the New Year.



A daguerreotype of the Daguerreobase team taken at the kick-off meeting in Antwerp

One (possibly unique) feature of Daguerreobase, other than its size, is that it was originally set up to share the detailed information gathered during active conservation work. Often these details reside in conservation reports without receiving wider distribution. When gathered together, these additional observations become far more important.

The recording of daguerreotypes will respect the original work: it is not a licence to remove old seals so as to gain access to plate marks and other hidden details. Only if a plate is already detached or if this information is already known would it be added to the database.

The partner representing the UK is Museum Conservation Services Ltd, based just outside Cambridge. If you are UK based and would like to include your collection of plates please contact Nicholas Burnett mcs@paperconservation.co.uk. Alternatively, the new version of Daguerreobase should be available by the time you read this so you are free to input your own daguerreotypes

independently. For institutions and collectors this provides a fantastic opportunity to make your collections more widely known.

This project is partially funded under the ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) as part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme by the European Community.

Nicholas Burnett ACR

Lucia Scalisi, Conservator of Paintings, ACR, argues for Icon to better represent trained conservators and consider moves towards the Conservation of Fine & Decorative Arts becoming a formally recognised profession for the good of the objects in our care



The author working in Beirut on the Khalil Saleeby bequest to the American University of Beirut

This is an edited version of an open letter to Icon regarding dissatisfaction in the lack of clarity, direction and support to members.

Being an accredited member of Icon is a costly exercise, as a long-term practising Conservator I see diminishing returns for my support.

I am aware that Icon actively supports training, pursuing lottery funding for placements because that kind of market funding is currently available, however Icon does little to support conservators after training.

By this I mean that I can see no difference in Icon's support for people who have invested in formal training; Icon supports equally those members with no formal training.

How can clients be expected to differentiate a conservation practice that has undergone the rigours of formal training and actively keeps up to date with CPD to that of a studio where no one has formal training qualifications and employs students because they are cheap?

There is no difference in the accreditation system for people who have trained and those who have trained themselves. How are clients to know?

I feel Icon does not truly support training courses because it is not moving towards conservation becoming a formally realised profession. We are still at the 'barber-surgeon' stage

of development. Is this to remain the case? Are we deluding ourselves with talk of being a profession?

On another front Icon presents itself at formal heritage events. Does art and culture lie solely within the framework of heritage institutions?

There are huge events taking place all over the country from BADA Fairs to Frieze, from local town hall antique and collectors fairs to country house fairs and events. Where is Icon? You will not find Icon promoting any outreach there and to this end I think Icon is missing a major market, where many 'restorers' ply their trade whilst potential clients remain in the shadows of ignorance as to what is good practice.

Icon could and should have a presence for auction houses too, at least making an approach to discuss conservation, making presentations to auctioneers and dealers with the case for good practice.

I was hardly surprised when in October Icon's office sent out the flyer from a television production company seeking 'restorers' to bring forth their goods and contacts for a potential television programme.

Did anyone in the Icon read the flyer? Did Icon not think to make a professional approach to the company or provide advice to 'restorers'?

Is Icon afraid? Unsure? Or just can't be bothered about the potential in these developments, seeing it as beyond the Icon remit?

When I see the term 'restorer' bandied about like some Holy Grail occupation my heart sinks. A supposed up and coming professional body – Icon – lets an opportunity to raise the bar pass by, not a thought given to consequence or potential.

Further, if I ask about decentralising the London office do the hearts of individuals sink? Is it something that Icon should be giving thought to as it considers its decision to close the Chantry Library for example?

In summary my arguments are: -

- Icon to make greater representation for formally trained and qualified conservators.
- Icon to actively speak out about the benefits of formal training qualifications and the training Institutions.
- Icon to develop outreach to client bases on a series of levels.
- Icon to make moves towards a legitimate profession.
- Icon office to consider decentralising – to support organisations like the Chantry Library.

Appointments



Vicky Garlick has recently been appointed as the Assistant Teaching Fellow and Archaeological Conservator in the Department of Archaeology at Durham University. Vicky is a relatively recent graduate of the Durham course and has experience at the National Museum of Wales and the Royal Armouries.

She will be teaching practical skills to the students on the Master's course in Conservation of Archaeological and Museum Objects and acting as the conservator for Durham Archaeological Services; providing commercial conservation services to archaeological units, museums and other heritage organisations and individuals in the North East of England and beyond.



Caroline Peach left the British Library, where she was Head of the Preservation Advisory Centre, in July to set up her own consultancy business, Preservation Matters Ltd. In this new role she is involved in a wide range of activities including working as the part-time administrator to the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF), www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk.

NHSF (of which Icon is a founding member) has recently been granted charitable status and Caroline's work focuses on supporting the Trustees to deliver the National Heritage Science Strategy goals of building partnership in the heritage science community and promoting the public benefit of heritage science.

Alongside this she is a member of the newly established Archive Service Accreditation Committee, a member of the Scottish Council on Archives working group on preservation and conservation, and has recently been elected a Trustee of Icon.

Awards



Our own **Ian Clark** ACR EngTech FIMechE MRINA can now add a few more letters after his name. During a special ceremony at the recent Museums Association Conference in Liverpool Ian was awarded fellowship of The Museums Association. This is not an honorary position; it has been earned through years of hard work. The award is designed to encourage and recognize an advanced level of professional development in any area of museum work and is focused on excellence and awarded to people going above and beyond their current role.

Ian is a very active supporter of Icon and is a member of The Institution of Mechanical Engineers Heritage Committee. He is a strong believer in joining up his many areas of interest and crossing the boundaries that so often hinder us from achieving more. Ian is also a great advocate for conservation wherever he is. You will remember that he was the one who encouraged Sir Paul McCartney to support The Conservation Awards. Among Ian's many projects that are currently underway is the internal conservation of HMS Alliance, a World War II submarine on display at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Gosport, Hampshire.

www.ianclarkrestoration.com



Leanne Tonkin has left the People's History Museum in Manchester after four years to take up an Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Textile Conservation at Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio in America.

Leanne thanks all those at PHM whose support has really helped her develop as a conservator and looks forward to continued learning with the Mellon Fellowship. Her time in Cleveland at a large national museum will be spent with a varied and challenging textile collection covering many cultures and periods and offering plenty of opportunities for interdisciplinary working.

Leanne intends to remain as proactive as ever with Icon's Textile Group ('Out of sight but certainly not out of mind!', she says) and passes on her contact email: leanne.tonkin100@gmail.com

Research Fellowship

A grant of up to £80,000 is available to a UK public institution to enable a senior conservator (employed by that institution) to pursue a research project sabbatical for two years.

During the sabbatical the post will be covered by an externally recruited junior conservator.

The grant will meet the salary and on-costs of the junior conservator and the project costs of the work undertaken by the senior conservator.

Closing date: Monday 3rd March 2014

Full details and application form:
foundation.clothworkers.co.uk/fellowship

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Out Patience

Claude Grewal-Sultze of Preservations Solutions describes the experience of working in public for the National Trust at a property in Cambridgeshire

SETTING THE SCENE

In 2011 The National Trust set out a raft of conservation principles in the *Journal of The Institute of Conservation* (article by Katy Lithgow, vol. 34, no.1, p.128) to guide their heritage and natural conservation practice in the future. A key feature of these principles was to formulate conservation projects within National Trust properties so as to benefit visitors' experiences.

This central focus upon the 'public benefit' of visitor engagement has previously led the National Trust, like many other institutions, to offer pre-booked tours of conservation studios and formal or informal talks describing the work done by conservators. These programmes of engagement aim to develop the visitor's understanding of the significance of the National Trust's collections, wherein conservation is used as a means of building greater connection with the objects displayed in their properties.

As part of this process, five paper conservators are spending two years working at the National Trust's Wimpole Estate, in full view of the public for the entirety of this project.

A MULTI-FACETED ROLE

As members of this team we are endeavouring to stabilise and preserve a selection of two hundred and fifty nine books which were stained and damaged by an ingress of water in 2010. Our studio has been set up within the 'Red Room', one of the historic and ornate public spaces in Wimpole Hall.

The presentation of our task has been used as a means to

Team member Nicola Kiddle demonstrates our techniques to the public



respond positively to an unfortunate event, and provides an extension to what the Trust sometime term their 'offer' for National Trust Members and day visitors. As such, the public presentation of our task is also an illustration of the manner in which an incident, in this case a leak, has been reappraised as an opportunity to highlight a particular part of the National Trust's collection. The leak and our project have generally encouraged a greater focus on the 10,000 books held at Wimpole Hall.

The public nature of our working environment has added weight to the presentational aspect of our job. This emphasis allows us to draw focus to our profession, and we are able to present our work as something separate from restoration. People tend to be interested in us personally too and we are peppered with questions as we work:

- 'Why did you become a conservator?'
- 'Isn't it tedious?' Or:
- 'Is it fascinating / painstaking / requiring the patience of Saints?'

As a conservator working within a public space, exposed to the curious gaze of hundreds of people during a busy working day, we act as conservators, interactive exhibits and tour guides all in one.

The Red Room is on the circuit visitors use when exploring the house; as it is adjacent to the Library and Book Rooms where the leak occurred, we are the final stage in the visitor's journey from disaster to recovery. Consequently, they are lead from the Book Room and Library where the books got wet, stained and damaged, to our studio where the books are wetted again, this time to remove the staining. Our studio has become part of the display of the house, and we are folded into a space ripe with history. The Red Room was previously used to hide away the private papers of Rudyard Kipling by his last surviving daughter, and former owner of Wimpole Hall, Elsie Bambridge. We are now offering a new and very particular point of link to the literary holdings and heritage of the house.

'A LAUNDRY FOR BOOKS'

To outline the project for visitors and to save us from overly repeating ourselves, the Wimpole House Team have produced an explanatory display setting out the circumstances of the leak and our process of blotter washing.

Whether through preconceptions, or the language of the display, the public tend to expect us to use special chemicals rather than plain water. The Trust have outlined our process of treatment as 'A Laundry for Books'. To complement the display we show how the treatment uses water to re-dissolve dirt and wash out the stain. People commonly react with genuine surprise that the cause of damage can also be its



Team member Eugenie Karen in the Library at Wimpole Hall

from many related yet deeply separate industries. We have met scientists, publishers, builders, musical instrument conservators and a host of other workers who have provided additional insight into our project and our workplace.

