

## Colour choice provokes great debate

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### Also in this issue

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Staffordshire Hoard discoveries

Designing the PF13 conference logo



Icon PF13  
Positive Futures  
in an Uncertain  
World 2013



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THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

## JANUARY 2013

Issue 44



### From the Editor

Happy New Year to you all and thank you for all your news and contributions over the course of 2012. Do keep them flowing in 2013!

This issue sees some further changes to layout as *Graduate Voice* is renamed *In Training* and placed with the *In Practice* section to set side by side the insights and techniques of the senior practitioner and those of the emerging conservator. The title *Graduate Voice* has for some time now seemed rather off-putting and excluding for those whose entry into a particular conservation discipline has no graduate route. *News from the Groups* also moves to be closer to the other professional news items. I hope, too, that you will enjoy the return of the *Intervention* column. If there is a topic of burning interest which you would like to hold forth about to your colleagues, then this is your opportunity: let me know!

From Christmas pudding to gravestones there is no saying what conservators will do next, to say nothing of murder in the museum. To find out more, read on.....

### Lynette Gill



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#### Cover photo:

A paint cross-section from the Great Hall at Kelmarsh Hall. A debate about which of many possible decorative schemes to use in the Hall is recounted on page 27ff. Photo: © Helen Hughes

#### Disclaimer:

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# from the chief executive

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ICON'S CEO

Alison Richmond writes:



Photo: Matt Wreford

I am often asked about my job and what it is that I actually do and, more importantly, what am I trying to do for Icon. In this job, I have met quite a few Chief Executives and the common denominator for all of us is that we each approach the role differently. In my brief experience, it is a role that is moulded both by the individual and by the Chair of the Board, who has a vision of what kind of CEO they want for Icon.

I thought I would take this opportunity to explain my own approach to the job and how the Chair has influenced the development of my role. In conclusion, I would like to touch on what I would like to achieve in my time at Icon.

*at my age I can admit when I don't know something!*

### Creating Icon's team

For much of the time over the last two years, I have been involved in changing the shape of Icon's staff team. Why does this take such a long time? I would say that it takes at least a year to understand an organisation and how it works and another year to implement what you have decided to change.

Yes, I was a Trustee on the Board of Icon for five years before becoming CEO, but the view from the Board is very different. It could be described as the proverbial swan gliding on the water. Trustees are not necessarily aware of the legs frantically scrambling beneath the surface.

Changing the staff structure of Icon was a difficult and painful process for all concerned. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with such experienced professionals. The big difference now is we have a great team of people working together and this is already making a real difference to Icon members and to how we are perceived by the world outside.

My philosophy throughout my career can be summed up in one word: teamwork. For this reason, I dedicate some of my time every week to catching up with staff and making connections between us and the work we do.

Apart from the staff team, there are smaller teams that form either permanently or temporarily around the work that needs

to be done. Trustees and members are actively involved in committees and projects, and work closely with staff. It is great to have so many people with different skills and interests to call on. Sometimes, there is so much energy generated by enthusiastic Trustees and members that it is hard for a CEO to keep up.

*proud to be the first conservator CEO*

### My support network

One of the wonderful things about having reached a certain age, and having never done this job or anything like it before, is that I can admit it when I don't know something. This is incredibly important because there are still so many aspects to the role that I need to build up competence in very quickly and the only way to do it is by learning from others who have more experience.

I am deeply grateful to my mentor who has always been willing to meet to talk over a sticky problem. I have also created a small network of fellow CEOs in cultural heritage organisations and I meet with them fairly regularly to share information.

Staff and Trustees have all been incredibly generous with their time, willing to share their expertise and to support my development. It has been a fantastic experience and one that I would never have had if the Trustees had not had faith in me from the outset.

People often talk about being a learning organisation. For me this means that we - staff, Trustees and volunteers - learn from each other, contribute our perspectives to the debates and thereby compound our potential to build Icon into a stronger, more effective organisation.

### Having a conservation background

I am very proud of the fact that I came to the role from the profession. This is not always the case. There are many organisations like ours that are run by people with management or business or finance backgrounds or who move from running one organisation to running another very different one, and until my arrival this had been the case for Icon. The Trustees broke this tradition when they appointed me believing there was value in having a conservator lead Icon.

I think that I am able to bring a deeper understanding of conservation and, from my background, of conservation training and education. I have a wide network of colleagues and friends in the field on whom I can call. I am engaged with the subject matter that concerns our profession, as well as the profession itself. I can then convey this enthusiasm for what we do and for the people who do it when I am trying to convince a funder to support us.

### Meetings galore!

There is one aspect of my job that I really enjoy but is a very slow burn – building relationships. This involves meeting with all kinds of people: heads of foundations and grant-giving bodies, grant managers, potential sponsors, and leaders of NGOs in the cultural heritage sector.

These meetings lay the foundations for a relationship on which I can build over time and that can possibly lead to an opportunity for Icon. I also make a point of attending (if I possibly can and the budget stretches to it) every event that I am invited to. I never know when or where I might meet the next friend of Icon.

### Working with the Chair

It is commonly held that the relationship between Chair of the Board of Trustees and Chief Executive is critical to the success of an organisation like ours and I couldn't agree more. For the past two years, Amber Xavier-Rowe has worked very closely with me, supported me through all the tough times, and has helped to mould my role at Icon.

Together we confronted the big issues at Icon, thought strategically and acted inclusively. This has set the direction for Icon of the next five years. Our new Chair is Juergen Vervoorst. Juergen and I already have a good working relationship and I am very happy to be working with him.

## *a swan frantically scrambling beneath the surface*

### Safeguarding the bottom line

My primary long-term goal is to leave Icon in significantly better financial shape than we were when I came into the post. This is a very tough challenge as we have very few ways of generating a surplus of unrestricted funds (the funds that we can save and use later on whatever we choose, as opposed to restricted funds that have to be spent on specific projects). One of the avenues I am exploring is to get Icon in shape to attract corporate sponsors or philanthropic donors. It is my dream that the next CEO of Icon does not have to worry so much about the bottom line.

I am also focussing on attracting new members. Our current workforce research project will help us to know who is out there working in the sector. It is my view that every one who could be a member of Icon, should be a member of Icon.

### Securing conservation's future

My second goal is to be able to predict a more secure future for conservation education and training in the UK. This can only come about with a co-ordinated effort on the part of universities, employers and funders. That is what Icon is trying to bring about through its Education & Skills Strategy and by

working with the Strategy Stakeholder Group. Enormous economic pressure is being brought to bear on universities and employers. Protecting provision for future conservation professionals is a huge challenge.

## *from strategy to teabags*

### Getting our voice heard

My third and final ambition is for Icon to be what it claims to be: 'the lead voice for the conservation of cultural heritage'. We are doing well on this count. Icon is consulted regularly by major funders and non-governmental public bodies, such as Creative and Cultural Skills, our sector skills council.

But Icon is too small to make an impact on government policy alone. We have to do this by partnering with others who are bigger and who get listened to. This is why it is so important for Icon to be a member of umbrella organisations like the Heritage Alliance and the newly formed National Heritage Science Forum. Through these organisations we can cover all aspects of conservation, including the built heritage, collections and archaeology, and ensure that key messages about conservation are heard.

Someone once said that the role of the CEO can be described as 'strategy to teabags'. It encapsulates the experience perfectly. It is never boring. I love my job.

### Alison's route to Icon's CEO

After a first career teaching art history for the Inner London Education Authority, Alison trained as a paper conservator at Camberwell College of Art. She joined the Conservation Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1990, where she worked in the paper conservation studio, moving on to join the staff of the the postgraduate conservation programme jointly run by the Royal College of Art and the V&A, eventually becoming Deputy Head.

Alison has always been interested in the development of the conservation profession and has published on professional ethics and the history of conservation. She and former colleague Dr Alison Bracker jointly edited their book, *Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths* (Elsevier, 2009). Before being appointed Chief Executive in 2010, she had sat on the Icon Board since its inception in 2005.

Alison is an Accredited conservator and a Fellow of the IIC (International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works)

# professional update

## BOARD ELECTIONS



Photo: Matt Wrieford

Penny Jenkins



Photo: Matt Wrieford

Siobhan Stevenson

The results of the recent elections to Icon's Board of Trustees were announced at December's AGM. Two seats were available and Penny Jenkins and Siobhan Stevenson were elected to fill them for a second term.

Congratulations are also due to Juergen Vervoorst on becoming Icon's new Chair. Juergen was the Board's candidate for Chair and in the absence of any other nominations for the post, he was declared elected without a ballot in accordance with Icon's Byelaws. Juergen's term of office lasts until the 2014 AGM.

## OUR 8th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### The formal business

The AGM took place at the beginning of December, kindly hosted by The Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Around a hundred members attended and the event was purposeful and thought-provoking without sacrificing cordiality and good cheer. Icon's new Chair Juergen Vervoorst conducted the proceedings, with our Business Manager Simon Green on hand to ensure that various necessary formalities were properly observed, such as votes on resolutions concerning auditors and the financial accounts.

Chief Executive Alison Richmond summarised the Board's Annual Report and the year's developments, highlighting notable positive achievements, including progress on the National Conservation Education and Skills Strategy, the success of the internship scheme and key activities by the Groups. She noted that despite the stiff competition for resources, funding organisations like what Icon does and are keen to support us. She was therefore confident that Icon is sustainable in the long run and that its current good financial shape will improve even further.

Questions from the floor covered a wide range of subjects from aspects of the PF13 Conference arrangements to the Conservation Register, the *Caring For...* Leaflets and the place of international members in the organisation.

### Discussing ethics

With the close of formal business Juergen Vervoorst gave some tantalising glimpses of his interests as the new Chair, including the prospect of a governance review and the question of how Icon can be made stronger and better heard. He then introduced the second part of the evening – a discussion of the work currently underway to draw up a code or codes of ethics and practice. Icon Trustee Lizzie Neville masterminds this project and she led this part of the evening, describing the proposed programme of work, introducing the members of the Working Group present at the meeting and fielding a slew of interested and interesting questions.

Topics covered included the proposed application of the codes to whatever Icon members worked on (therefore including the built heritage) and wherever they worked in the world; the potential of the codes to explain to the public what we do and to clarify to clients or management the limits of our interventions. Another significant point was the intention to keep the codes succinct by linking and cross-referencing them to the Standards already in existence for the Accreditation process. It was quite clear that the discussion could have gone on all evening had the Chair not intervened to chivy us all out of the lecture hall to share a glass before the V&A needed to close.

## HISTORIC SCOTLAND NEWS

Historic Scotland's annual *Focus* magazine will be available in February 2013. *Focus* features some of the projects that HS Conservation Directorate has been involved in over the last few months, from the conservation of our monuments and sites to our latest research projects. The magazine also has a catalogue of all our publications, and information on how to order them both in our website or by contacting our Publications Officer on 0131 668 8638.

*Focus 2013* includes articles about the conservation of the Glasgow Cathedral stained glass windows, specialist conservation work to a Pictish stone found in Orkney and of course an update to our Scottish Ten project. This year a section of the magazine is dedicated to metal conservation, with topics such as the conservation of the Forth Rail Bridge, conservation of Duff House lead statues, and other projects like the recently completed conservation of the Edinburgh Castle's War Memorial.

The focus on Metal is because Historic Scotland is hosting *Metal 2013* from 16–20 September 2013, the tri-annual international conference of the ICOM-CC Metal Working Group. The conference is held every three years in a different



Photo: Matt Wrieford

Icon's new Chair Juergen Vervoorst

location globally and is hosted by a local organisation. Historic Scotland is delighted to host this five-day conference at Surgeon's Hall, Edinburgh. The packed schedule will see experts from around the globe present their latest research to an international audience, as well as networking events at Edinburgh and Castles.

For your issue of *Focus 2013* please check the website [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/conservation](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/conservation), or call 0131 668 8638. The website also holds our up to date news, information about our events and our publications most of which are free to download. To find out more about *Metal 2013* or to buy tickets, you can visit its dedicated website [www.metal2013.org](http://www.metal2013.org). If you have any other enquiries, do not hesitate to contact us on [hs.cgoutreach@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hs.cgoutreach@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

## SCOTS WHA HAE?

Beneficiaries of The Cross Trust may, indeed, think they are 'Scots wha hae' (loosely translated as 'Scots who have'). This little-known trust was founded in 1943 by Sir Alexander Cross to give grants 'to enable young people of Scottish birth or parentage to extend the boundaries of their knowledge of human life'.

Over the years, the focus has been to support science, medicine, the performing arts and travel for educational purposes, but the trustees continuously review and widen the Trust's purposes to reflect current needs. I have recently been appointed a trustee and

am keen to raise awareness of The Cross Trust amongst would-be conservators and conservation professionals. Baseline criteria however are that applications can only be considered if the applicant is under thirty years old and if s/he was either born in Scotland or has, or had, a parent born in Scotland. There is scope for funding to support undergraduate study as well as some post-graduate studies, and project and study funding outwith degree courses could also be considered. There is plenty of information on the website, and look for the Guidance Notes which are found from the home page by going first to Applying as an Individual then to How to apply.