Some things we have heard have made an indelible mark on our outlook; since meeting the former printer from Burnley who told us that purified mutton fat was commonly used as a binder for printing ink, I can barely open a book without getting an imagined whiff of Sunday dinners.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

This project is an interesting test of the extent to which a specific treatment process can be used to represent a profession. It succeeds because it is sufficiently complex to interest the public, but simple enough to be undertaken whilst interacting with them. Most conservation procedures are too time consuming and complex to be given daily public exposure; so the privacy of listening to Radio 4 in a back room studio is assured for the moment. But increasingly we might all have to get used to answering the same question twice.

With thanks to my colleagues, Graeme Gardiner, Sarah Lennox-Cooke, Nicola Kiddle and Eugenie Karen for their contribution to this

solution.

Our conversations with the public often require us to elaborate on the purpose of our treatments. We are keen to explain that stabilising the paper is as important as removing the stain, and this often leads us to explain how acidity catalyses the degradation of paper. People have a common conception that 'acid free' is a positive quality in paper, but rarely know why. Similarly, the historic use of rags to produce paper is only occasionally known of, and we have observed that it is a short leap from washing mucky shirts to washing paper sheets in the public mind. In this, the laundering allusion offers a useful entryway to a brief history of paper making.

A TWO-WAY PROCESS

Visitors regularly joke about us helping them with their own books. They also want to take everything they learn from us and apply it at home, so we are often at pains to explain that however simple a process may seem it is fraught with potential dangers, and that not all paper is the same. There is a fine balance between making what we do accessible and making our work look straightforward. We have often heard people recounting what they have been told moments before to their fellows in garbled and altered ways, making our exchanges sometimes seem like an elaborate game of Chinese Whispers. It is a concern that we are offering just enough of an insight into conservation to ruin a mass of family heirlooms.

Equally, our conversations with the public have offered opportunities to meet and professionally engage with people

The author at work in Wimpole hall



Paisley's Grand Fountain

Dismantling the central core: Episode 3 of Jim Mitchell's project

THE CENTRAL STRUCTURE COMES DOWN

Taking down the main structure of the fountain proved to be a challenging exercise. While many of the wrought iron fastenings had failed, others had virtually amalgamated with the cast iron. It was soon found that copious amounts of red lead putty had been used in the assembly; both sealing the joints and voids – and giving bedding for assembling differently shaped parts. This necessitates extra protection for the technicians and controlled disposal of the waste material.

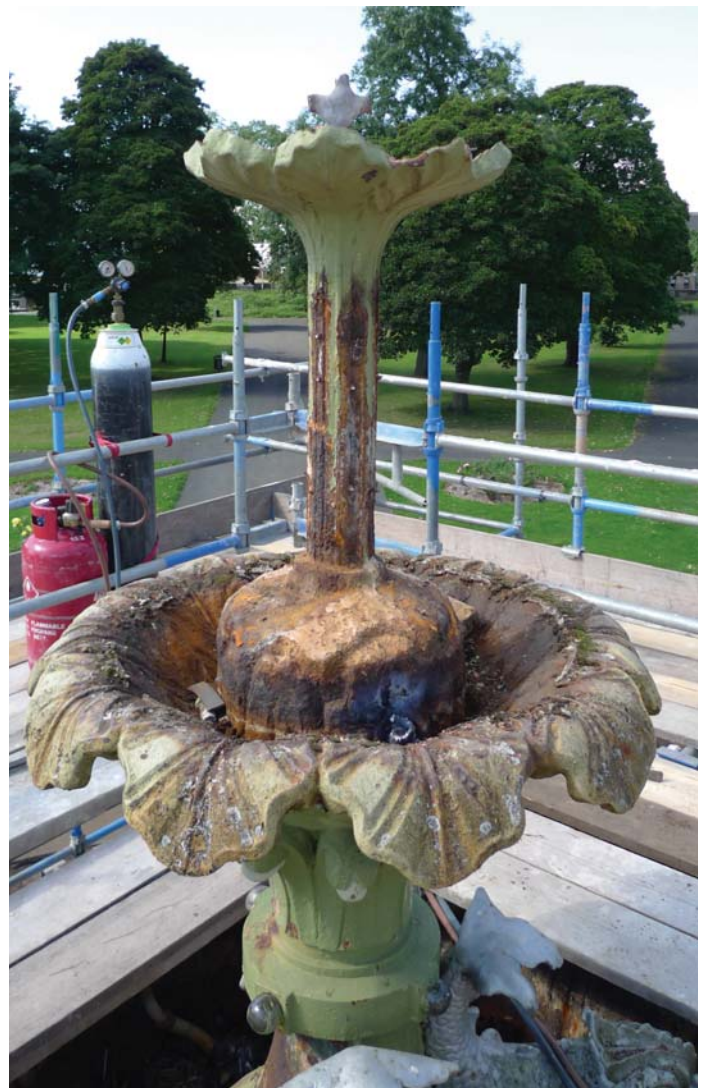
Most of the decorative elements were screwed to the larger parts, allowing a more three dimensional appearance than is possible with a single casting. These fastenings were drilled, cut or flame-washed out, so the dismantling took

considerable time. Dismantling each component from the other is vital; both to examine the condition of the interface and to remove the risk of fracture by corrosion expanded fastenings.

The core assembly is basically a stack of components, either flanged or spigoted one to the other and the actual method used to separate them can only be ascertained as each level is removed. There are, of course no drawings or plans to work from!

The close up image of a frost heave fracture shows where pieces – the missing sections either side of the sunburst – have been forced off by frost action. Old images have verified that the sunbursts themselves once contained hemispherical glass orbs.

Hérons and fronds removed: a week's work





Two tonnes of bowl lifted clear. This is the fourth and final bowl in the cascade, mounted on the buttressed core



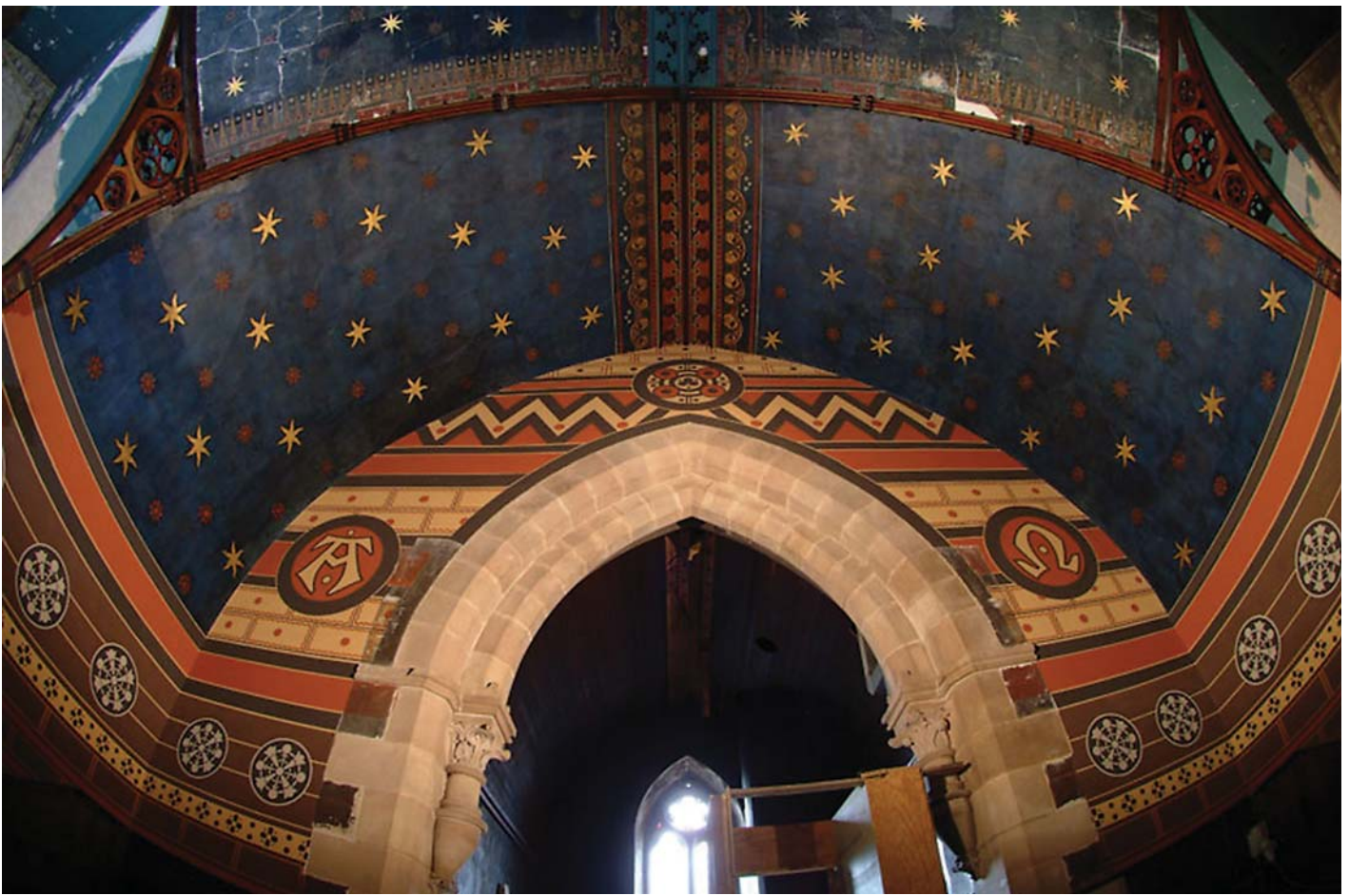
Frost heave fracture

The image shows where the crumbling lead putty has held enough water to fracture the casting when it froze. The blue-black fracture edge has stabilised but this characteristic tells us it has itself absorbed moisture into the micro-structure of the iron.

Lifting the bowl clear was the most delicate of the many lifts. It was decided to keep the quatrefoil bowl in one piece rather than to separate it on the fountain, thereby risking imbalance and stress to the structure. Soft stops were used to protect the ironwork.

Past glories: the fountain was once a colourful structure





Dowanhill Church, 1866. The fountain was completed a year later in 1867

THE PAINT SCHEME

The close-up detail of the central core of the fountain gives a tantalising glimpse of the beautiful colours that once adorned it. It is a condition of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland funding that the original scheme is reinstated as far as possible.

The scheme was the work of Daniel Cottier, (1837–1891) an artist and designer born in Glasgow. Cottier is best known for his fine stained and painted glass work, as well as interior decoration.

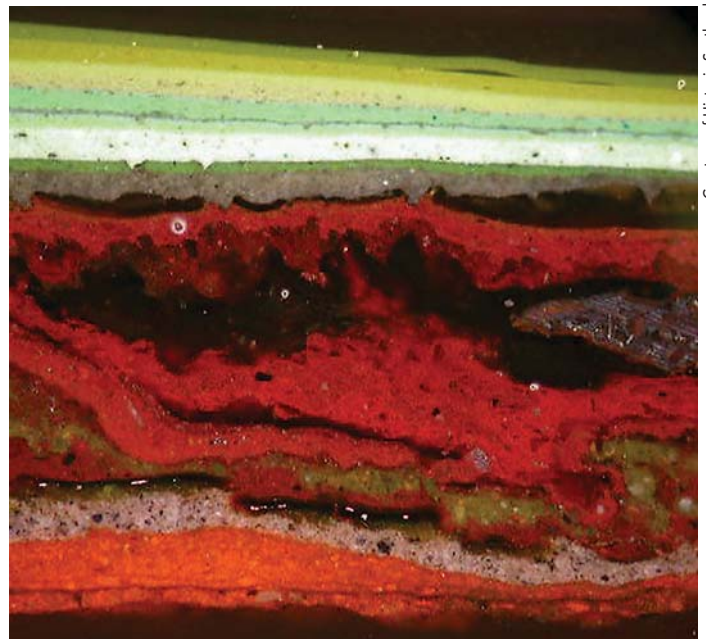
His work was said to be influenced by the writing of John Ruskin, the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the work of William Morris. He painted allegorical figures in the Pre-Raphaelite style of Rossetti and Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Cottier's glass work was considered to be an important influence on Louis Comfort Tiffany and also is credited with introducing the Aesthetic Movement to America and Australia.

The Cottier Theatre (once Dowanhill Church) in Glasgow's West End has been undergoing conservation for many years and the picture (above) gives some idea of the boldness of his style. He worked with architects such as 'Greek' Thomson and William Leiper, who in turn often commissioned work from the top ornamental iron-founders of the day: George Smith (Sun Foundry) and Walter MacFarlane's Saracen Foundry.

Cottier's gold, bronze and tinted glazes are known to have been used on the fountain from contemporary descriptions. The use of metallic particulate suspended in varnished glazes must have been striking; albeit short lived, due to the decay of organic varnishes exposed to direct sunlight. The structure

had been repainted many times with the original finish being refreshed only once. Most of the lower level finishes were destroyed or damaged but there is enough evidence for us to get close to Cottier's concept. The image below shows the disruption of early coats by blowtorch.

Detailed paint sampling will continue to define the scheme as far as possible. The problems encountered with water penetration into the iron and paint sampling will be discussed next time.



around and about

Rescuing Belmont

Belmont is a fine 18th-century maritime villa in Lyme Regis, Grade II* listed, and badly in need of funds to prevent its slide into dereliction. There are many stories like that around the country, you might think, but Belmont has a particular interest, especially for conservators who specialise in stone and related materials, because it was the home of a remarkable woman, Mrs Eleanor Coade (1733–1821), manufacturer of the artificial stone that bears her name.

In fact, Coade stone is not stone at all but a fired clay product, which survives the ravages of weather rather well. The artefacts modelled from it were wide-ranging, from sculptures, statues, tombs and garden ornaments to architectural ornamentation such as keystones, capitals, coats of arms and chimney pieces. They were extensively used by all the notable Georgian architects – Robert Adam, John Nash and Sir John Soane amongst them – and examples can be found the length and breadth of the British Isles, in country churches, city streets and grand palaces.

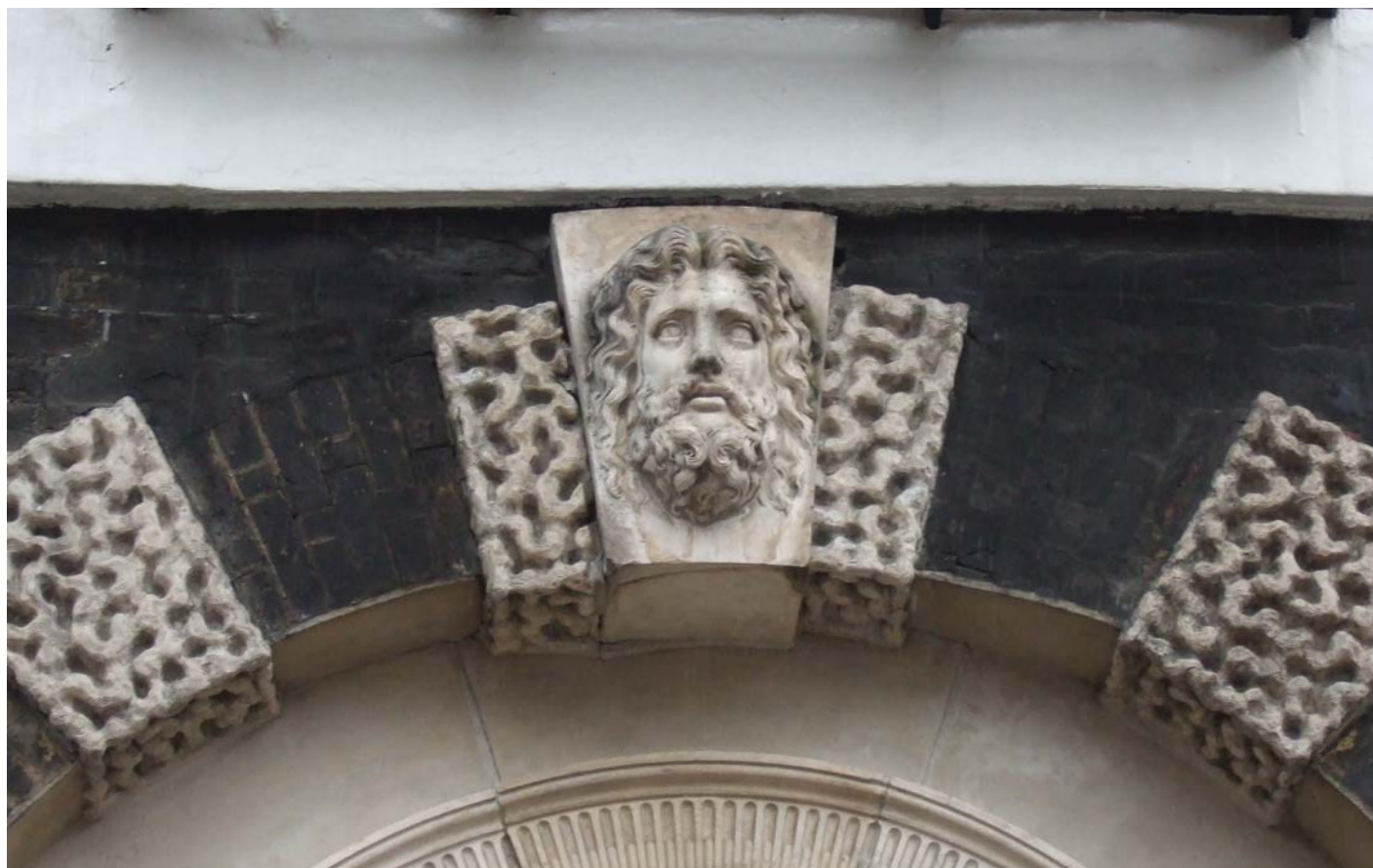
Belmont was built by Samuel Coade, who transferred the house to his niece Eleanor in 1784. It is the only surviving personal monument to Eleanor Coade but in more recent

times it was also home for forty years to John Fowles, author of *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Towards the end of his life he approached The Landmark Trust, the charity which rescues historic buildings at risk, about taking it on to save it from insensitive development. As it was once Mrs Coade's holiday villa, so it will be used for holidays again, with its original features sensitively repaired and reinstated.



Belmont house in October 2013. Coade stone features liberally embellish its facade

A Coade stone keystone and other decorative elements above the door of a house in a London square, c.1775



CONFERENCES

14TH CARRIAGE RESTORERS' CONVENTION

National Railway Museum
York 9–10 November 2013

This year the National Railway Museum (NRM) hosted the 14th Carriage Restorers' Convention, an annual event where carriage restorers – individuals or from railway societies across the UK – come together to share skills and ideas. The two day event took place in the museum's conservation area better known at the 'Paintshop'. This behind the scenes approach created a relaxed, friendly hands-on environment where delegates could network and exchange news.

Large structural science and industry objects demand a practical approach when it comes to conservation and the UK's heritage railways have played a crucial role in the preservation of many internationally significant engines and rolling stock. Heritage lines are often registered museums, although mainly run by volunteers and enthusiasts who tend to be custodians or owners of the engines and carriages. Therefore the emphasis can be on the restoration and engineering work necessary for maintaining running vehicles. Increasingly however, many have curatorial and conservation advisors from museums such as the National Railway Museum and some are loaned museum engines or carriages in return for maintenance or repair. Unique or sole surviving vehicles are overseen by Trusts and many have benefited from Heritage Lottery Funding or similar.

The diverse nature of the field was reflected in the presentations, case studies, restoration updates and high quality technical demonstrations given by craftsmen, representatives of heritage railways and a variety of museum and rail professionals. Some of the topics covered were: decorative arts conservation and restoration; livery paint and transfer application; Railway Heritage Registers and UK wide surveys of existing railway stock and infrastructure; museum carriage illumination; structural engineering repair and modification; safety and performance testing of vintage carriages run on the mainline for the 150th anniversary of the London Underground.

There was discussion on best practice, material analysis for restoration and on original carriage work manufacturing techniques. Advice was given on sourcing funding opportunities and there was an exchange of material and supplier information.

Each day concluded with a chance to climb on board selected railway carriages to admire their historical interiors, as well as a final chance to see the 'Great Gathering' of



Charlie Bird explains the NRM Carriages Illumination Project

all six of the surviving A4 locomotives in their last weekend at the NRM in York.

The conservation department proved an excellent venue for this inspiring, informative and fun weekend reflecting the colourful world of railway preservation in 2013.

Further details and videos from the event can be found under '2013 Carriage Restorers' Convention' in the NRM conservation blog: nationalrailwaymuseum.wordpress.com and on YouTube.