[www.thecrosstrust.org.uk](http://www.thecrosstrust.org.uk)

Clare Meredith ACR

## YORK FOUNDATION AWARDS

Applications are invited from craftsmen and conservators for financial support. Since 2000 the York Foundation for Conservation and Craftsmanship has helped over eighty

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 2013 and shortlisted applicants will be interviewed in early May. Further details and application forms are available at [www.conservationyork.org.uk](http://www.conservationyork.org.uk).

## MANUSCRIPT CONSERVATION GRANTS

The National Manuscripts Conservation Trust offers grants for the conservation and preservation of manuscripts and archives. Applications are welcome from Cathedral Archives and Libraries, Record Offices, Museums, University Archives or Special Collections sections, as well as owners of manuscripts that are exempt from capital taxation or owned by a charitable trust. Grants can cover conservation, binding and other preservation measures, including digitisation (providing it is part of a wider conservation project).

The application form can be downloaded from [www.nmct.co.uk](http://www.nmct.co.uk). If, having consulted the website, you have any queries about whether your project is eligible etc please contact Mrs Nell Hoare, who manages the Trust. You can get in touch with her either through the NMCT website or at [nmct@thetrustpartnership.co.uk](mailto:nmct@thetrustpartnership.co.uk).

The next deadline for the submission of applications is 1 April 2013.

## THE ANNA PLOWDEN TRUST

### CPD Awards for 2013

The Anna Plowden Trust is seeking applications from established conservators for grants towards the cost of attending either a short specialist course or a major conference during 2013. In both cases the Trust will consider funding up to 50% of the cost.

The Trust has been awarding grants since 1999 and normally between ten and twelve are given each year. The courses attended have covered a wide range of subjects, including Islamic binding structures, the preservation of photographic materials and medieval books, basketry conservation and pest management as well as collection care issues. The Trust also funds attendance at conferences, both in the UK and abroad, often helping to finance participants who are giving a paper. In the past two years it has helped conservators to attend conferences or courses in the Netherlands, Italy, Mexico, France, Portugal, Belgium and the USA.

The Trust particularly welcomes applications from those teaching conservation and from conservators working in the private sector. Preference will also be given to applicants who work in a team, either public or private, where the skills they



Sir Alexander Cross (1880–1963) as a young man at Balliol College, Oxford



acquire with the help of an Anna Plowden Trust grant can be passed on to others.

Those applying should have more than five years' experience since completing their training. The closing dates for applications are March 19, June 18 and September 17, 2013. Application forms can be obtained from the Trust's website, which is [annaplowdentrust.org.uk](http://annaplowdentrust.org.uk) or applicants can e-mail Penelope Plowden at [penelopeplowden@btinternet.com](mailto:penelopeplowden@btinternet.com).

## LIBRARY NEWS

### Opening hours

Just to remind you of the Library's new opening hours:

Monday AM (9.00–12.30)

Tuesday ALL DAY

Wednesday PM (1.30–5.00)

### Photocopies

Don't forget that we supply photocopies of journal articles, chapters from books, and conference papers, which are held in the Chantry Library collection. Icon members can claim ten free articles each year, provided either as scanned pages or in hard copy. Email Ros Buck, Librarian at [chantrylibrary@icon.org.uk](mailto:chantrylibrary@icon.org.uk) with your requests, quoting your membership number, or complete and send the copyright form available on the Chantry Library webpages [www.chantrylibrary.org.uk](http://www.chantrylibrary.org.uk) (Library Services).

### BSI Standards

The two latest BSI Standards, *PD 5454:2012 Guide to the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Materials* and *PAS 198 Specification for Managing Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections*, are both now held, for reference only, in the Chantry Library collection. For access, please contact [chantrylibrary@icon.org.uk](mailto:chantrylibrary@icon.org.uk)

### Recently received publications

**Engraving and Etching 1400–2000: A History of the Development of Manual Intaglio Printmaking Processes** by A.D. Stijnman, Archetype Publications, London, 2012, 658pp. ISBN: 9781904982715

This book surveys the history of the techniques of engraving, etching and plate printing – i.e. that of manual intaglio printmaking processes – from its beginning in the 1430s until today. Economic, educational and social aspects are discussed, as well as the dissemination of the trade of intaglio printmaking. Further details and contents pages at: [www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=166](http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=166)

**Adhesives and Consolidants in Painting Conservation**, edited by Angelina Barros D'Sa et al., Archetype Publications, London, 2012, 99pp. ISBN: 978-1-904982-88-3

The papers in this volume were presented at an Icon paintings group conference at the National Portrait Gallery, London. Further details and contents pages at:

[www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=170](http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=170)

**IPI's Guide to: Sustainable Preservation Practices for managing storage environments**, Image Permanence

Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, New York, 2012, 112pp. Spiral bound

**Moving Collections: Processes and Consequences**, edited by Ida Antonia Tank Bronken, Susan Braovac, Tone Marie Olstad and Anne Apalnes Ørnhól, Archetype Publications, London, 2012, 220pp. ISBN: 978-1-904982-84-5. Papers are in English, Norwegian, Swedish or Danish. Papers not written in English include an abstract in English. For the contents pages, go to: [www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=167](http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=167)

**Historical Technology, Materials and Conservation: SEM and Microanalysis**, edited by Nigel Meeks, Caroline Cartwright, Andrew Meek and Aude Mongiatti, Archetype Publications, 2012, 212pp. ISBN: 978-1-904982-65-4. Contents pages can be seen at: [www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=130](http://www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=130)

### Recently received journals

**BAPH Quarterly** (The Journal of the British Association of Paper Historians), No.84, October 2012

**Book Arts** arts du livre Canada, Vol.3, No.2, 2012

**The Ephemérist**, No.159, Winter 2012

**Journal of Paper Conservation**, Vol.13, No.3, 2012

**The Picture Restorer**, No.41, Autumn 2012

**Print Quarterly**, No.4, December 2012

**Studies in Conservation**, Vol.57, No.4, October 2012

**Ultrabold, The Journal of St. Bride Library**, No.12, Autumn 2012

### Find out more

There are several ways of keeping up to date via the Chantry Library:

- Visit the Library News page at <http://chantrylibrary.wordpress.com/> for further details of new resources and a full listing of all journal articles received over the past few month.
- Or you can have the news come to you by subscribing to the RSS feed and track new books and journals at the Library in real time. More details on how to do this are also at <http://chantrylibrary.wordpress.com/feed/>
- Details about new library resources can also be found in the quarterly Chantry Library Resources Updates, on the website here: [www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1827&Itemid=175](http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1827&Itemid=175)

## DESIGNING THE PF13 LOGO

**Miles Gould, Designer at Harrison & Co of Brighton, explains the process of designing the logo for *Positive Futures in an Uncertain World***

Harrison & Co was approached by Icon's Chief Executive Alison Richmond with the ambition to translate the Institute's passion for sharing innovative and progressive conservation



Harrison&Co  
Creative Presentation

Example of how the logo and the colour palette might be used

into an identity for a conference to be held at the University of Glasgow 2013.

Our process started by visiting the headquarters of Icon to meet the team and to discuss what the ambitions for the event were. Working closely with the team meant we were able to get under the surface and start to understand more clearly what the Institute is about and what it stands for. This ultimately helps us to produce a more honest and effective design. It was clear after discussing the brief that the venue was an important feature of the conference. Not only is the University a landmark for Glasgow, and a testament to Gothic Victorian architecture, but it also incorporates fantastic

The colour palette



examples of modern-day restoration techniques. The in-depth research we undertook of the location helped us formulate the entire identity from the logo mark through to the colour palette as highlighted below left.

We decided to focus our design on the famous Cloisters, situated under Bute Hall, the venue for plenary sessions. The sweeping arches of the cloisters are immediately recognisable, visually appealing and appropriate for the subject matter of the conference. We also felt that the seamlessly connecting arches symbolised the coming together of delegates, working harmoniously together to provide strength and the foundations upon which to build a positive future for conservation.

The halls were restored in 1986. Analysis of the paint layers found that the original decoration was based on the heraldic colours of the Marquis of Bute - red, blue, silver and gold. It is this colour palette which runs through the visual identity of PF13. It was important for us to draw as much inspiration from the location as possible, so that our design worked harmoniously with its surroundings.

We feel privileged and inspired to be working with Icon. It is a huge honour to work closely with an institute that is dedicated to promoting and preserving national treasures. It was also very refreshing to work with a team who were open to conceptual thinking. This openness in discussion and creativity, we believe, helped us to produce a unique mark and one which is full of optimism for the future of conservation.

## News from the groups

### BOOK AND PAPER GROUP

The Book and Paper Committee is looking for sub-committee members to join us in various project-based tasks, supporting the work of the committee members.

We would like to hear from members interested in helping with the organisation of events such as talks and courses run by the Co-operative Training Register. We need volunteers to help organise courses, hand out badges etc in exchange for a reduced price place on the course plus travel expenses. If you are interested in helping on CTR, please contact victoria.stevens@magd.ox.ac.uk.

We are also keen to develop publishing, e-content and peer reviews, promoting Icon and providing support to conservation students. If you are interested in helping, please contact the Chair, Stefania Signorello by email s.signorello@wellcome.ac.uk, stating your areas of interest. Please feel free to have an informal chat on any aspect of the work you are interested in.

The Task and Finish review of the Journal is underway, with the first meeting held at Icon headquarters at Lafone House on 23 November 2012. Two members of the Book and Paper Committee, Heather Ravenberg and Isabelle Egan are part of this review as well as Journal Editor Janet Berry, Trustee Ylva Dhansjö, Chair of Group Chairs, Francis Downing and a yet-to-be-nominated academic, the Task and Finish group is led by Lara Artemis, Trustee and member of the Editorial Panel.

*Stefania Signorello*

### Co-operative Training Register update Welcome to a new CTR year!

At the beginning of a new year, the CTR committee are in a reflective mood following a very full training programme for 2012 but are also firmly looking forward to what promises to be an equally exciting agenda for the first half of 2013. The diverse activities of 2012, which included courses across the UK on packing and moving collections, parchment analysis, adhesives as well as a very successful free evening lecture, have established the CTR within the Book and Paper Group's training structure and it is from this solid base that we launch our 2013 programme.

### The Autumn courses

Our final two courses of 2012 ended a productive year and were both popular and well received. Originally intended as a one day course, *Environment for Objects*, was significantly over-subscribed and we were fortunate to be able to arrange a repeat course the following day. In total, fifty five participants came to Oxford over the two days to benefit from Dr Tim Padfield's overview of standards and passive and low energy measures for environmental control. A review of the course can be found on page 25.

Although no one enjoys completing feedback forms at the end of a long training day, the benefits of feedback were clearly demonstrated as Dr Padfield reviewed the direction and content of his course to accommodate the information

received from participants of day one. Most of the feedback from both days indicated that a longer course on this subject would be welcomed by members and this is something we will look into for the future. Our thanks go to Dr Padfield, Conservation and Collections Care at the Bodleian Library and the Oxford Conservation Consortium, for working with us to develop this course.

Never ones to rest on our laurels, the CTR committee managed to squeeze in a final training event for the year and in early November Camberwell College of Arts acted as hosts for *Information Skills for Conservators*, presented by Ros Buck, Icon's Chantry Librarian. This is the second year we have co-operated with Camberwell to run this very useful and practical course providing a research toolkit for students and members alike. It is hoped that this will become an annual fixture for CTR and Camberwell.

### A packed Spring programme

Looking forward, we are eagerly anticipating our first event of 2013, a *Stationery Bindings* workshop on 4 February, to be held at Staffordshire Record Office and organised in collaboration with colleagues in the Archives and Records Association.

We are pleased to announce that our General Meeting for 2013 will be held on 3 April 2013 at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich and we are in the process of developing a fantastic programme of visits and lectures with the Conservation Department at the museum, as well as hopefully providing a stunning venue for our GM meeting itself. Further details will follow.

### Collaborative approaches for PF13

True to the co-operative spirit, the CTR committee has been working with Book and Paper Group members as well as other Icon groups and together we have developed excellent and varied group sessions for the Positive Futures 2013 conference in April. Our over-arching theme for the group sessions is *Current Solutions for Mutual Issues* and we have four presentation categories for our programme: the *Clare Hampson Showcase*, *Collaborative Conservation*, *Moving Issues and Storage Solutions* and a *Joint Adhesives Session* with Science, Textiles, Photographic Materials and Ethnography groups. In the latter three categories there will be both established professionals and student speakers, highlighting aspects of their research and work. We are delighted to have Joanna Kosek as our Chair for the first day's session.