Stathis Tsolis Conservation Manager
National Railway Museum

Sophie Adamson Conservator/Carriage Restorer
Stately Trains & Keighley & Worth Valley Railway

TEXTILE SYMPOSIUM 2013

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam 7–8 October 2013

After a ten year renovation project the Rijksmuseum reopened in April. This two day international symposium on textiles was organised, in collaboration with ICOM, as part of their celebrations. It gave a wonderful insight into the textiles on display, why those items have been chosen and the conservation treatments carried out. Curators explained about the selection and historical background of a range of textiles whilst conservators from the Rijksmuseum Textile Conservation Studio and private conservators presented talks on the conservation, research, treatments and preparations required for display in the museum.

After a welcome from **Taco Dibbits**, Director

Mullins Studio demonstrating graining techniques





A knitted whaler's hat

of Collections, **Tim Zeedijk**, Head of Exhibitions, explained that the collection is now exhibited in chronological order from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. Textiles are seen alongside paintings, furniture, silver and porcelain objects as well as other items.

Two tapestry presentations followed. **Elsje Janssen**, Curator of Textiles, spoke about the collection of one hundred and sixty tapestries. Unfortunately, only ten of them are on display, although it is intended that the collection be rotated biannually and there are exciting plans to organise a tapestry exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in the future. **Suzan Meijer**, Head of the Textile Conservation Studio at the Rijksmuseum, presented the challenges in conserving the tapestries. A seventeenth century Gobelins tapestry had faded re woven areas. After testing, to establish that the paint did not penetrate into the warp and would not run, Lascaux acrylic paint was used to retouch the areas, applied by dotting the paint on with a brush.

The collections comprise of about 10,000 costumes and accessories. **Bianca du Mortier**, Keeper of Costume, presented a fascinating insight into the development of its display since the 1920s. Currently a costume case houses small thematic displays. These are changed every six months. This short turnaround of displays brings conservation challenges, so costume in good condition has to be selected. But there are always exceptions, such as a lace dress dating from 1850 which underwent conservation treatment for display. **Mieke Albers**, Textile Conservator, described the treatment.

In 2009, the Rijksmuseum received a gift of one hundred and sixty early 20th century Japanese kimonos. **Menno Fitski**, Curator of East Asian Art, gave an enthusiastic overview of the kimonos, their history, design and techniques used. Then followed the endearing story of 17th century Dutch whalers hats, with two presentations. The first was from **Jan de Hond**, Curator from the Department of History, followed by **Carola Holz**, Textile Conservator. After archaeological excavations at Dutch whaling



A funereal heraldic tunic, 1647

settlements at Spitsbergen between 1979 and 1981, textiles were found preserved, including thirty seven woollen hats. They are all knitted and unique. Their conservation involved creating ethafoam supports to minimize handling for display and storage.

The next two presentations of the day, by **Eveline Sint Nicolaas**, Curator of History and **Mieke Albers**, discussed the clothes worn by Ernst Casimir, from the House of Orange, when he was killed in 1632. The cloak is displayed as it would originally have been worn. Using an authentic pattern, a doublet and breeches have been made from synthetic felt, recreating its correct shape.

Gijs van der Ham, Curator of History, spoke about a heraldic tunic used at the funeral in 1647 of Prince Frederick Henry of Orange-Nassau. **Art Néss Proaño Gaibor**, Material Technological Analyst at the Conservation Science Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE) discussed his involvement with the tunic, which included carrying out dye analysis testing.

The second day began with a welcome from the Head of the Department of Fine and Decorative Arts, Prof. Dr. **Gregor Weber**. Dr **Reinier Baarsen**, Senior Curator of Furniture, discussed the display of an original historic interior of 1794, where virtually all the textiles have survived. **Paul van Duin**, Head of Furniture Conservation, gave a detailed account of the dismantling and reinstating of the room into the museum. Research into the original paint colours was presented by **Ruth Jongsma**, from the Bureau voor Kleuronderzoek and Restauratie, and **Susan Meijer** discussed the reinstallation of the textile elements.

The 20th century galleries are a new development for the Rijksmuseum. **Ludo van Halem**, Curator of 20th century Art, and **Anna Laganá**, Independent Conservator, presented *Wombtomb*, a textile sculpture made in 1968 by Ferdi Jansen. Made from faux fur, it had been shaped with foam padding, most of which had deteriorated, sagged and collapsed. It was discovered that two types of foam had been used. The ether foam was in good condition whereas the ester foam had degraded. New ether foam

was bought but on testing it was found to have ester within it. Anna stressed the importance of not relying on supplier's knowledge, highlighting the need for independent testing. The foam will be allowed to off gas before being used.

The Stedelijk Museum, (Amsterdam's Museum of Modern Art) was represented by two talks on textiles within the design galleries. **Victoria Anastasyadis**, freelance Design Historian, discussed the collection and **Netta Krumperman**, Conservator, highlighted the issues of textiles' sensitivity to lamps and display lighting. Dr. **Elsje Janssen**, Curator of Textiles, highlighted ongoing projects; the digital photography of damasks and lace, the technical analysis of oriental carpets and a book of the textile collection. **Bianca du Mortier**, discussed 'ModeMuze, a digital platform for costume to which seven major costume collections in the Netherlands contribute.

The Textile Conservation Studio works closely with the University of Amsterdam. Dr. **D.O.R. Lugtigheid**, Lecturer in Textile Conservation, talked about the conservation course, with the practical sessions taking place at the Rijksmuseum Studio. The last presentations were given by two students about their final practical projects. **Joni Steinmann** presented her conservation treatment on an 18th century silk fan and **Marjolein Homan Free** described her treatment on a nineteenth century silk dress.

The symposium provided a wonderful opportunity to learn about the textile collections and the choices and challenges faced, against the backdrop of the impressive, newly renovated building. Hearing presentations from different professionals within and outside the Rijksmuseum emphasized the collaborative ways in which decisions are made. The welcome statement announced that 'the museum ... has to take proper care of the objects, and provide conservation to the highest possible standards' This Symposium illustrated that the Rijksmuseum are fulfilling this.

Jane Smith, Textile Conservator
National Trust Textile Conservation Studio.



North West Wallhanging, Queen's Ante Room, after conservation

COURSES

WALL HANGINGS AT HAM HOUSE: the extraordinary in situ survival of the late 17th century Queen's Ante-chamber Wall Hangings

Icon Textile and Historic Interiors Groups
Richmond, Surrey September 2013

This excellent study day was held in situ at Ham House in Richmond-upon-Thames on a sunny day in late September. The focus of the day was the recent research and conservation of rare embroidered wall hangings composed of damask centres surrounded by velvet borders, thought to be the original 'blew Damusk in pain'd and bordered wth. blew velvet embroidered wth. Gould and fringed' mentioned in the c.1679 Ham House inventory. These hangings were installed in a room that became known as the Queen's Ante-chamber following a visit of Queen Catherine of Braganza in 1673.

The day started with a tour of the house during which we had the opportunity to see the conserved hangings in situ. Then we moved behind the scenes to a seminar room for an introduction to the project from National Trust Conservator **Vicki Marsland** followed by an in-depth presentation from **May Berkouwer**, whose company 'May Berkouwer Textile Conservation' carried out the work on the hangings. After an excellent lunch there was an opportunity to discuss the treatment and look at samples and documentation in front of the hangings with May and her assistant **Gerda Koppatz**.

The hangings had undergone many previous conservation campaigns by the time May started work on them in 2009, including at least two treatments (adhesive and stitched) when Ham House was under the care of the V&A, and it is fair to say that they were in fragile condition and a challenging project! Things were to prove even more interesting once May started work as she discovered that the damask parts of the hangings were not the original blue that had faded to the yellow/peach colour we see today but were

in fact 19th century replacements, which, more logically for what remains, were coloured in a two-tone pink and drab.

Furthermore, dye analysis revealed that the pink was dyed with early synthetic dyes that date it to post 1850. Fortunately there were fragments of the original blue damask preserved below the new and by examining these pieces and embroidered parts of the original that had been cut out of the damask and appliquéd onto the new silk, May and Gerda were able to establish the original design pattern of the blue damask. It turned out that the 19th century pattern was copied from the 17th century damask.

Following all these discoveries the original conservation brief set by the National Trust was reviewed and it was decided that the 19th century replacement damask would be kept but the panels could now be taken apart to fully support the silk primarily with a stitched treatment; I made a note that this involved three kilometres of laid couching! The details of the treatment were just as fascinating as the research and involved some novel use of materials and equipment to remove adhesive stains from the silk.

I highly recommend learning more about this fascinating project by coming to the Textile Group Forum in Spring 2014 where May will be one of the speakers.

Elizabeth-Anne Haldane, Senior Textile Conservator
Victoria and Albert Museum

INNOVATIONS IN CONSERVATION MOUNTING OF WORKS ON PAPER

Icon Book and Paper Group Co-operative
Training Register
National Maritime Museum
21–23 October 2013

This course took place in the conservation studios at the Maritime Museum, Greenwich. A group of twenty people sat enthralled for three days listening to **Hugh Phibbs** decant decades of experience during lively discussions on hinging, mounting and

materials. On loan to us from the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, USA, Hugh Phibbs set our brains on fire with his ideas. Prior to attending, I had wondered how many innovative hinge permutations there could be. I was astounded at the energy, information and sheer enthusiasm that Hugh engendered and not just about hinges!

We discussed new materials, from D-lite™, an aluminium corrugated material, to Tclad® as well as the relative uses of Prolite®, the egg crate-looking foam, versus Plastazote® to absorb shocks to artworks of small dimensions – Hugh made so much sense with applied science: the more rigid Plastazote® is better suited to heavier items.

Continuing with our materials, we discussed anodised aluminium, which is of archival quality since it is oxidised already, powdered aluminium finishes, the uses of Marvelseal® 1311, Corroplast®, Coroplast® made of polypropylene; materials we are often not sure about using and simply do not have time or resources to explore. Hugh didn't just tell us about them and their qualities and possibilities, he told us where to use them and how they could be changed and adapted, put together and re-invented.

Hugh's experience and knowledge were distilled into the course and rolled into a bullet point parade...some things we had learnt in college but, in practice, have moved away from for reasons of speed and ease, such as the idea of filling Western paper losses with Japanese tissue repairs. We were urged to review our past, while also embracing present and future materials.