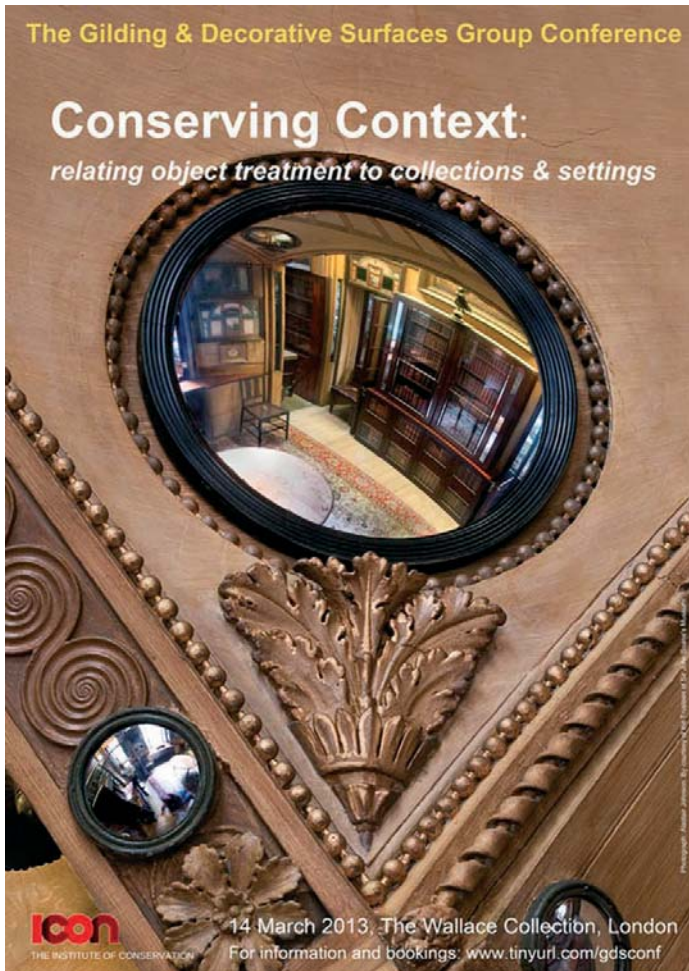
There is a detailed synopsis of all speakers and presentations for the Book and Paper Group sessions on the PF13 website and we look forward to meeting you there.

Finally, courses in the pipeline include a print identification course, to be held in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication of Reading University, which we hope to tie-in with an evening lecture. Also in development, and following a Book and Paper Group member's recent suggestion via the online forms, is a lining workshop which we hope will include suction table methods.

Details of these and all CTR events will be announced to members via group lconnects.

**Victoria Stevens** ACR, Book and Paper Group

## GILDING & DECORATIVE SURFACES GROUP



### Conference Announcement.

*Conserving Context: relating object treatment to collections & settings*

The Group's Committee is pleased to announce our first Conference since 2009. It will explore the complex issues involved in making decisions that correspond between objects, collections and settings. The Conference will consider the intentions of treatments to objects' decorative surfaces. It will focus on how these treatments conserve or change the whole context of their collection and setting; whether inside or outside a house, museum, gallery or other location such as an industrial context. In both museum and private contexts it is often difficult to rationalise the necessarily nuanced approaches which are taken with these issues. However, in seeking to maintain whole contexts, an integrated approach is required to be applied right down to individual objects as elements within.

The Conference wishes to highlight commonality and collaboration between disciplines and to include a variety of periods, materials and approaches, with each paper concentrating on a specific case study.

For further information go to [www.tinyurl.com/gdsconf](http://www.tinyurl.com/gdsconf)

**Early Bird booking is now open!** Contact Claire Daly at

[GDSG.Conference2013@gmail.com](mailto:GDSG.Conference2013@gmail.com) to secure a place.

## PAINTINGS GROUP

The paintings group conference publication 'Adhesives and Consolidants in Painting Conservation' was released by Archetype in December. If you haven't already bought the book please contact the group treasurer [info@rebeccagregg.co.uk](mailto:info@rebeccagregg.co.uk) to order your copy. The cost is £32.50 + £4 postage and packaging.

The speakers for the paintings group session, *Art and Audiences*, at the Icon Conference PF13 have been confirmed and further information is available on the conference website [www.iconpf13.com](http://www.iconpf13.com) We hope to see many paintings group members in Glasgow in April and don't forget that details of funding sources are also available on the website.

Will Shank, Co-Founder and Co-Chair, *Rescue Public Murals* will be giving a talk about the performance and preservation of acrylic paint used externally on murals on 30 April at the Freemason's Lodge in London. For details please see the Events page of the Icon website. Bookings can be made by contacting Clare Finn by email ([finnclare@aol.com](mailto:finnclare@aol.com)) or telephone +44 20 7937 1895. If you would like to review the talk for Icon News please let Clare know.

An Osiris infrared camera workshop day was held in October 2012 at the Icon offices. The paintings group is interested in organising more training events for our members. Do you have a suggestion? As always we would love to hear any suggestions or comments.

### The Paintings Group Committee

[Icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com](mailto:Icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com)

Chair:	Francis Downing
Secretary:	Rhiannon Clarricoates
Treasurer:	Rebecca Gregg
Student Liaison Officer:	Helen Dowding
Group News Officer:	Alexandra Gent
Committee Members:	Angelina Barros d'sa Lizzie Bone Ambrose Scott-Moncrief Chantal Thuer
Talk series organiser:	Dr. Clare Finn

## PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIALS GROUP

Icon's Photographic Materials Group recently organised a visit to the British Film Institute's Cold Storage facility. One of the delegates, Bridget Warrington, has kindly written a review of the event which can be found in the Review section of this issue.

This visit appears to have been well received and it is possible that a follow-on visit to the BFI's Berkhamsted store will be organised for next year. We would love to hear from you about the kinds of future visits, workshops and lectures that you would find useful. Please get in touch with your ideas via our website: [www.icon.org.uk/](http://www.icon.org.uk/) or our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ICONPhMG>

## Conference PF13 10-12 April 2013 *Positive Futures in an Uncertain World*

The Photographic Materials Group will be sharing a session with the Book and Paper Group at the PF13 Conference. We are pleased to announce the inclusion of the following papers relating to photographic materials:

- Andrew Megaw 'How pleasantly to the eye and gracefully the photographs interweave with the typographic...the makers and consumers of 19th century photographically illustrated books'
- Anna De Matos 'Poster presentation: How do new scientific analytical techniques help the preservation of photographic materials in hard supports'
- Jenny Harvey and Sarah Allen 'Darwin's Daguerreotypes: the origins of the treatment'

## STONE AND WALL PAINTINGS GROUP

### Natural Stone Show

Icon in conjunction with the Stone & Wallpaintings Group will have a stand at the Natural Stone Show, 30 April to 2 May at ExCel, London. The Show takes place every other year and English Heritage hosts a natural stone and building conservation conference normally on the third day. This is a great opportunity to showcase stone conservation and Icon. The Stone & Wall Paintings Group, with assistance from the Icon staff, will be the manning the stand, so if there are any members who would like to help out over the three days please contact the Icon office at [admin@icon.org.uk](mailto:admin@icon.org.uk) who will put you in touch with the relevant Committee members.

### Problem Stones 2

This event attracted a capacity audience. A report of the conference is in the Review section.

### Future conferences

The S&WP group will be organising a conference for Autumn 2013. We will have details in due course. If you have any suggestions for topics or site visits that you think may be of interest to the group, then please contact Clara at [clara.willett@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:clara.willett@english-heritage.org.uk).

## TEXTILE GROUP

Because of the timing of the *Positive Futures Conference* in Glasgow, the Textile Group Annual Forum will not be taking place this Spring. As we usually have our AGM at the forum, notice is hereby given that the AGM will be held later in the year at a date and venue to be confirmed (possibly at HRP May/June time). If anyone has any issues that they would like to raise with the committee before then please do contact me or any of the committee with your concerns. Our contact details are on the textile group web pages.

By now you should all have received the nominations for new committee members, if not please do contact me. We need to replace three excellent, hard working members this time. One position will be the Icon News co-ordinator, the other

two are for ordinary members who will be co-ordinating events and other general committee work. We are trialling a new voting system this year; on the Iconnect you will shortly receive there will be a link to a survey site where we would ask you to vote for the nominees you would like. This we hope will be a more confidential system of voting.

We have several events planned already for this year, including a visit to the Clothworkers Textile Study Centre for the V&A, Historic Royal Palaces 101st Anniversary celebrations, a trip to the Leather Conservation Centre in Northampton, a visit to the Fan Museum in Greenwich and a Back to Basics workshop which this year will hopefully be either a Chemistry or an Analysis Refresher; the what, when why and where of analysing your objects. Details of all of these will be available on the Textile Group web pages.

At the PF conference in April, we have a small session with poster presentations on the theme of recent Adhesive work plus a talk by Zenzie Tinker on an exciting new project being set up, and we are joining with several of the other specialist groups for an overview of the use of Adhesives in Conservation. We hope that from this we may have an adhesives workshop with the B&P group possibly next year. Please do come along and support the Group and Icon at the University of Glasgow.

*Deborah Phipps*, Chair

## STOP PRESS!

### Calling all students and interns Bursaries for PF13

We are delighted to announce that the National Association of the Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) Patricia Fay Memorial Fund has awarded Icon a grant to cover the cost of thirteen student/intern delegate fees to attend Icon's *Positive Futures in an Uncertain World Conference* 10-12 April 2013.

Icon is very grateful to NADFAS for supporting the conference in this way.

If you would like to apply, please send a 300-word statement on how the grant will benefit you, along with proof of your student/intern status to [conference@icon.org.uk](mailto:conference@icon.org.uk).

**Applications should arrive by 28 February.**

## Cookery Corner – or Peregrinations to Communications

### Paintings Conservator Clare Finn ACR, Paintings Group Committee Member and former Icon Trustee, links breakfast fry-ups to photographs and graphic conservation communication

There is something very pleasing about finding that two bits of information you thought were entirely separate tie up together, and my interests extend way beyond paintings' conservation.

I like cooking and some time ago I decided to look into the science of cooking to see if it would improve my skills – after all improving my knife skills did (you should see my pineapple carpaccio) and I now wield a scalpel in a whole range of ways. So I plunged into Hervé This' *Kitchen Mysteries*<sup>1</sup>. Right up front – it has not made me a better cook! It did, however, introduce me to Maillard reactions.

They are what goes on when you sear meat, why roast coffee smells so good, why bread crusts taste and smell better than the inside, the crumb, of the loaf and presumably why toast is scrummy. In short they are the chemical reactions that make brown, odorant, pleasant tasting compounds in food when it is cooked.

Bear with me if you are wondering why talking about cookery has anything to do with conservation. Apparently, there are books and books devoted to Maillard reactions. They are responsible for a great many things but, nevertheless, they are not fully understood.

Here is the short version of what they are about:

When molecules containing an amino group  $\text{NH}_2$ , like amino acids in proteins, are heated in the presence of sugar, a water molecule is eliminated and the sugar and protein reagents bond in a Schiff base. That Schiff base is then rapidly replaced by an Amadori product. With me so far?

Monsieur This includes a diagram that looks not unlike one for a non-polar solvent. These reactions take place at high temperatures, above  $100^\circ\text{C}$ , as that is the boiling point of water. They do not happen to boiled food as the temperature is limited to that of water's boiling temperature. So frying in oil is a useful way of getting the temperatures high enough.

Apologies for any inaccuracies this lightning fast description may have included, but I hope you get the principle.

Sometime later, I read an essay on the photographer

Eugène Atget (1857–1927) who meticulously, one might say obsessively, recorded Paris and its environs<sup>2</sup>. The critic Walter Benjamin described how Atget's photographs uncannily, and unintentionally, looked like the 'scene of a crime'. The article was on his technique. Atget used albumen papers for his prints until after the 1st World War when these papers were no longer available, at which point he switched to gelatin aristotype papers.

Then buried away in the footnotes I spotted a reference to an article on Maillard Reactions in albumen prints<sup>3</sup>. Well, that there were Maillard reactions with albumen, i.e. eggs, I could accept. But what has been happening with photos? Has someone been frying them?

The short answer is YES!

I knew that heat sealing photographs was not a good idea, or prints for that matter. However, I thought this was because it flattened delicate textures and speeded up the overall aging process. To the lay public aging may seem inevitable, so if it is going to happen anyway why fuss if it is speeded up a little? It's unavoidable, right? But now I find the image of a frying photograph so visual. It's a much more pressing idea.

If good communication is at the heart of good practice then we should aim to be clear, be credible (get accredited), be concise (I am probably not) and be creative. Illustrate your point as vividly as you can. Use metaphor, use analogy to get that message across. After all if frying your food shortens your future, frying your photos shortens your past!