As a teaser, here are a few bullet points that came out loud and clear:

- Minimise temperature to avoid chemical reactions – above 10 degrees Celsius, all reactions double in speed
- The harmful effects of an acidic environment are not always a certainty: some objects are happy in their acidic environment
- Don't sweat the acids as much as the peroxides
- Sulphur is bad, but not silicates
- Wash and dry treated glazing materials such as Perspex, Optium and acrylics. They have trace plasticisers and cause surface streaking on the glaze until removed.

Hugh asked us to consider the damage we do to objects without our gloves, forcibly making his point by demonstrating the effects of a fingerprint on Sellotape. As a lesson, it is powerful and works to make you consider how many times that fingerprint is being deposited onto an object, just through the handling the object receives from the conservation process alone. While one can ponder the use of gloves in conservation handling, it is certainly worthwhile to consider how much one



At Hugh Phibbs' workshop on conservation mounting

should be washing one's hands. For mounting, should one prefer the soft handle of cotton, Hugh advocates two pairs of gloves: one a pair of nitrile gloves, then the cotton pair, as cotton gloves wick whatever is coming from our fingers into the cotton fibre, so they are not ideal.

We made models of amazing folded hinge supports to control objects without ever introducing moisture or adhesive to the object; these supports are often used on photographs. We explored many hinge variations, among which was the unusual double-layer Y-hinge, bonded with a layer of polythene. We discussed methods of applying minimal amounts of adhesive to stick the hinges onto the object and used Hugh's adhesive of choice: an even mix of starch and methylcellulose, which possesses the best qualities of each adhesive.

There simply is not enough room here to describe how much information Hugh gave out during those three days. He also made us reflect on the interaction of materials and review our practice through the innovative materials and methods we had discussed. One thing that should not be overlooked is the breadth of discussions that also took place among peers from other institutions and professions. It was such a refreshing opportunity to have a forum where conservators were able to compare and exchange ideas and discuss how we all address individual problems.

There are many ways around problems. Hugh Phibbs's inspiration and most important message was to look into the past. Our ancestors were not stupid and often faced the same problems we have today; many of them were solved admirably. I was very impressed with Hugh's generosity in sharing so much of his knowledge, adding asides, tips and discoveries and inspiring us all. Watch out for this course and, if it returns, do not miss it!

Thanks to the to the Clare Hampson Scholarship Trust for sponsoring this workshop and to the B&PG CTR for organising it.

Isabelle Egan

VISIT

ORIGINS OF THE AFRO COMB

Icon Ethnography Group
Cambridge 21 September 2013

Under a fresh autumnal breeze, a group of conservators gathered together to visit the *Origins of the Afro-Comb* exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

The exhibition explored the history of the combs, spanning over 6,000 years as well as their multiplicity of cultural, geographical and socio-political contexts. It began with the symbolic parallel between an Egyptian bone comb from c.3,500 BCE and a plastic comb decorated with the representation of a clenched fist, iconic of the Black Power and Civil Rights movements among Afro-Americans, and representing the impetus of the project.

The exhibition also included artefacts of the material culture around combing, such as barber shop signs, wigs and masks, as well

as styling apparatus which provides the viewer with a greater overview of the cultural, social and political senses of the act of grooming. The exhibition, it seemed to us, not only achieved a rather unusual reunion of African comb collections within the Fitzwilliam Museum, as well as from other museums in the UK, but also successfully displayed a compelling cross-section of the cultural practices which surround them.

Pia Edqvist, a conservator currently on placement with the Fitzwilliam's Department of Antiquities and carrying out conservation for the exhibition, led the gallery talk which focused on the conservation aspects of the exhibits. In her talk Pia offered some fascinating conservation insights into the exhibition. The diversity of ethnographic deposits one would potentially find between the teeth or within woven, carved, or beaded spines was particularly striking: from human hair to grooming products such as oils and waxes of various sorts, the material analysis of which is being conducted. The project also provided her with the opportunity to review the technology of comb making, such as weaving, as well as looking into the complexity of the often composite nature of the group, which poses particular challenges to their conservation treatment. Her work and research for this project will also constitute her Master's dissertation in Conservation Science at the University of Oslo, Norway.

The Group's AGM was held after the gallery talks over lunch, and was followed by what turned out to be an informal yet informative forum for the participants. We were very fortunate to have a good mix of emerging conservators with more experienced colleagues, from those working in the field of professional practice as well as a more

The Ethnography Group visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge



academic context. The exchange of ideas, giving respective updates on our projects, with everyone chipping in and putting our heads together over the practical problems our colleagues are facing, reminded us all of the joy of talking conservation over a cuppa on a Saturday afternoon.

The exhibition closed at the beginning of November at the Fitzwilliam Museum but to find out more about the project, visit www.originsoftheafrocomb.co.uk/.

Misa Tamura, Ethnographic Group Committee

TALKS

INNOVATIONS IN CONSERVATION MOUNTING

Icon Book and Paper Group Co-operative Training Register

King's College, London 22 October 2013

.....
This evening lecture complemented the workshop on the same subject reviewed by Isabelle Egan above.

Hugh Phibbs started his talk by explaining that without the ability to preserve objects either by natural means or artificially, all knowledge of the past will be lost for future generations - the preservation of objects keeps our culture alive! After this, we were treated to a whistle stop commentary on the various ways in which things have been preserved, from animal fossils preserved naturally in limestone to the Mary Rose warship preserved in mud at the bottom of the ocean. These 'natural' events were compared to techniques such as Egyptian mummification and the survival of the Dead Sea Scrolls, when knowledge of 'how to' preserve objects marked a turning point in the desire to preserve our past and our present in order to enable future generations to benefit from an understanding of our history. The importance of various agents of change such as oxygen and salt, either added or taken away, were seen as crucial in bringing about this stabilization.

Phibbs then described the many ways to prevent or delay potential damage by the agents of change: light, humidity, pollution, radiation. When works of art on paper are mounted or framed, adding moisture to the object by way of paste on hinges should be introduced with the greatest of care due to water being a very polar solvent. Modern glazing methods create a barrier between the object and these potential environmental hazards.

Phibbs described a few methods of framing works of art, and provided a list of materials which he found useful in framing and providing a stable non-fluctuating micro-environment for an object. This is usually in the form of packaging material to create a sealed package consisting of the glazing materials (usually glass or acrylic), the object hinged to a mount, and the backboard.

Heat-sealing composite foils are critical to the creation of these packages. These foils, used in combination with laminated glass, which itself makes a functional vapour barrier, can form a package that will exclude extremes of relative humidity indefinitely. Acrylic sheets can be used for shorter term protection. Such foils can also be used in exhibition crates to isolate wooden elements. Also the inclusion of silica gel impregnated paper, and papers loaded with activated carbon, calcium carbonate and/or zeolites, will help in maintaining a stable condition inside the package.

He also briefly described some case examples of anoxic framing, as well as basic containers such as the Solander Box that help to maintain a stable environment.

The lecture and the question and answer session afterwards were audio-recorded and will be available in the Book & Paper Group site 'The Gathering'.

Many thanks to Hugh Phibbs for taking time out of his hectic schedule to speak to us and to Amelia Rampton and the CTR Group for organising this event. Thanks are also due to the Clare Hampson Scholarship Trust for their financial support and to Conservation by Design that sponsored the drinks reception that followed.

David Giles British Museum Mounting Studio

THE CONSERVATOR AS EDUCATED CONSUMER: A 'how to' for commissioning technical imaging and analysis

Icon Paintings Group

Freemason's Hall, London 30 September 2013

.....
Dr **Jilleen Nadolny** described to an attentive audience the array of tools used at Art Access & Research Ltd. in London, a company where technical analysis and imaging can be commissioned, to collectively amass a large amount of information about a painting from, at maximum, minute samples.

I was hooked by the title of this lecture. Conservation spans so many disciplines, each project provoking the conservator to consider a new approach. Clearly there should be more primers and refresher lectures out there to make sure that conservators are educated consumers. Many of us who commission specialist investigations have carefully considered the questions we want answered, but we may not know if we are getting the right experts for the precise questions and if they have access to the best techniques to effectively answer them. Dr Nadolny emphasised that it matters who does the work, as different skill sets will yield different results. She described case studies where insufficient sampling, the wrong specialist and the use of the wrong techniques failed to properly dispute inauthentic attributions.

Dr Nadolny is an art technology scientist. Whereas conservation science focuses on the way materials deteriorate and the impact of treatments, art technology science combines

technical art history – understanding materials (including the development, use and trade of specific materials) and works by an artist and others of the period – with technical examination. Technical examination involves setting a well-defined and reproducible protocol, sampling, scientific analysis and interpretation of the results.

Dr Nadolny also relies on imaging techniques to highlight the condition, structure and technique of the painting such as brush work and pentimenti. She often uses a camera and tripod, but at Art Access & Research Ltd. they also have a true-scale image scanner that captures high resolution multispectral and X-ray images which are precisely mapped. The images can be superimposed to compare, for example, features in the underdrawing that appear in Infrared versus those which appear under X-rays.

She showed the audience some images of pin-head sized samples for cross-sections, scrapings of each colour of the paint palette for scanning electron microscopy-energy dispersive X-ray spectrometry (SEM-EDS) and non-invasive surface scanning with a handheld X-ray fluorescence spectrometer (XRF). The type of sample is dependent on the analytical method.

She compared analytical techniques:

- Elemental analysis, such as XRF and EDS, examines elements for inorganic pigment characterisation, though connecting spectrum to pigment is difficult.
- Morphology analysis, such as polarised light microscopy and SEM, examines the shape, colour, particle variations produced by manufacturing, mixtures and trace components, and is used to identify naturally and synthetically derived pigments.
- Spectroscopy, such as Fourier transform infrared spectrometry (FTIR) and Raman spectroscopy, examines molecular bonding to identify and differentiate compounds.
- Separation techniques, such as gas chromatograph mass spectrometry (GCMS) and liquid chromatograph mass spectrometry (LCMS), identify binding media and organic dyes.

All these analytical techniques need expertise to interpret the results and a substantial library of reference materials. Art Access & Research Ltd. has access to almost 3,000 pigment reference samples because of the Pigmentum Project, a project affiliated with the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at the University of Oxford.

At the end of her lecture, I was aware of a wide range of techniques that would address each of my specific painting technology questions. It is reassuring to know where these techniques are available.