<sup>1</sup> *Kitchen Mysteries: Revealing the Science of Cooking* by Hervé This. Paperback: University Press Group Ltd, 2010, ISBN: 9780231141710

<sup>2</sup> 'Exhibiting Eugène Atget. The photographer's techniques and the conservation and restoration of his work in the collection of the Musée Carnavalet' by Anne Cartier-Bresson and Martha Sirven in *Eugène Atget, Old Paris*, Fundació Mapfre & TF Editores, Madrid & Alcobendas, Spain, 2011, pp. 305–318

<sup>3</sup> 'Role of the Maillard, or "Protein-Sugar" reaction in Highlight Yellowing of Albumen Photographic Prints' by James M. Reilly in *Preprints of papers presented at the 10th Annual Meeting, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 20–30 May 1982*, American Institute for Conservation, Washington DC, 1982, pp.160–168.

## New staff at Icon

**Jayne Sheraton**, who has been Icon's temporary Training Officer for the last few months, has now been recruited to the position of Training Manager. She will be managing all of Icon's work-based training, including Icon internships and the Conservation Technician Qualification. Jayne can be contacted at [jsheraton@icon.org.uk](mailto:jsheraton@icon.org.uk)

Welcome, too, to **Kath Whittam** who is the new Professional Development Support Officer. She will be working with Jayne on work-based training and also supporting Susan Bradshaw in professional development initiatives. Kath started on 7 January and her email address is [kwhittam@icon.org.uk](mailto:kwhittam@icon.org.uk)

## Moves



**Simon Cane** has not had to move very far: he has just taken on the role of Interim Director of Birmingham Museums where hitherto he was Head of Museum Operations. In his new role he will assume full responsibility for both operational and strategic issues, working with the Birmingham Museums Trust. Simon was, of course, the chair of the Icon's Board of Trustees for 2006-2008 and he joins a very select band of conservators who have gone on to become museum directors.

**Amy Crossman** has recently taken up the post of Collections Conservator for the South East Territory and South London at English Heritage. This full time temporary position involves managing the conservation of historic sites in the South East; undertaking the care of collections located in Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Surrey, South London, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Amy says that both the most interesting aspect and the biggest surprise of the job is the variation of sites within the Territory. They range from decorative historic houses, such as Osborne House, archaeological sites and more modern sites, such as the Dover Tunnels, as well as the diversity of the materials housed within them.

## Awards



Dana receiving the Keck Award

Congratulations to **Dana Goodburn-Brown** ACR, who accepted the Keck Award on behalf of CSI: Sittingbourne from the IIC (International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works) in December. The 2012 award was a joint presentation and Dana was in prestigious company, as the other recipient was the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece, for the conservation and restoration of the Caryatids with the use of laser technology.

The Keck Award celebrates the promotion of public understanding of conservation and appreciation of its accomplishments and Dana has been an indefatigable and enthusiastic contributor to public awareness of the practice and beneficial results of heritage conservation.

As many readers will know, CSI: Sittingbourne is a grass-roots conservation project located in two shops in the town centre shopping mall in Sittingbourne, Kent. One shop contains an archaeological exhibition, where visitors can learn about a local archaeological excavation, and a unit opposite houses a conservation lab, where conservators and conservation volunteers work on the finds under the eye of the public.

The initiative has been running for over three years now and is a joint project involving Dana, the Canterbury Archaeological Trust and the Sittingbourne Heritage Museum, not to mention the support of local businesses and the wider community. It has attracted nearly 20,000 visitors so far, including many who might never normally visit museum-type attractions but come in whilst they are shopping. Conservation interns have worked there, schools visit, special events are organised and publicity from local to national level have all contributed to a unique example of public engagement with conservation science. Most recently, Dana has been asked to put on an exhibition of the project at the Houses of Parliament this month.

© Paul Krehan, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Institute of Conservation



## RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

A grant of up to £80,000 is available to a UK public institution to enable an experienced 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: Friday 1st March 2013.**

Full details and application form:  
[foundation.clothworkers.co.uk](http://foundation.clothworkers.co.uk)

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# New Discoveries in the Staffordshire Hoard

Cymbeline Storey, Staffordshire Hoard Conservator based at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery explains the Niello Grouping Project

When conservation of the Staffordshire Hoard began in 2010, the work was primarily exhibition-driven, with the conservation team preparing objects for display at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG), the Potteries Museum in Stoke-on-Trent (PMAG) and the travelling Mercian Trail and National Geographic exhibitions.

With this phase of the conservation programme completed and the English Heritage-funded research programme now underway, the hoard conservation team has been working on characterisation and grouping projects aimed at furthering our understanding of what objects are present in the hoard. Many of the 3500 objects in the hoard are small fragments, and now that the larger, more intact objects have been conserved we are faced with the challenge of piecing together the remaining fragments into more complete objects that can then be studied.

When most people think of the Staffordshire Hoard, the first objects that spring to mind are probably the gold and cloisonné garnet sword and seax fittings. While these 'star' items are indeed spectacular and have been the focus of exhibitions so far, there are also a large number of silver objects in the hoard (in total about 1.4 kg of material), many of which are fragments. For this project I chose to take a closer look at a group of objects that initially appeared to be less glamorous: the approximately one hundred objects in the hoard that have niello\* inlay, most of which are silver and silver gilt.

Because this project involved handling the objects, the condition of them all was assessed prior to the start. Through this process I determined that nine objects required conservation for stability (consolidation of cracks and the application of a Japanese tissue support backing) before they



Figure 1: Cymbeline assembling fragments of a silver and niello plate

could be handled safely.

After this was completed the objects were assembled and grouped (Figure 1). The goal was to find and document associated objects, fragments of the same object, and joins where possible, but not to physically join any objects.

Niello has been identified on only four gold hoard objects; the remainder are silver and silver gilt. The silver objects are fragmentary, heavily tarnished and corroded, which is an expected finding in archaeological silver. It is evident that the weakest points of objects with niello inlay are the niello channels, which are often quite deep. Breaks tend to occur along the channels, resulting in highly fragmented objects, often with disruption or loss of niello along break edges.

Figure 2: Silver strip with niello inlay and gilt border





Figure 3: Silver plate with niello inlay and gilt border

Because of soil coverage on break edges, confirming joins was impossible in many cases, though speculative reconstructions such as the one seen in Figure 2 could be made. Cleaning of break edges will be required to confirm most joins. In total twelve groups of objects were identified over the course of this project, and the one hundred fragments form approximately twenty two (suggested) individual objects.

Some magnificent objects have emerged from this grouping project such as a silver strip with niello inlay and gilt borders (Figure 2), a silver plate in an unusual fish-like shape (Figure 3), and a beautiful silver gilt hilt collar with angular faces and raised zoomorphic decoration (Figure 4).

It is hoped that characterisation projects such as this one will contribute to the research programme by bringing together small fragments into more complete objects which can then be studied. It is also hoped that this project will prompt discussion amongst academics, conservators and scientists. New questions about the manufacture and use of these objects have emerged from this work. The next phase of investigation is now underway and involves further conservation to confirm joins and enable closer examination of construction and manufacturing details such as the depth

and shape of niello channels, tool marks and evidence of the method of niello application employed.

In conjunction with the conservation being carried out on the niello group, scientists at the British Museum are analysing niello samples to determine their composition and how niello in the hoard compares with Anglo-Saxon niello from other sites such as Sutton Hoo.

Hoard objects with niello inlay are currently on display at BMAG and PMAG. A large exhibition of hoard objects – including many conserved objects not displayed previously in the UK – is on display at PMAG through 1 September 2013.

For the latest hoard conservation information, including video and written blogs by hoard conservators and our student interns, visit the Staffordshire Hoard website: [www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk](http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk). Our video blogs can also be found on YouTube.

\* Niello is a metal sulphide commonly formed of sulphur and silver and/or copper, sometimes with the addition of lead. When heated, this mixture fuses into a hard, black substance that is used as an inlay material. Typically, a channel or recess is carved into a metal object and the niello is inserted, where it hardens. The types of niello found on Anglo-Saxon objects are silver/sulphur and silver/copper/sulphur

Figure 4: Silver-gilt hilt collar with niello inlay



# CPD without tears?

In this two-part article, Cathy Proudlove ACR writes about the benefits of regional conservation forums with reference to East Anglia and Victoria Stevens ACR then describes a recent meeting of her local Oxford-based group

**Cathy was Head of Conservation at Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service until 2009. She was an Icon Trustee from 2008 – 2010 and still occasionally contributes to the Care of Collections Group Committee**

**Victoria works for the Oxford Conservation Consortium and is a leading light on the committee of the Book and Paper Group's Co-operative Training Register**

## IN PRAISE OF REGIONAL GROUPS

Whether you have a conservation qualification, are planning to, or just starting to develop an interest, it is well worth thinking about activities to broaden your view of the world outside your workplace. It can be hard to spare the time and even harder to find the money to attend all the courses and events that might be useful. This makes the offer of something nearby very appealing and these offers may come from local or regional conservation groups.

A good example is the East Anglian Conservators' Forum (EACF), which has been running for nearly twenty years. It holds several events each year and they are always well worthwhile. George Monger started EACF and can take huge credit for getting it going. In more recent years, the regional agencies were generous in supporting learning activities and allowing regional staff to spend time organising meetings, so the group has gone from strength to strength.

One of the secrets of EACF's success has always been a very simple model. There are no members and no fees, just a list of practising conservators in our region and other interested parties. The host venue usually provides a meeting room without charge as well as a tour or visit behind the scenes. Local conservators give short presentations or demonstrations. Often there is a specific theme but there is usually a broad enough range of topics to give a wide appeal and there is plenty of time for networking. Nobody gets paid, so it is usually possible just to make a very small charge to cover refreshments, making the meeting affordable to all. They are often based in a museum, archive or historic building but sometimes in a private workshop or studio. Preservation Equipment Ltd., based in our region, has also hosted several EACF gatherings.

Recent events could stand as models of what a regional meeting should be like. Of two meetings in 2012, one focused on textiles (see the report in last November's Icon News, page 33). The second, held at the Archive Centre (Norwich Records Office), was particularly varied. There were demonstrations on leather treatment and the use of gelatine adhesives. Reports on three recent conferences from people who had been there were an excellent and painless way for the rest of us to find

out what might be the most relevant aspects for our own work.

EACF seems to have fared better than some other regional groups. It has the advantage of being relatively compact, compared with, say, the South West, and has conservators well dispersed across it, with hubs based on Norwich, Cambridge, Colchester and Ipswich. No single institution is large enough to dominate or to provide its own staff with all the CPD they need. The meetings bring conservators together in a way that doesn't happen anywhere else, from across the disciplines, public and private sectors, and at all stages of development. They don't have to be members of Icon – anyone interested is welcome.

It takes commitment to keep the show on the road; most recently Sarah Norcross-Robinson and her colleagues at Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service have been doing a magnificent job. All the meetings I have been to in the last few years have been memorable for me and I am sure the ones I didn't attend were just as good. A conference on lighting, *Don't leave it up to lux*, in March 2011 turned into more of a national affair, and received backing from Icon Head Office as well as the Care of Collections Group. Regional groups are not part of the formal structure of Icon but an event that offers good CPD can expect support from the organisation.

With funding from central or regional government unpredictable, how can we build on the strengths of regional groups to achieve a good spread of affordable CPD opportunities across the country? Could there be more collaboration with Icon specialist groups, and also with the regional offices of National Trust and English Heritage? Your comments would be very welcome: please send them to Icon News or direct to [cathy.proudlove@btinternet.com](mailto:cathy.proudlove@btinternet.com).

## X MARKS THE SPOT

The Oxford Conservators Group (OCG) is a cross disciplinary group of conservators working in and around the Oxford area who meet regularly for lectures, seminars, visits and social events. In October 2012 and in collaboration with Corpus Christi College, Oxford, the Group hosted a cross-disciplinary Conservation Forum for its members and colleagues. Entitled *Buried Treasure: Hidden Gems in the Oxford Collections*, the Forum showcased some objects recently conserved but not currently on public exhibition. The treasures unearthed included such diverse gems as the Founder's textile of Corpus Christi College, a collection of Islamic ceramics dating from the mid sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries including pieces



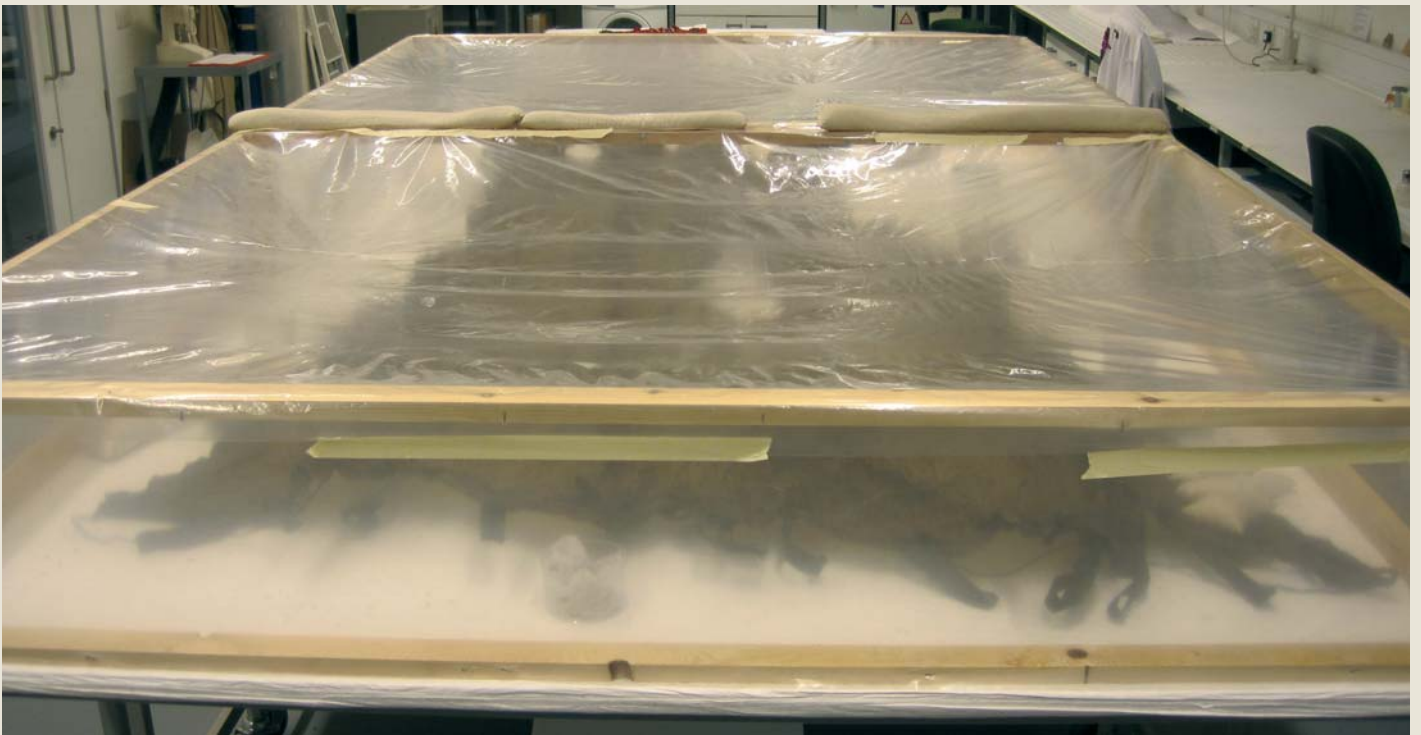
The Umiak sail shortly after it was unpacked

from the Iznik region of Turkey, mummy portraits from the Fayum region of Egypt from the time of the Roman occupation of that area and a nineteenth century gut membrane sail from the Hudson Strait.

### A textile journey of discovery

We were fortunate for two of the presentations, the Founder's textile and the Islamic ceramic collection, to have both the history from a curatorial perspective and the conservation treatment of the objects explained. Julian Reid, Archivist at Corpus Christi College, opened proceedings by discussing

The sail in a humidity chamber.



the discovery of the Founder's textile, now a pulpit cloth, and the subsequent detective work he undertook along with Professor Cinzia Sicca of the University of Pisa. It has been identified as originally being a part of Richard Fox's clerical vestments, the fabric for which originated in Italy and was probably manufactured in the 1520s. Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester and one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom at the time, founded Corpus in 1517. It was fitting therefore, given Fox's connections to the city, that the textile was conserved in Winchester by a then student at the Textile Conservation Centre, an institution which is much missed but happily now reincarnated in Glasgow. Florence Maskell's work on the textile in 2006 was described by Corpus Assistant Librarian Julie Blyth, which along with Julian's historical context provided a very full picture of the journey this object has made. Florence's thorough assessment of the construction of the textile provided supporting evidence for its previous life as part of a cope and the presentation also detailed the stabilization treatment and well designed housing of this sumptuous, though fragile, object. Participants had the additional treat of being able to view the textile which was on display prior to the forum.

### Middle Eastern treasures

The history and provenance of the Islamic ceramic collection, which is part of the Brocklebank Bequest, was contextualised by Heather Clary who has studied the collection extensively and the conservation treatment was described by ceramics conservator Kenneth Watt. This magnificent collection comprises one hundred and thirty one domestic vessels to include bowls, drinking vessels and hanging ornaments as well as twenty seven tiles, some of which are now set into panels. The collection is additionally significant in that there



The Founder's Textile before conservation

are comprehensive archive records of its acquisition by the Brocklebank family. It is divided into four groups of objects based on the centre of production: Iznik and Kutahya in modern day Turkey and Isfahan and Kirman in Iran. The oldest item in the collection is the impressive bowl illustrated here, made in Iznik around 1560 and one of the seven pieces which have recently received conservation treatment. Focusing on three of them, Kenneth Watt showed how their conservation included a combination of careful poulticing with laponite to reduce the contrast in tone between the intact and stained areas of the objects, the removal of previous unstable or unsuitable repairs and the sympathetic reconstruction of the items through infilling.

### Imaging reveals hidden features

We stayed at the eastern end of the Mediterranean for the

Iznik bowl c.1560

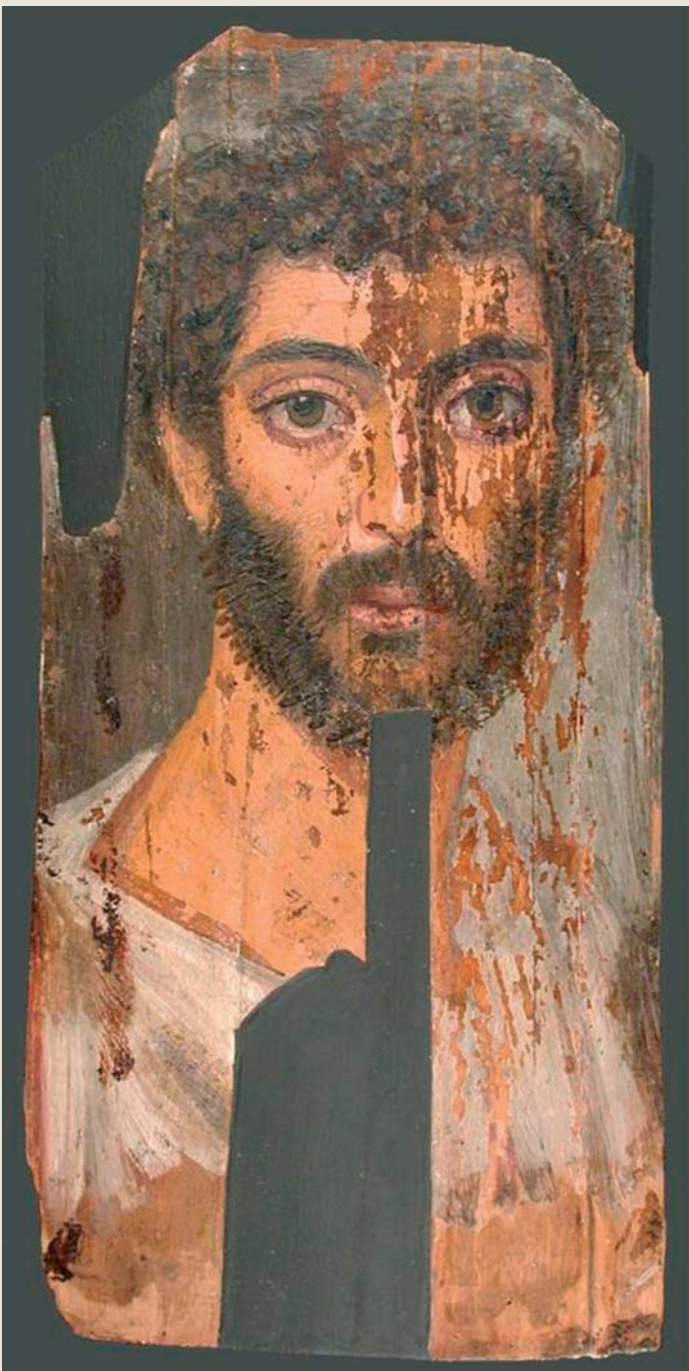


The Founder's Textile after conservation work

next presentation by Jevon Thistlewood, painting conservator at the Ashmolean Museum, on his recent work to conserve mummy portraits for display. These fascinating and poignant objects dating from the first and second century AD were indicative of settlers conforming to the burial practices of their adopted country and were used to cover the faces of the mummified dead. They portray the deceased at the time of death in an age where life expectancy was around forty years. Painted using tempera and wax based pigments on either textile or wood, the presentation detailed the pre-treatment pigment analysis and the fascinating results of infrared photography, allowing us to see through layers of discolouration to reveal the details of what lay beneath. Jevon went on to show delegates how cleaning had revealed delicate handling of the paint and how broken supports had been reconstructed. The presentation finished with a tantalising glimpse of how one of the portraits may have looked through a virtual reconstruction using digital images.

### Trans-Atlantic treasures: provenance and conservation combine

The Forum concluded with a presentation by Andrew Hughes, conservator at the Pitt Rivers Museum, about an ongoing stabilisation treatment on a walrus or seal intestine sail. The sail is from an Umiak – a large, skin covered boat. It is significant in that it is one of only two examples of a gut sail found in collections worldwide and it will hopefully be displayed as part of a forthcoming £1.6M Heritage Lottery Funded redevelopment on completion of the conservation project. Andrew included a wealth of information about the object's context and ably constructed the story around the provenance of the sail drawing on both primary and secondary sources to provide an entertaining backdrop to the conservation of this impressive object. The sail was collected from the Hudson Strait in 1824 by Lieutenant Francis Harding, who was at the time serving on board HMS Griper whilst



Mummy portrait of an Unknown Man (AD160-170) after treatment.

attempting to find the North West passage. The presentation also illustrated the ingenious methods conservators use to work around the challenges presented by large scale objects, such as the humidification tent shown here. It was an inspiring end to an evening of revealed treasures.

The OCG committee would like to thank all the presenters and also Corpus Christi College for their generous hosting of the event in the MBI Al Jaber Auditorium.

- Anyone wanting to be on the mailing list for the East Anglian Conservators' Forum should contact [sarah.norcross-robinson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.norcross-robinson@norfolk.gov.uk)
- If you live or work in conservation in or around the Oxfordshire area please contact Victoria Stevens at [victoria.stevens@magd.ox.ac.uk](mailto:victoria.stevens@magd.ox.ac.uk) for further details of the OCG

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# around and about

## Investigation of interior finishes at Abbotsford

by Ailsa Murray

### Introduction

The ancestral home of Sir Walter Scott, Abbotsford, sits on the banks of the river Tweed by Melrose. Building construction was completed in 1824. William Atkinson was chosen as the architect and George Bulloch, cabinet maker, gave advice on the furnishings. David Ramsay Hay of Edinburgh was appointed to oversee the interior decoration. The House contains an impressive collection of historic relics, weapons and armour. The library also holds over nine thousand rare volumes.

Abbotsford is now under the care of The Abbotsford Trust, established in 2007 having been passed from the Maxwell Scott family.

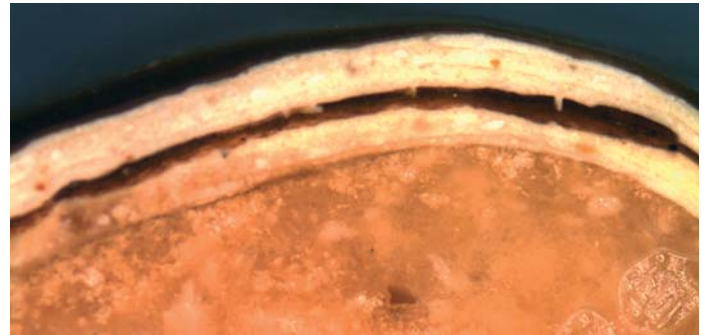
### The investigation

Historic Scotland paintings conservators were asked to undertake a full investigation of the House's interior finishes.