Sarah Pinchin

INSITU Conservation Services

SCHOOLS FOR THOUGHT

Oxford Conservators' Group 3rd Annual Conservation Forum Oxford 15 November 2013

Members of the Oxford Conservators' Group (OCG) and our colleagues in the Merton History of the Book Group gathered in the impressive TS Eliot lecture theatre at Merton College to enjoy a showcase of recent conservation projects and research in Oxford institutional collections. This year's Forum contained an impressive range of papers relating to the subject areas covered by the very broad church of conservation, which is represented to great effect in the membership of OCG. As a showcase for the provenance and conservation of objects and collections, the Forum ably demonstrated the wide range of expertise, knowledge and current schools of thought which characterise our work here in Oxford.

'No sooner got but lost?'

The first presentation, *Outrageous Fortune*, detailed the conservation work undertaken by the Bodleian Libraries book conservation team on the library's First Folio of Shakespeare, prior to its recent digitisation. Two members of the team, **Nicole Gilroy** and **Julie Sommerfeldt**, narrated the incredible history of this object and highlighted aspects of the conservation work undertaken, following some high profile fundraising.

The story of the First Folio is labyrinthine: superseded by the Third Folio in 1664, it is likely that the First Folio was sold around 1665 in a mixed collection of books for £24. For 250 years it was lost, before re-emerging in the late 1800s, its Oxford heritage betrayed by the characteristic hatching on the edges of the board. There followed two public fundraising campaigns, the first involving a bidding war with Folger in 1906 to secure the book's return to the Bodleian and a second campaign, mirroring the original 1906 campaign of individual pledges of support, in 2012 to secure its longevity through conservation and digitization. In stark contrast to the book's 1665 worth, the conservation and digitisation alone for the project required £20,000 to be raised.

Following the principles of extreme minimal intervention, practical treatment was restricted to making the volume stable for digitisation. The project, and the intervention of some of its famous sponsors, was highlighted in the project blog, a promotional tool that would have undoubtedly been embraced by their 1906 counterparts had it been available

Greatest strength, elasticity and freedom

Our second speaker, **Andrew Honey**, also a member of the Bodleian book conservation team, presented a paper entitled *The Vellum Trade: the binding of Jane Austen's fiction manuscripts*. This was an investigation of the techniques used to bind blank notebooks in the late eighteenth century and described



The Book Conservation Team at the Bodleian Libraries with the First Folio

how the study of these techniques could be used to differentiate between these otherwise plain bindings. Initially a project in 2006 to conserve Jane Austen's first manuscript volume of juvenilia which is held by the Bodleian, it grew to encompass research into the structures of all her surviving manuscripts which are now held by five libraries.

The blank books used by Austen, which were ready made and sold over the counter, were made to standard formats, sizes and patterns. The techniques used to bind them differed from those used at the time for printed books, such as the method of folding quires and the choice of parchment sewing supports promoted by the stationery binders for their 'greatest possible strength, elasticity, and freedom'. By recognising and studying these techniques Andrew was able to virtually reconstruct an Austen manuscript which had been disbound in the late nineteenth century.

A catalogue of curiosities

We moved away from the familiar environs of Oxford and out into the wider world for our third speaker, **Jeremy Uden**, Deputy-Head of Conservation at the Pitt Rivers Museum. Jeremy's presentation, *Conserving Curiosities*, detailed the two year project, funded by The Clothworkers' Foundation, to conserve and investigate approximately two hundred and twenty objects in the Pitt Rivers collection from Cook's First and Second Voyages of Discovery. These collections are particularly significant as they are the best documented Cook voyage and pre-contact collections in the world.

In his presentation Jeremy highlighted the treatment of one object in particular, a Tahitian mourner's costume, which required stabilization for display. In common with all our speakers, the treatment process revealed some fascinating and previously hidden information regarding the structure, composition and subsequent contaminants affecting the objects. This work included extensive analysis for materials identification in order to establish the nature of the plant fibres used, a useful tool for ascertaining the provenance and for verifying secondary sources of information.

In true OCG spirit, the project took a multi-disciplinary and collaborative approach with extensive consultation involving professionals working outside the field of ethnographic

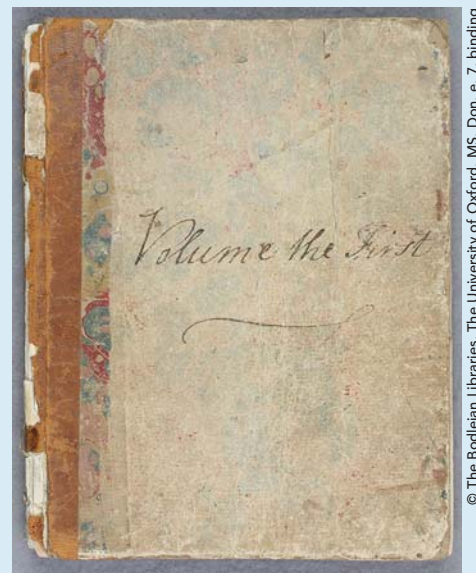
conservation. As a result, several other research projects contributed to the information the museum now has on these objects, and in return gained valuable research data for their own work. By drawing on the skills of many, much more can be learned and achieved.

Humble treasures of the Bronze Age

Staying on distant shores, we were fortunate to have both curatorial and conservation input as we moved to the Near East for our fourth paper. Dr **Paul Collins** and conservator **Nicky Lobaton** from the Ashmolean Museum discussed the history, care and treatment of a collection of combs made from olive wood and bitumen from the West Bank, the oldest continually settled area of the world. Dating from 1650–1500 BCE, these now extremely fragile and delicate objects were excavated from Jericho by Dame Kathleen Kenyon between 1952 and 1958.

They date from a time when Jericho was a flourishing city, and form part of the burial goods of family shaft tombs located outside the famous walls. The careful recording and site cross referencing undertaken by Dame Kathleen provided extensive contextual evidence for this important collection of objects, and proved to be helpful during

Jane Austen's Volume the First, left board before conservation





Jeremy Uden and colleague with the Tahitian mourner's costume

reconstruction and conservation.

The conservation itself took place in two stages. In 2008, the combs were rehoused to halt the storage damage that had occurred and the collection was researched. In 2013 the decision was made to conserve the combs to slow their structural decay and permanently rehouse the collection for long term safe storage. Some initial on-site conservation had been undertaken in the 1950s and although it did not use a treatment method we would recognise now, this action had preserved the combs to good effect.

The 2013 treatment programme focused on the stabilization of the combs using a combination of consolidation and adhesion, a painstaking process completed almost entirely using microscopy. During this treatment previously undiscovered decoration was revealed and documented. The nine complete combs and the nine boxes of fragments were then permanently rehoused in perspex boxes so that they could be viewed without the need to handle the objects directly.

Unique handling qualities

We returned home to Oxford for our final speaker, **Andrew Lamb**, who is the Museum Manager of the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments at the University of Oxford. His

A fragmented wooden comb from Jericho, 1650–1550 BC



Playing the plastic serpent

presentation focused on the ethical dilemmas and justifications surrounding the continued playing of historical musical instruments such as those held in the Bate Collection. As with many conservation disciplines, Andrew showed that the risk posed through the use of an historic musical instrument is on a sliding scale when weighed against certain factors, including rarity and its state of preservation or condition. He was able to give some excellent examples of such risk assessments to illustrate his argument.

It must be a rare presentation where the risks associated with the continued use of a harpsichord attributed to having been played by Handel are contrasted with those associated with playing a plastic serpent, a modern woodwind instrument based on shaped plastic tubing. Through these examples he showed that although each has a different cultural value, their ability to be played is the same, an argument that may be able to be applied to other areas of conservation.

Andrew's spirited delivery and lively presentation completed an evening which allowed the audience to access an immensely diverse range of objects, each with fascinating stories to tell. I would like to thank the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Julia Walworth, Librarian of Merton College and the Merton History of the Book Group for allowing OCG to use the TS Eliot lecture theatre. I would also like to thank all the speakers for generously volunteering to present their papers and to the OCG members themselves for their ongoing support in making the Forum an annual institution in the Oxford conservation calendar.

Victoria Stevens ACR

THE 16TH ANNUAL PLENDERLEITH LECTURE

Icon Scotland Group
28 November 2013 Dundee



Delivering the Plenderleith Lecture

This year the 16th Annual Dr Harold Plenderleith Memorial Lecture was held in Dundee, Dr Plenderleith's boyhood home, where he was brought up and educated. The event was well attended by Icon members, guests and students. In line with recently established practice, the Annual General Meeting of Icon's Scotland Group preceded the lecture.

Philip Long, the Director of the forthcoming V&A at Dundee, gave this year's talk to discuss the vision for this project and its challenges. Mr. Long's lecture addressed issues such as the goals of the museum as well as environmental conditions, technical aspects of the building and matters of interest to conservators.

Drawing on the past successes and rich history of Scottish design, the V&A hopes to fit in with their mission to help people to understand the universal relevance of design by demonstrating how design has improved human lives and continues to do so. This will be a purpose built museum but without its own collection within the building. Instead the venue will host collections from the V&A London and other lenders. The museum aspires to help to inspire Scottish businesses to become more creative and innovative in tackling their issues and professional strategies, and to interact with Scottish communities to nurture design talents and promote design.

The lecture was engaging and inspiring and ended with a hopeful message to conservators for practical work opportunities and the chance to be involved in the museum.

Maria Grabowska, Icon Scotland Group.

XRAYING A CONGOLESE NKISI FIGURE

Alexandra Cantrill, Conservator at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, puts a new piece of equipment through its paces

Background

In 2013 the Conservation Department at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery acquired a new tool. With help and great thanks to the Edward Cadbury Trust and the Birmingham Development Trust we were able to buy a brand new GE Digital x-ray unit.

The unit was primarily purchased for use with the Staffordshire Hoard project, however it has been a great asset to the museum's conservation department as a whole.

Over the past few months we've been working with our curators to find objects of interest to x-ray. When our Curator of World Cultures Adam Jaffer brought a composite Congolese Nkisi figure down to the Conservation Department displaying what can only be described as rather 'soapy' green active corrosion products, we saw what could be a great opportunity to show him what we could do.

About Nkisi figures

The Nkisi figure had been donated to the Museum in 1935. Often human or animal in form, these figures were used by people such as the Songye of south-eastern Congo to protect villages, families or individuals from illness and witchcraft and to resolve disputes. Each figure acted as a vessel for ancestral

All the copper nails in the figure had a fairly even coating of copper soaps.