Dining Room watercolour by Smith, 1904

Dining Room original graining revealed on moulding



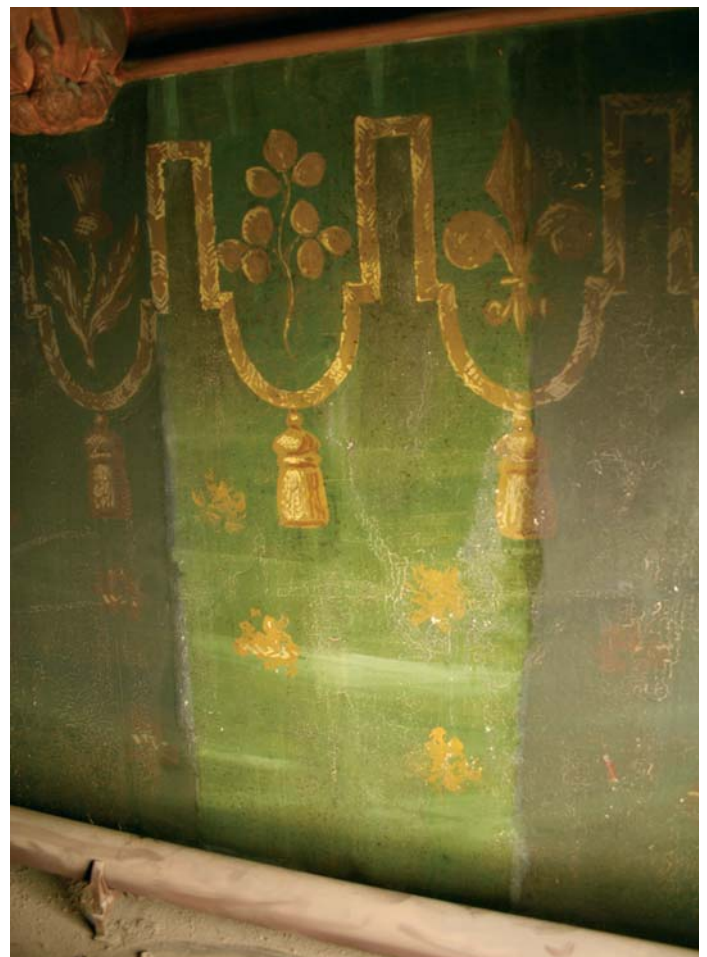
Paint cross-section from Dining Room ceiling, mag x10

The investigation aims were:

- To establish the extent of surviving original decoration and the nature of the non-original previous 'interventions'
- To determine whether it was possible to safely uncover original finishes currently hidden and undertake surface cleaning trials.

Our investigations concentrated on five rooms: The Dining Room, Armoury, Drawing Room, Library and Entrance Hall. Investigations used a combination of paint sampling, paint

The Library, surface cleaning trial from painted frieze





The Library, surface cleaning trial from painted graining on ceiling

reveals and archival evidence. Luckily for us, Scott's intentions for the interior decoration were meticulously recorded by D.R. Hay in his treatise *The Laws of Harmonious Colouring*.

The Dining Room plaster ceiling is divided into panels with moulded ribs, displaying bosses with Scotts' Arms and various plants. The surfaces are currently painted white except for the armorial bosses. Fine mechanical scraping revealed an imitation oak graining beneath the modern layers, however removal proved very difficult from these intricate areas.

Reference to D.R. Hay's treatise noted 'he ordered me to paint the dining room ceiling, cornice, niches in imitation of oak to match the doors, window shutters and wainscoting'.

The magnificent library ceiling was modelled from Rosslyn Chapel and Melrose Abbey. Surface cleaning trials confirmed the presence of heavy dirt accumulations and cleaning would greatly enhance appreciation of the painted faux frieze and imitation grained ceiling.

The final room investigated, The Entrance Hall, takes the form of a miniature gothic baronial hall. Fortunately the decoration here has not been covered over although the original oak graining has become much darkened with heavy dirt deposits. Surface cleaning trials revealed a much lighter tone which if cleaned would transform the space of the hall.

Conservation options for each room are now being considered. Abbotsford is due to open again in late Spring 2013.

The Project Conservators are Damiana Magris, Ailsa Murray and Michael Pearce.

## Christmas postscript

If you have had a surfeit of Christmas, you might flinch at the thought of finding a centenarian Christmas pudding on your work bench. What is probably the oldest plum pudding on earth came to our attention when this image of it arrived in the Icon office last month adorning Ian Clark's Christmas card. A few days later, in one of those happy coincidences, it also featured in the BBC programme *The Great British Bake Off: Christmas Masterclass*.

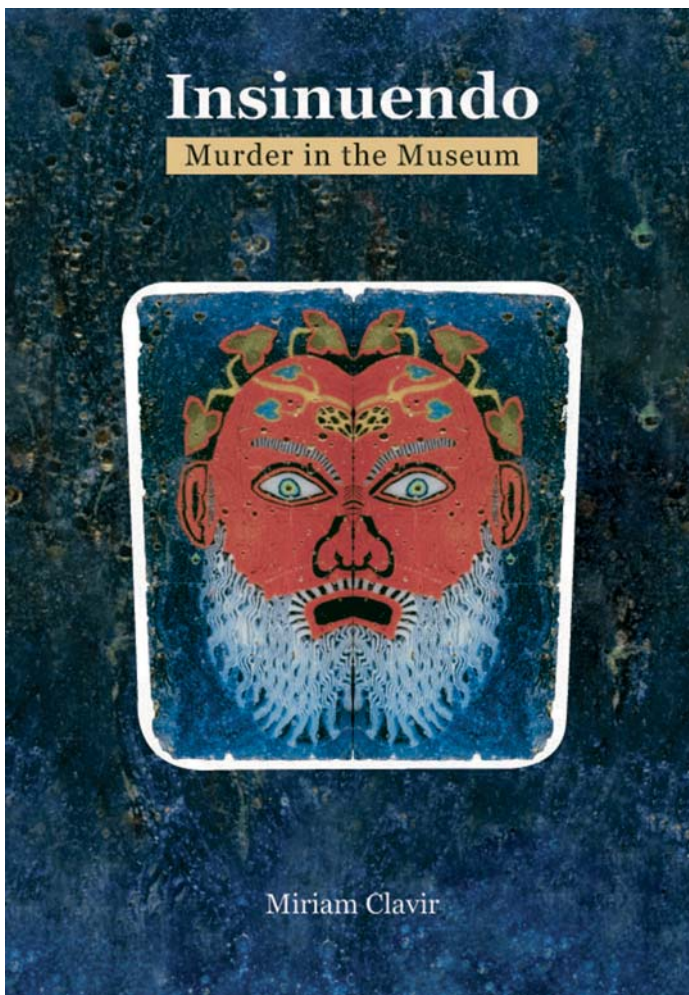
In fact, it is the containing tin rather than the pudding itself which Icon member Ian (of Ian Clark Restoration) was called upon to conserve for The National Museum of the Royal Navy at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. As with so many of the artefacts which conservators are privileged to handle, the story behind one rusty old tin brings a little piece of social history to fascinating life.

Sending Christmas gifts to the armed forces serving overseas was the brainchild of Miss Agnes 'Aggie' Weston, born in 1840 and raised as a teetotal Christian in Bath. Her interest in temperance and sailors' welfare also encompassed the founding of Sailors' Rests in Devonport and Plymouth, so that sailors ashore had somewhere to go other than pubs or sleeping rough, and writing a monthly letter to sailors on the high seas, achieving a circulation of 60,000 by 1918. Shortly before her death in that same year she was created a Dame of the British Empire and was buried with full naval honours.

You can find more detail on Ian's website [www.ianclarkrestoration.com](http://www.ianclarkrestoration.com) or on [www.royalnavalmuseum.org](http://www.royalnavalmuseum.org)

One of Miss Agnes Weston's Christmas Puddings sent to the Naval Brigade during the Boer War in 1900





and question marks over locked doors, poisons cabinets and record keeping. As you can see, the story sets a cracking pace.

Many congratulations to Miriam for a good read and an honourable mention to MOA for allowing itself to be the setting (although of course no incidents or living characters.....).

Miriam has told Icon News that she is now working on a second book with the same heroine, this time set in Quebec City on an archaeological dig in Lower Town.

\* *Insinuendo: Murder in the Museum* is published by Bayeux Arts Inc., 2012, ISBN 978-1-897411-38-4

## The splendour of Italian art

If you missed the spectacular exhibition *500 years of Italian Art* in Glasgow there is another chance to see it further south at Compton Verney in Warwickshire from 23 March to 23 June 2013 before it goes off touring in North America. With over forty of Glasgow's greatest Italian paintings, mostly unseen outside the city, the exhibition is of the highest quality and richness including landscapes, portraits and devotional works from the Renaissance onwards by artists such as Giovanni Bellini, Sandro Botticelli, Titian, Salvator Rosa and Francesco Guardi.

The conservation input was highlighted in the May 2012 issue of Icon News and further reviewed last November (issue 43).

St Catherine Crowned, c1520 by Bartolomeo Veneto



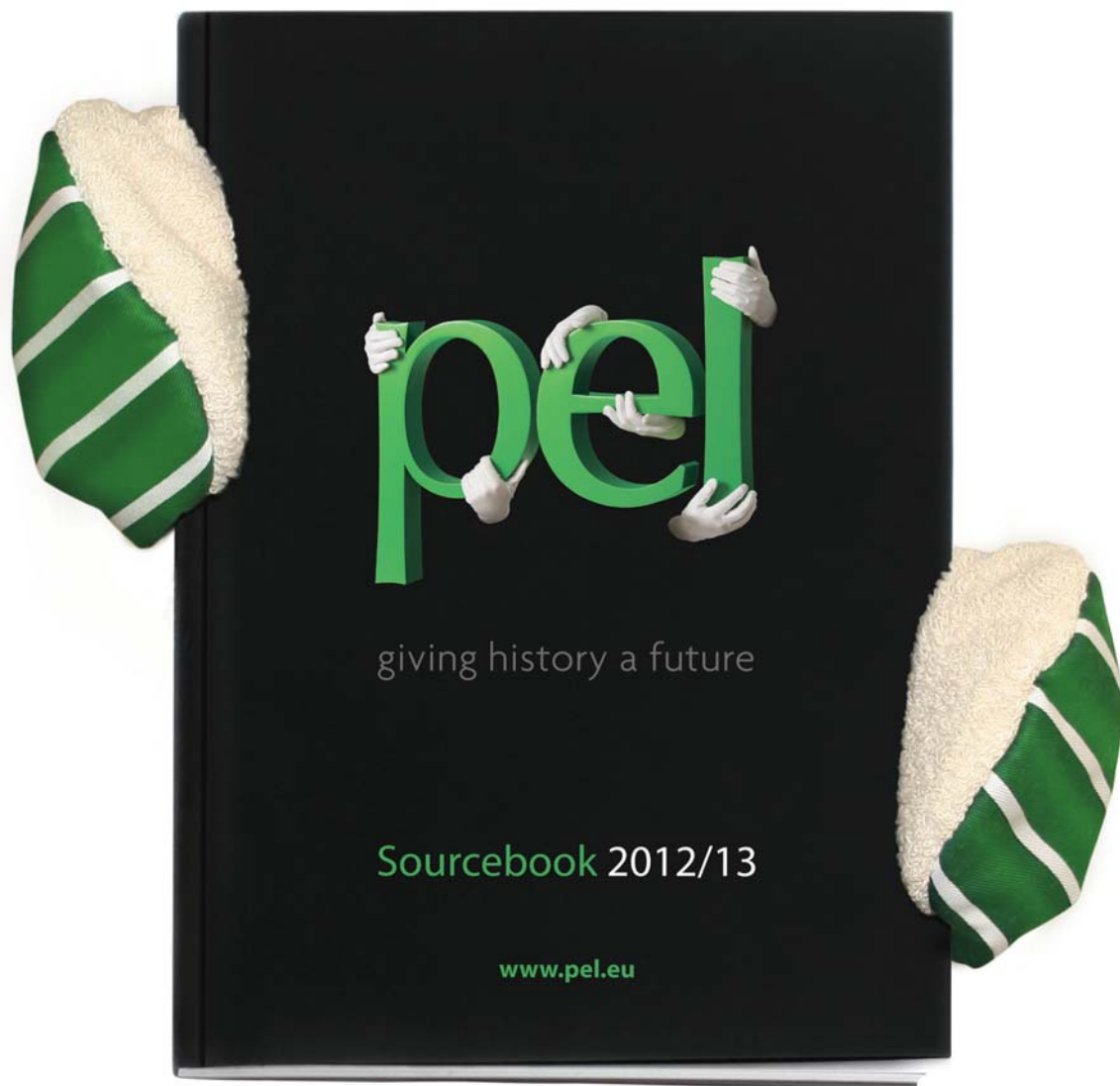
©Culture and Sport Glasgow (Glasgow museums)

## Red herrings galore

From time to time Icon News features the other creative activities that conservators get up to in their spare time. This time around our attention has lighted on Miriam Clavir who has written a murder mystery\* set in a museum and featuring a conservation intern, albeit of mature years, as her detective heroine.

Dr Clavir is a renowned Canadian conservator who has worked at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia; taught museum conservation for several universities and written many museum conservation articles. She has also published a scholarly book *Preserving What is Valued: Museums, Conservation and First Nations* (UBC 2002). Miriam is a Research Fellow at MOA and works in her own practice in conservation education.

What with the recent festivities and work on this January issue, we haven't had time to finish her more light-hearted contribution to the world of conservation literature but already in the first few chapters we have encountered tensions over the holding of indigenous peoples' material culture in museums, tensions between curators and conservators, dilemmas over conservation ethics, a dodgy art dealer/expert



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## BOOKS

### MUSEUM COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT: A HANDBOOK

**Freda Matassa**

Facet Publishing 2011

ISBN: 978-1-85604-701-2 258pp

I confess to a vested interest behind my

desire to review this book. Birmingham Museums Trust contributed movement forms to the book and I was keen to see how they had been used.

At first sight, this is not an obvious book to purchase for the conservation book case, with chapters on legal issues, loans procedures and acquisitions. I am in the fortunate position to have colleagues who deal with many of these issues so I only have to be involved on the periphery. This doesn't mean that I should not know about these parts of museum practice and this book is an excellent introduction, guide and checklist.

It is an agreeably slim volume with a cheery and easy to spot cover. The book is divided into two sections, an overview of collections management and then the practicalities of each area. Each chapter has the same format, with an introduction, the meat of the subject and a round-up of the points covered. A reference section ends each chapter, with a comprehensive, general list of references at the end of the book supplemented by a large list of weblinks. Examples of policy, procedures and forms are included from museums around the United Kingdom to show how each area can be put into practice.

I read this book travelling to and from work and whilst it was not as gripping as the previous week's book (Dodger by Terry Pratchett) it was a surprisingly easy read. The style of writing was lively and pleasantly brief. Points were not laboured and the only time I felt bamboozled was reading the legal chapter, especially with regard to immunity from seizure. I did find myself thinking 'I don't think we do that' at a number of points throughout my reading and I shall pass the book to relevant colleagues with those pages marked.

The book is a useful refresher for those areas in which we are involved as conservators and a good reminder of why certain things happen in the way that they do, particularly in relation to loans. Checklists throughout the book act as a useful reminder of best practice and for those conservators who find themselves as the collections management team in its entirety, this book would serve as a good companion.



The only downside of the book is the price (£43.96 for CILIP members; otherwise £54.95). Its intended audience is somewhat niche and thus it has a price tag to reflect the small volume of sales that it will probably achieve. This may put it beyond the reach of many museums and this is a pity, as it really is a very useful guide.

How did Birmingham Museums Trust fare from its inclusion? I'm pleased to tell you that we fared very well. A form we developed as an object movement assessment form was included as an example of best practice. Get a copy of the book and have a look. We'd be delighted to hear that you are using it too.

**Jane Thompson Webb**, Care of Collections Group and Collection Care Officer, Birmingham Museums (previously Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery)

### MORTARS, RENDERS AND PLASTERS Practical Building Conservation series

**Alison Henry & John Stewart, volume eds.**

Ashgate Publishing for English Heritage 2012

ISBN: 978-0-7546-4559-7 643pp

*Principal contributors: John Ashurst and Richard Ireland*

*Other contributors: Peter Ellis, Helen Hughes, Sophie Godfraind, David Mason, Tracy Manning, Robyn Pender, Sarah Pinchin, Simon Swann, Nigel Whitehouse and Chris Wood*

It is fitting that one of the opening photographs in this volume shows the hand of John Ashurst within an imprint in plaster created two millennia ago at Herod's Fortress at Masada because the roots of this volume reach back to John Ashurst's notebooks, which in turn led to the first volume of *Mortars, Renders and Plasters* published in 1988. This much enhanced and expanded volume provides the historical background to the subject with a detailed explanation of current theory and practice.

With contributions from many noted experts in the field (listed above) this book is very much a team effort, and this is where its strength lies. At over six hundred pages it may appear unwieldy and not reader-friendly; however this is not the case for I found it a delight to either read or dip into. Material is clearly presented and lavishly illustrated with photographs and diagrams. Throughout the text there are links to the other volumes in the series (timber, stone etc), and at the end of each of the main sections there is a list for further reading, enabling one to probe deeper into particular aspects raised within the volume.

The core of the book – the nature of lime

plaster and renders, how they come to be in the condition they are in and what can be done to conserve them for future generations – is described in a logical manner. It starts with a thorough description of mortars, renders and plasters; what they are made from, how they are prepared and used. From here causes of deterioration and damage are investigated and explained, with this in turn leading to assessment of the condition of mortars through surveying, diagnosis and comprehension. From assessment treatment options are considered, their suitability and how they can be applied, concluding with proposals for long term care and maintenance. A considerable amount of information is presented here; parts are complex and there are times where there is a need to move about the volume to pursue a particular thread or issue.

Within the core section of the book I found the information on limes, naturally hydraulic limes, cements, pozzolans and gypsum of considerable interest. Here historical usage is linked into qualities of the materials (strength, permeability, porosity, brittleness and speed of set). There is also extensive discussion on mortar and plaster mixes and how they might be successfully employed.

After the core section five 'special topics' are discussed: 'Paints for Plasters and Render', 'Decorative Painting on Plaster and Render', 'Natural Cements', 'Mortar Floors' and 'Ruins'. Each provides an overview with many jewels of information and links to delve deeper. There is a useful Glossary too. To sum up, I find this to be a very practical and user friendly volume which presents and explains this fascinating subject in a clear and digestible manner. The editors and contributors should be congratulated for their combined efforts.

**Peter Martindale** ACR

## WORKSHOPS

### CARING FOR SCREENPRINTS

**IAP Course in association with Tate Britain**

London 10 -11 October 2012

'It's probably unsalvageable, but there's a chance we may be lucky' was the first piece of advice given on this two-day IAP course 'Caring for Screenprints' with **Piers Townshend**. Piers was emphasising the importance of managing client expectations when faced with the technical challenges of dealing with screenprints and this is an attitude which – thanks to this course – I now understand to be necessary in the treatment of these often difficult objects.

The workshop focused on a treatment methodology using a solvent chamber – a heat-sealed bag made from Escal oxygen barrier film – and a solvent reservoir containing white spirit, with a small



Piers Townshend in action at the IAP course

proportion of other solvents, which vary with the type of ink. The principle is that the solvent softens the ink so that it gently expands along with the paper as water is introduced, avoiding cracking of the ink, or scalloping of the paper margins. The Escal film prevents the solvent escaping so reducing (but of course not removing) the need to use extraction.

There were a good many 'what not to do' examples which Piers had prepared earlier, for example how to tell when a print has been in the chamber too long or had come into contact with the film of the chamber while the ink was softened. These practical demonstrations would be of real diagnostic use to anyone needing to carry out similar treatments on these tricky objects.

The plentiful time waiting for prints to soften or wash was put to good use examining example screenprints and test samples and discussing, amongst other things, anoxic framing trials, rust removal, anionic fixatives, different types of copy pencil, use of fibreglass pens, consolidation, bleaching, the problems of drying large objects and the best methods of adhering stretching margins. While the selection of topics touched upon was wide the course always remained focussed on the theme of caring for screenprints.

We visited the print rooms to examine some of Tate's collection of screenprints, discussed storage methods and access, and later enjoyed a talk by **Joyce Townsend** about the Tate's use of the microfademeter to quantify colour change with light exposure and how it helps them make loan and display decisions.

During the demonstrations we were encouraged to be hands on and there was plenty of time allowed for questions and in-depth discussions. Some processes could not be demonstrated within the limited two day timeframe of the course and in these cases we were presented with a range of prepared examples. I feel that the course

would have benefitted from a presentation of more scientific background for the methods being taught – in particular on how the rust removal treatment works. Given the location, I also felt that an opportunity had been missed for an in-gallery element to the course.

However, my overall opinion of the course is resoundingly positive: I thoroughly enjoyed the lively and wide-ranging discussion and the insight into the practical problems of dealing with screenprints. This course is as much a masterclass in the methods, tips and tricks of Piers Townshend as a class on screenprints. I know this window into his working process will provide me with real benefit in my studio practice.

**Sophie Connor** Freelance Paper Conservator

#### **WOODBORERS WORKSHOP** **Icon Care of Collections Group** **Reading University September 2012**

'We need poo pictures!' This was the closing cry at the Woodborers workshop organised by Care of Collections Group.

The participants were drawn from those with a specific interest in Integrated Pest Management, as the day was focussed on woodboring insects and thus assumed some prior knowledge of insect pests. They were guided by **David Pinniger** with assistance from entomologists **Graham Holloway** (Reading University and our host), **Darren Mann** (Oxford University Museums) and **Brian Riddout** (English Heritage's timber expert).

A short but informative presentation covered insect biology and identification. This showed that woodborers are very picky about the type of wood they eat, requiring specific levels of humidity, fungal attack or parts of the tree before they will attack wood. Imported timber and loans are bringing new species to the UK – thankfully these beetles mainly require living wood to

colonise (and warmer temperatures than are normal in the UK) so are unlikely to take hold here. This did raise interesting questions around reproduction objects and wood used for crates. These items are rarely subject to museum quarantine procedures but the prospect of large beetles emerging from these items in galleries is rather alarming. We perhaps need to rethink our procedures in relation to these items.

After this came the quiz. Anyone who has done a course with David Pinniger will know that there are always boxes of bugs and often samples of damage too. This course was no different, except that there were bugs, damage and frass! For me, this is always the best part of the course. Insects in real life always look different from their pictures and the damage that looked so obvious on the slide seems much more like everything else in an object. The revelation on this course was frass. I already knew the defining features of Furniture beetle (*Anobium punctatum*) and Death Watch beetle (*Xestobium ruffivilosum*) frass but this was a whole new world. Powder Post and False Powder Post frass is impossible to tell apart. House Long Horn beetle frass is like little oil drums. Dry Wood Termite frass has little scoops in each face of its frass making it quite sculptural. I spent the afternoon gazing down microscopes in absolute delight. We were all delighted to find that 'Timber' by Brian Riddout for English Heritage contains some wonderful pictures of frass that greatly aided the identification.

The day closed with a discussion about how best to format the information we had shared. The discussion came up with various suggestions but we unanimously agreed that we needed more poo pictures! This was a fascinating way to spend a day and huge thanks go to the course leaders and especially Graham Holloway for offering his lab and sharing the senior common room with us.

**Jane Thompson Webb**, Care of Collections Group

#### **ENVIRONMENT FOR OBJECTS** **Icon Book and Paper Group Co-operative** **Training Register** **Oxford 29–30 October 2012**

The Book and Paper Group's CTR events continue with **Dr Tim Padfield**, a conservation scientist, giving two one-day workshops introducing the principles and tools needed to promote low energy environment control. The Bodleian Library's Conservation and Collection Care Department were excellent hosts for the first day's thirty participants in their temporary location, a pleasant riverside walk from Oxford. Day two was generously hosted by the Oxford Conservation Consortium, with twenty five members in attendance. This location is adjacent to the Chantry Library, allowing participants to look at copies of the environmental standards mentioned in Dr

Padfield's presentation. We had received, well in advance, a commendably readable bibliography available from Dr Padfield's website [www.conservationphysics.org](http://www.conservationphysics.org).

Dr Padfield began by summarizing the day ahead, running through the principles and issues of environment control and standards including the need for human comfort in exhibitions. Padfield went on to highlight problems with various approaches especially an over-reliance on air conditioning. He introduced us to a diagram, after Sebera's concept of the isoperm, with contours of constant reaction rate of a typical hydrolysis reaction as a method of predicting the influence of temperature and relative humidity. The use of one reaction is reflected in the Image Permanence Institute's Preservation Index which uses cellulose acetate degradation to give an estimated lifetime in years.

The benefits of allowing temperature variations were proposed using the Sebera diagram. Case studies of three buildings with different control methods were described including full air conditioning, buffered with mild conservation heating, and dehumidified with some winter heating from the inhabited areas. The advantages and disadvantages were discussed comparing the different climates achieved and the energy levels used.

Standards for the archive environment were considered, beginning with the recently published PD5454:2012 and PAS198:2012. Relative humidity and temperature recommendations that were referenced in the documents were discussed and Padfield queried the reliability of guides that do not quote all their sources. Relative humidity and temperature levels from different continents recommended in the last ten years were shown to illustrate their inconsistency. There are only about three hundred conservation scientists in the world to supply reliable evidence. Nor is there a scientifically useful database of damage attributed to environment, so many standards can only be guidelines. As a book conservator I find attributing damage to specific environmental causes difficult with complex items such as leather.

We broke into groups in order to design a heritage store. We began by plotting a year's climate data on a vapour pressure chart before using this and the type of collection to specify the environment. We decided what control activity was needed to achieve this and proposed a low energy, pragmatic course of action. Unfortunately this took up a lot of time and would have been more useful nearer the end of the day when we had a better understanding of low energy climate control methods.

Padfield described the principles of air conditioning and gave examples of historic methods of control through building techniques, for example, incorporating

towers to allow warm humid air to rise. The properties of thermal mass versus lightweight insulation to modify daily and seasonal temperatures were described. Issues around cold storage including problems with ice formation and the effects of RH buffers in individual packs were discussed.

Padfield's aim was to be responsive to the participant's knowledge and interests so the first day's programme was used as a guide. Pollution and the uses and limits of humidity buffering were not covered. By the second day the programme had bedded in and all subjects were included.

This was a fascinating introduction to a complex subject which was over-subscribed. I now have some knowledge of the issues and limitations of low energy approaches to archive stores. Padfield's clear explanations furthered our enthusiasm for encouraging low energy solutions to environmental control. However, for this conservator despite the reading list, a longer course would be welcome.