The wooden figure has numerous copper alloy nails, a snakeskin necklace, fur belt and hide head adornment



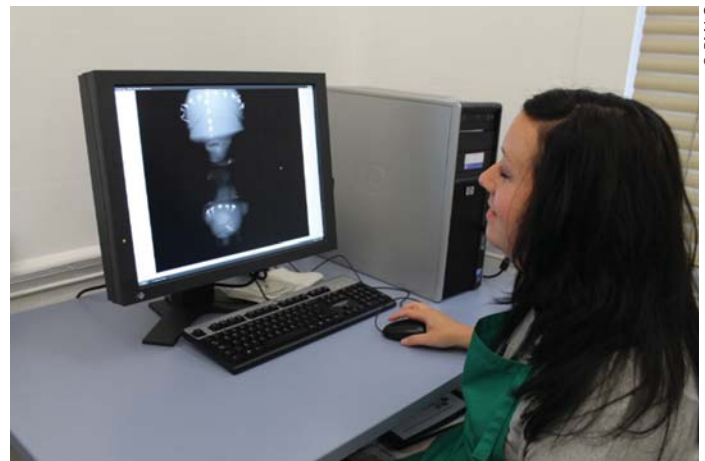


Placing the nkisi figure in the x-ray unit

or natural spiritual forces and their use was closely associated with the belief that the dead could influence the fortunes of the living.

Magical substances called 'medicines' were stored in compartments within the figures. These included clay, charcoal, seeds, animal matter, human hair and nails. Figures could also be adorned with beads, feathers, animal skins or

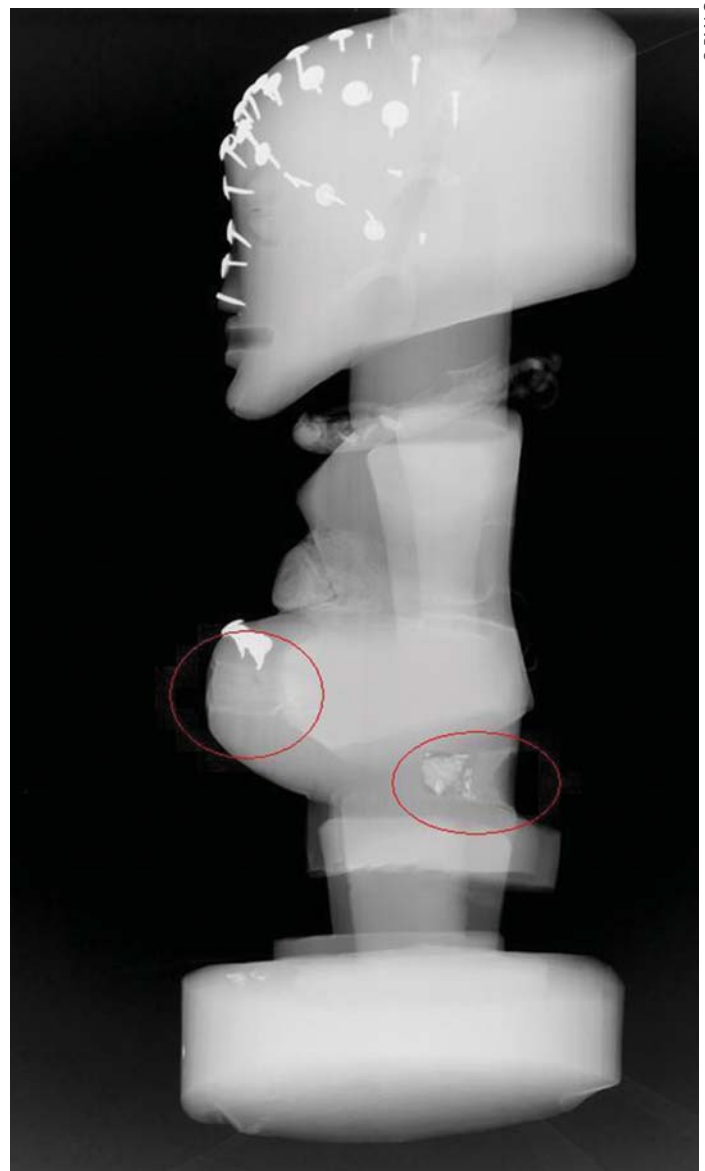
The Xray unit and scanner



Examining the x-ray image

metal nails which further enhanced their powers. The use of nails, often of European manufacture, has been linked to Christian concepts of sacrifice and martyrdom introduced by Portuguese missionaries who arrived in central Africa from the late fifteenth century onwards. Adam had long suspected that this figure had a cavity in its abdomen.

The x-ray images show not one but two internal cavities within the figure.



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X-ray is a really great non invasive way to take a look at what's going on inside an object. It helps us better understand an object's construction and put together better informed treatment proposals. It was a perfect tool for investigating the insides of this object!

What we found

Interestingly, the x-ray of the Nkisi figure clearly showed that not only was there definitely a main stomach cavity within the figure but there was also a clearly visible second cavity (highlighted in the x-ray [left]) in the lower abdomen. Both cavities contain bundles of loose organic material. Further analysis is necessary to determine exactly what this material might be, but importantly for our curator the x-ray confirmed that the figure was produced for ritual use rather than for sale /export – as became the case with many Nkisi figures produced in the 20th century.

For conservation treatment purposes, the x-ray showed that the corrosion of the copper alloy nails was occurring just on the exposed surfaces; the density of the internal pins indicated that they were stable and showed no signs of corrosion products. This allowed me to consider that the corrosion was either occurring as a reaction to an unknown coating on the surface of the figure or in reaction to a pollutant in its display case. The figure is displayed alongside other composite ethnographic materials within a display case with a closely monitored environment.

Further findings and treatment

Further investigation into Nkisi figures found that it would not be unusual for the figure to have been daubed with animal fat or blood depending on the ritual it had been made for,

however, on this object no obvious signs of this were visible. I therefore felt very aware that any cleaning I did to the object could result in the loss of such material and so I wanted to make sure this was a key factor in my decision making.

Under microscope examination I found that the wooden body of the figure and the copper pins were entirely coated in a waxy substance of unknown date. Despite this being quite tacky to the touch and potentially the cause of the corrosion issue I decided that where possible this waxy coating should be left undisturbed on the wooden body. I did however make the ethical judgment to carefully remove the active corrosion product from the copper alloy nail heads and where possible underneath the heads even though it may remove original surface materials.

The long-term stability of the object was the most important aspect here, the continued corrosion and potential loss of pins could change the understanding of the figure, especially as they make up one of the main spiritual elements of the piece.

The corrosion removal was done mechanically with thorns held in a pin vice under a microscope followed by a solvent clean with small acetone swabs. Once clean each nail was given a coating of microcrystalline wax which was very carefully applied with a tiny paintbrush.

The figure as it looks after treatment can be seen on the cover of this issue of Icon News.

This small project has been the first of many we now hope to take on with our curators at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Not only has it been a reminder of what a useful tool x-ray is for the conservator but it also proves how valuable it can be in aiding curatorial research.

THE INSTALLATION OF GEORGE II'S TRAVELLING BED AT HAMPTON COURT PALACE

Charlotte Gamper, describes some lessons learned on a twelve month textile conservation Internship at Historic Royal Palaces

Introduction

Historic Royal Palaces' (HRP) textile conservation studio, now part of Conservation and Collection Care joined with preventive conservation and conservation science, emerged at Hampton Court Palace (HCP) in 1912 with the establishment of a tapestry restoration studio, overseen by the polymath William Morris. Much of the textile collection is integral to the story of HCP and consequently most of the tapestries and textile furnishings are on permanent display. Costume and general textiles tend to be rotated for display in temporary exhibitions and are usually exhibited at Kensington Palace rather than HCP, or on loan.

Last February I worked alongside a team of conservators to assist with the installation of different beds for the recent *Secrets of the Royal Bedchamber* exhibition at HCP. This project enabled me to become better acquainted with the intricacies of conservation at HRP. I have chosen below to share what I learnt from my experience of installing George II's travelling bed.

The project

King George's bed was made in the 18th century and is approximately 8'8" tall. It was designed with easy disassembly in mind for travel with the court around the country – a useful feature for us conservators today! It is a rare example of a



Royal Collection Trust/ © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2013

George II's Travelling Bed, after installation for the *Secrets of the Royal Bedchamber* exhibition

travelling bed in which most of the original textile hangings survive. The textiles are, further, a rare example of silk damask with a large-scale repeating foliate design.

The aim was to de-install the bed in the Cumberland Suite at HCP where it had been displayed since June 1995 and then transport it to a temporary exhibition space for reassembly. My role was to help with this process. The beds at HCP are moved infrequently and so I was lucky to gain such experience.

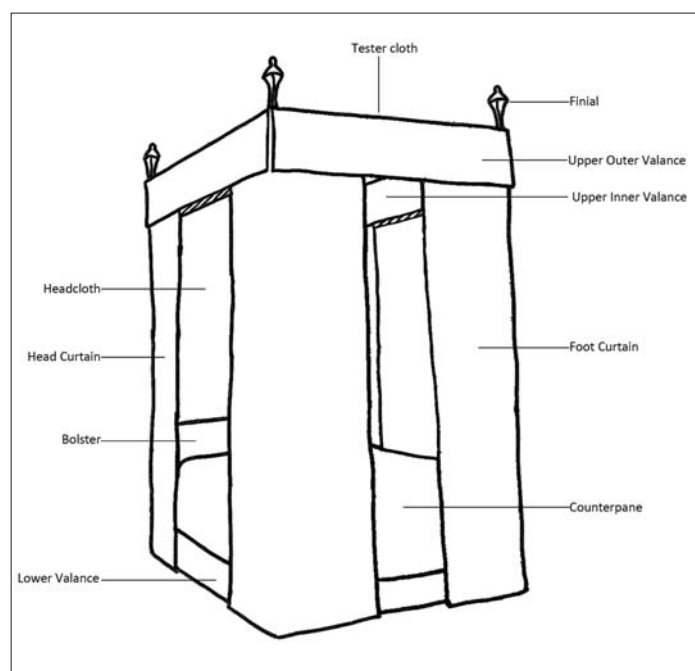
A great deal of textile

Prior to this I had no understanding of the anatomy of a state bed, nor of the quantity of individual textile elements present and their nomenclature. The furnishings of George II's bed comprise twenty seven textile parts: a tester cloth, four finials, four curtains, three upper outer valances, four upper inner valances, three base valances, a head-cloth, two fabric-covered bedposts, a counterpane (bed cover), three mattresses and a bolster (cylindrical pillow).

Of these textiles, all are original except two valances and the counterpane which, due to their fragile state, were put into storage, either pending possible future conservation work or because their state is such that conservation is no longer possible. These three textiles were substituted with replica fabric for the exhibition to give a good representation of the bed's original appearance. The replicas were constructed as new and are therefore distinguishable from the originals.

Wherever possible at HRP the original textiles are on display and consequently some textile treatments are ambitious in

George II's Travelling Bed, showing textile nomenclature





George II's Travelling Bed bedstock, showing Velcro® strips on curtain rail for attaching curtains

scale and scope, something which may not be an option for studios with fewer conservators. This has led to the development of expertise in the delivery of certain treatments at HRP, such as the reversal of an adhesive treatment on the fragmentary curtains of George II's bed. It has been interesting for me to explore both the opportunity that HRP has for more intensive treatments on its key objects, alongside the challenges it faces in having these objects on permanent display.

Working on high

Much of HRP's collection is large in scale and so installations involve working at height. Prior to this project, I had not installed any large three-dimensional objects and this experience therefore exposed me to the procedures

Showing mattress transportation method on mattresses from William III's Bed, Hampton Court



Carrying out surface cleaning on the Travelling Bed during installation

necessary when moving such objects. Before we started the work, careful planning was required to ensure that all equipment necessary – including things like ladders, tissue paper, transport boxes and an emergency repair kit – were transferred to the de-installation site. As we were working at height, at least six conservators needed to be present to avoid any precarious negotiating of ladders whilst carrying fragile objects. A risk assessment was produced and distributed to all project staff so that everyone was aware of potential hazards. During de-installation it was vital to maintain communication with all team members, to ensure that everyone knew what was occurring when, to avert any potential harm to persons or objects and to ensure time efficiency.

The de-installation

Originally, the headcloth, tester cloth and valances would have been hung from the bedstock using nails. Today, soft Velcro® has been stitched to the conservation linings of the textiles and hard Velcro® attached to the corresponding position on the bedstock for hanging. Velcro® enables even weight distribution, hanging without nailing into the fabric and also easy removal and replacement – reducing handling and enabling quick salvage in case of emergency.

The textile elements were removed in a logical order so that there was no unnecessary handling or manipulation of fragile textiles. Removal of the higher textile components on George's bed was done by two people from ladders placed on either side of the bed. They were then carefully lowered to

conservators at floor level, who temporarily laid them on protective cotton sheets. Once removed, the larger textiles were rolled onto padded tubes for transport to the bed's new location and smaller textiles placed into custom-shaped boxes.

An ingenious method for transporting the large, fragile and heavy mattresses has been devised at HRP. A thick custom-made calico cover encases each mattress. These covers have a dual purpose of shielding the mattresses whilst they are on display or in storage, to protect their delicate outer fabric and impede pest infestations, and they also facilitate their safe transportation. Along the two longer edges of the covers is sewn a channel, which can each accommodate a metal pole, inserted when moving the mattresses. The poles extend beyond the edges of the case cover so that they can be used by conservators to lift and move the mattresses, one at each corner, without direct handling of the objects.

After all the textile elements were removed, the wooden bedstock was dismantled and reinstalled by a specialist furniture conservator.

Once packed for transport, the textiles were taken through the Palace to the exhibition venue, with extra conservators clearing the route as and when necessary. The opportunity was then taken to conduct a thorough surface clean of all the textiles and simultaneously check for pest infestations – luckily with nothing untoward found – before reassembly ready for exhibition.

Lessons

My participation in the installation of George II's travelling bed was a fantastic and insightful experience. I now have first-hand knowledge of the anatomy of state beds. I learned more about both past and more recent conservation treatments undertaken at HRP, such as the reasoning behind using replicas on the bed, which broadened my understanding of conservation methodologies in an historic house setting.

My exposure to some of the clever ways that conservators at HRP have dealt with conservation challenges, such as the case covers for the fragile mattresses, was inspiring. Such additional insight gained on this project was something which I had not anticipated. The large team of conservators at HRP greatly assisted my exploration of these topics, as I was able to draw on their individual experiences and learn from their different perspectives. This is something which I found particularly true throughout my internship.

George II's bed delivered on both these points and it is an apt reflection of the types of opportunities that my internship supervisors Miriam Langford and Gabriella Barbieri and the conservation department at HRP have made available to me. I would like to thank the Clothworkers' Foundation who funded my internship, enabling me to gain these experiences which will now be invaluable in my future career.

Charlotte is now working on contract at HRP

WATCH OUT FOR THAT LEARNING CURVE!

Tales of a Conservation Student Abroad

My name is Aimee Sims and I am in my final year of the Master of Art Conservation program at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. This past summer I was fortunate enough to work as a conservation intern at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG). This opportunity provided me with invaluable practical experience in both interventive and preventive conservation and allowed me to work on a wide range of materials.

Working alongside Alex Cantrill, I successfully assisted in the conservation of a unique but incomplete suit of samurai armour as well as the conservation for redisplay of a selection of Greek pottery vessels. I conducted an environmental study under the guidance of Deborah Cane and I also had the chance to work on a few of the Staffordshire Hoard objects under the guidance of the hoard conservation team. These projects allowed me to expand my base knowledge, gain confidence as an emerging conservator and develop strong professional habits. The following is an account of two of these projects.

Treating the samurai armour

The samurai armour entered the conservation lab in

The author unpacking the samurai armour





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Before and after the insertion of patches into the area of loss

preparation for display. It had been a part of the collection since 1885 and stored most recently at the Museum Collections Centre. What interested me the most was the combination of different media used to create the intricately designed pieces. These particular pieces of armour combined papier mâché, textiles and metalwork.

Over time many of these materials had started to degrade. The two main areas that required treatment were the dô (cuirass), which showed a lot of flaking surface material and the sleeves (kote), which had many tears and losses in the fabric. As I had recently completed my textile conservation module on my course, it was the sleeves that I chose to focus on.

The tears in the fabric were able to be sewn together using Gütermann® 100% polyester thread in colours matching the fabric. The losses required me to source material of a similar colour and insert patches into the areas of loss, evenly anchoring them to places where the original fabric was still physically stable. The fabric used was a plain weave cotton, dyed a similar tone of brown as the original fabric. For the areas of smaller loss, a 100% nylon 20 denier monofilament netting was used as an overlay to secure the degraded and loose threads. This technique was chosen as it would prevent the loss of the original fabric and would allow the viewer's eye to easily pass over the small imperfections.

The environmental study

This study evolved from a pewter tea set with enamel inlays, which had been on display until it was noticed that the enamels seemed to be corroding. White crystalline material had begun to appear around the edges of the enamel inlays,

and in some places the enamel was removed completely, leaving only an extremely tarnished base complete with white corrosion. The fear was that with no intervention the corrosion would continue and the enamel would eventually be lost altogether.

The set was immediately removed from display and brought down to conservation for investigation. None of other pieces in the display case showed signs of corrosion, therefore my task was to investigate the phenomenon that it was undergoing. Data loggers placed inside the case were first analyzed to check temperature and RH, which were both stable and of acceptable levels (Temp. 21°Celsius, RH 30–40%).

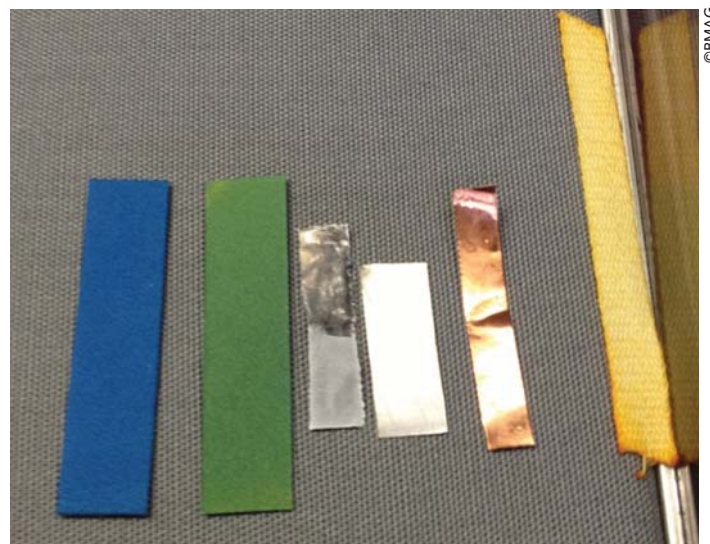
Next, X-ray fluorescence (XRF) of the tea set was carried out which revealed that the white powdery corrosion contained a high percentage of zinc. Research and consultation with BMAG team as well as conservation professionals brought about the hypothesis that the corrosion was likely due to a polluted environment. This was investigated by placing silver, copper and lead tokens inside the showcase and monitoring them over a period of eight weeks. This time frame was chosen as it fit within the period of my internship and left me with enough time to analyse the results and conduct follow up tests. These results confirmed an unstable environment as the copper and silver tokens showed almost no change during this time; however the lead tokens showed deterioration after only two weeks.

AD strips before (blue) and after (green) colour change; lead, silver, copper and cresol strips (l to r) inside the display case

Milk jug showing a loss of enamel and white crystalline material



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Silver display case showing the area where the tea set was removed

To determine the type of pollutant inside the case, A-D Strips®, which change colour in the presence of acidic vapour, were placed inside all the showcases in the metals gallery. The results revealed that the only two cases suffering from an acidic pollutant were the case that held the tea set and the case adjacent to it that shared a backboard. This revelation made it possible to assume that the pollutant was likely acetic acid from unsealed MDF or fibreboard.

I was then able to recommend the following:-

- first, that the tea set be cleaned of the corrosion, placed in a stable environment and monitored for future deterioration.
- secondly, that all objects be removed from the two polluted display cases.
- finally, that the display cases be redesigned so that the base and backboards be changed to ones that have been sealed with a conservation grade product that does not off-gas volatile organic compounds.

These projects, although completely different, challenged me to expand my knowledge and think critically. I believe they were a great example of the problems conservators face, be it physically stabilizing an object for public display or investigating sources of pollution within the museum environment itself. I feel lucky to have had such a fantastic learning experience and am excited to continue forward on my journey to becoming a conservator.

My eternal thanks to all the staff at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery who shared their knowledge and encouraged me throughout my internship.

From beetles to The Beatles



Entomology Products (Pages 71-75)



Phonograph Record Storage Sleeves (Page 27)

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