**Angela Craft**, Book Conservator  
Senate House Library, University of London

## CONFERENCES

### PROBLEM STONES 2

**Icon Stone and Wall Paintings Group**  
The Tower of London 15 November 2012

The Tower of London is an excellent place to visit regardless of when you go. The draw of this venue was one of the reasons why Problem Stones 2 returned, where five years ago, Problem Stones 1 proved such a success. As before, Historic Royal Palaces couldn't have done more to enhance this event, providing surveyors and conservators as specialist tour guides.

Building archaeologist, **Dr Roland Harris**, who has worked extensively on the recent White Tower project and the appointed Tower of London architect, **Ian Angus** of Carden and Godfrey Architects described the variety of stones used in the construction of the White Tower and the conservation techniques used to repair this iconic building. There are thirty five different stones in its construction. Kentish Ragstone is the principal building stone, but there is also Thanet sandstone, Reigate, Tainton, Beer, Caen and Portland, to name just a few others. Perhaps this isn't a tale of problem stones since hardly any stones were replaced in this project and their longevity may be in part due to the relatively soft, shelly, original bedding mortar that substantially remains. This phase of repairs has used non-hydraulic lime mortars since it was observed that hydraulic lime used in the 1950s seems to have caused fracturing in the Ragstone.

Now clunch is a problem stone. It delaminates, fractures, spalls recurrently. Even in the 14th century, it was known that this soft and easily carved stone deteriorated



**Delaminating clunch**

rapidly and various treatments have been used to try and address this. Recent research by **Trevor Proudfoot** (replaced at this presentation by **Berenice Humphreys**) of Cliveden Conservation Workshop Ltd and **David Odgers** has looked to identify the reasons behind this troublesome stone.

Clunch is a fine, highly microporous, and sedimentary limestone, with 8% clay content. Their site investigations (David Odgers sang the praises of a microscope that connects via a USB to a laptop) and laboratory investigations indicated that the likely decay mechanism is the blocking of fine pores on the worked stone surface. This affects the permeability of the stone, leading to differential thermal stress and variable moisture transfer, resulting in delamination and powdering.

In 2011, Messrs Odgers and Proudfoot also had the opportunity to review consolidation trials undertaken by English Heritage in 1985. These trials described a series of comparative consolidation treatments that were undertaken on the clunch of the south stable block at Woburn Abbey. One-half of this elevation had been dressed back (which was the Estate's method of dealing with delaminating clunch) to behind the decay zone and the other had not. The same treatments were applied to both types of surface. They included an alkoxy silane consolidant (Brethane), hydrophobic treatments (microcrystalline wax, boiled linseed oil) and lime treatment (lime poultice, limewater and lime-casein shelter coat).

Although the section treated with Brethane had survived very well, some decay was evident and issues of re-treatability make it an unviable option. Areas treated with wax and oil have discoloured and continued to deteriorate. The section that had received lime treatment had initially worked well but with lack of maintenance had broken down. The client, Woburn Abbey Estate is to be commended for investing in such research. These investigations have not only helped us better understand the deterioration of this stone, but also highlight the value of undertaking these activities and reviewing



Lias Quarry

past treatments – something that we do all too rarely.

David Odgers had clearly been very busy since he presented a second talk on Purbeck marble, reviewing the history of its treatment. The mechanism of the decay of Purbeck marble is a complex interrelationship between mineralogy, environmental conditions, the methods of working and fixing and previous treatments. This presentation used examples from York Minster, Norwich Cathedral, and Gloucester Cathedral to review both historic and recent treatments and explored currently available options. One of the strangest materials was 'snake stone' – a prize is offered to anyone who knows what this is! **Lynne Humphries** of Humphries and Jones went on to describe the conservation of two 16th century tomb chests in Chichester Cathedral. This dealt with the build up of centuries of wax, crude cementitious repairs, delaminating and friable areas through careful removal and consolidation with lime mortars.

Perhaps it is unfair to term Blue Lias and sandstones problem stones since those who presented talks on these weren't short of conservation methods to deal with them. However for those who are less familiar, it was fascinating to hear about how these conservators tackle them. **Sally Strachey** and **Lisa Etherton** outlined several case studies to illustrate the numerous techniques used by Sally Strachey Historic Conservation to conserve churches built of blue lias. Blue lias is easily available and quarried in large sheets with narrow beds, which makes its use limited but not necessarily problematic. The blue-grey lias is fine-grained and crystalline, with a high clay content which all contribute to potential deterioration. However, Sally and her team have adapted several traditional techniques to prolong the life of such structures. These include re-rendering, re-pointing, surface repair, sheltercoating and slurry consolidation. They usually use blue lias (hydraulic) lime for these interventions.

**Christa Gerdwilker** gave an overview of the diverse range of sandstones that she and her colleagues at Historic Scotland are challenged with conserving. Using examples from all over Scotland, common causes for accelerated sandstone decay were discussed. The harsh environment is certainly a factor, but poor design and selection of inappropriate stones and ill-considered past treatments have in some cases led to costly and irreversible damage. Christa illustrated the care and investigation that Historic Scotland undertake to understand the stone types and underlying decay mechanisms, the techniques they use to monitor long-term conditions, as well as the craft and skills of those tasked to conserve their precious heritage.

**Graciela Ainsworth** also illustrated her talk with some of Scotland's most iconic architectural features. She has been working and carving sandstone there since 1990 and her talk presented the variety of problems she has encountered. The details of her work were fascinating particularly for us conservators (and my Achilles heel since as Chair I failed to keep Ms Ainsworth to her allotted time) and her care and enthusiasm were inspiring.

A topic that made everyone sit up was the Strategic Stone Study, presented by **Alison Henry** of English Heritage, who collaborated with the British Geological Survey (BGS), local geologists and historic buildings experts from each of thirty five English counties on this nationwide project. England's rich architectural heritage owes much to the great variety of stones used in buildings and other structures. Stone is the major building material in many of the half-a-million listed buildings and 9,500 conservation areas in England. If the character of these buildings and areas is to be maintained, supplies of new matching stone are needed for repair and new construction. In many cases however, the source of the original stone is not known and even where it is, it is not unusual to find that the quarry has long-since closed. This makes it difficult to obtain suitable stone for repair or new-build. By identifying the most significant building stones used in the past and by mapping where they came from and potential alternative sources, the Strategic Stone Study aims to address these problems. This enables the most significant building stones in each county to be established and, where possible, the original source of stone for a particular building or settlement identified. Progress to date can be viewed on the BGS website, but Alison stressed that it is work in progress and further work is required to make the system fully functional.

The conference covered a lot of ground and it is clear that even in these economically difficult times there are clients, architects and conservators who have the resources, techniques and skills to investigate and

conserve our rich stone heritage. I don't think we'll be organising Problem Stones 3. Not because there aren't plenty more stones and decay mechanisms to understand and investigate, but perhaps it'll be titled Challenging Stones. Certainly the speakers at this conference repeatedly stated that the stones they were tackling weren't really problematic but this is a matter of perspective and a conservator's role is often to overcome constraints – material, logistical, budgetary etc. We don't tend to see things as problematic, since we like nothing more than a challenge!

Abstracts of the presentations at this conference can be found on the Stone and Wall Paintings group page on the Icon website.

**Clara Willett** Architectural Conservator  
English Heritage

### THE BIG DEBATE: how to present the Great Hall of Kelmarsh Hall Kelmarsh Hall Northants 22 November 2012

For the last twenty years the Trustees of Kelmarsh Hall have been faced with a difficult dilemma – how to present the Great Hall at Kelmarsh. The problem is that the Trustees are faced with an excess of riches – the room has just too many 'significant phases'.

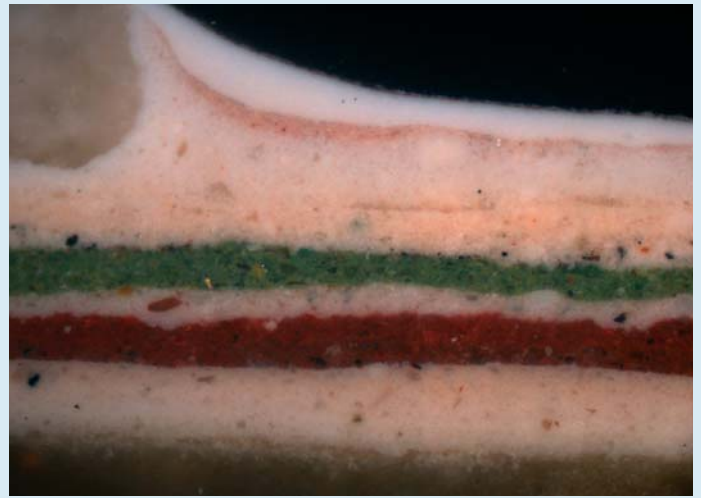
Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire is a Grade I listed building described as 'a Palladian gem'. The imposing double height entrance hall was designed by James Gibbs, one of Britain's most eminent architects, c.1723–32, and survives structurally unaltered (apart from the loss of its original chimneypieces). But around 1928 to 1930 the Great Hall was redecorated by Nancy

#### The Great Hall at Kelmarsh





Detail of flaking paint



Paint cross-section showing Nancy Lancaster's bright pink obliterating the early 20thc dark green which she did not like

Lancaster in a vibrant shade of pink. The hall was described at that time as being 'unhesitatingly welcoming, absolutely surprising, unashamedly elegant; a rich but fresh setting made from the melding of textures and colours.' Nancy Lancaster went on to become one of the pivotal figures of British interior design, co-owner of the firm Colfax & Fowler, and to be hailed as 'the inventor of the English Country House Style'.

By the 1990s, however, the existing scheme was flaking badly and was in need of some form of intervention. At that time it was assumed that the Nancy Lancaster 'Kelmarsh pink' was the existing scheme on the walls of the Great Hall but this was not the case. Research carried out in the 1990s (Ian Bristow, Marianne Suhr), further complicated matters, establishing that the current scheme was not the one devised by Nancy Lancaster but a later scheme applied in the 1950s, most likely under the direction of John Fowler. This new knowledge enriched the Trust's dilemma. John Fowler is an important figure in the history of twentieth century historic house presentation; apart from being Lancaster's business partner at Colefax & Fowler, he was also responsible for the redecoration of many National Trust interiors during the 1950s and 1960s.

Which of these decorative schemes is the most significant? Such discussions, or 'the management of values-conflict disputes', is the stuff-in-trade of all conservation bodies and professionals. We conserve the fabric of objects and buildings but it is the value we attach to these materials which makes them important and deemed worthy of conservation. So how do we begin to evaluate and compare the relative values of the original Gibbs scheme and these two later twentieth-century interventions? It is the 'chalk and cheese' problem.

The faded appearance of the Fowler scheme may indeed have a certain charm, but we assume that it does not reflect the classical simplicity of the original Gibbs interior and does not have the excitement and élan of the famous Nancy Lancaster pink scheme. There are clearly several options for the presentation of the Great Hall and each option has its own group of fervent advocates. 'It is obvious we should recreate Gibbs!' some cry, while others state 'This is a rare survival of a John Fowler scheme and

should be retained!', only to be refuted by the assertion 'No, it is not by Fowler at all!' while another faction pleads 'Let's recreate Nancy's pink!'. But as the argument continues so does the deterioration of the existing paint scheme and it is in danger of being lost before any management plan is formulated. A decision needs to be made. But what action should the Trustees take?

Like most historic buildings Kelmarsh Hall has to earn its keep and runs a very successful and varied functions and events programme, which includes product launches, seminars, photo shoots, team-building days, dinners and wedding receptions. While some clients love the worn look of the Great Hall, other potential clients are put off by the flaking paint and ad-hoc retouching, and what they perceive as a neglected interior. In 1999 this dilemma inspired a one-day conference entitled 'Inspired by the Past – Kelmarsh Hall 1926–1954' which was held at Kelmarsh and organised by the Kelmarsh Preservation Trust and the Traditional Paint Forum. The papers delivered were re-presented at another conference 'Country House Taste in the Twentieth Century' held in London in 2001

#### The Debate programme

with assistance from English Heritage. The papers were then published in 'John Fowler – The Invention of the Country-House Style'. (Hughes 2005)

While these two conferences and the post-prints went some way to clarifying the issues, they did not resolve the problem. Previous architectural paint research carried out by Dr. Ian Bristow in the 1990s was a limited pilot study restricted to fifteen paint samples removed from the lower level of the room. The new research was carried out in 2012 to establish the appearance of the original Gibbs', later Georgian and Victorian schemes – and Nancy Lancaster Pink. This research had the advantage of high level access and the examination of over one hundred and fifty paint samples. At the same time the Trustees explored mechanisms for making the decision about the future presentation of the Great Hall. Setting aside their own personnel preferences the Trustees identified all the possible options for their future treatment of the room.

These were:

- Recreate the James Gibbs scheme (c.1723 –1732)
- Recreate the Nancy Lancaster scheme (c.1928 – 1930)
- Recreate the John Fowler scheme (1950s)
- Conserve the existing John Fowler scheme
- Commission a new scheme
- Do nothing

It was then agreed to hold a formal debate and invite six experts to speak in favour of one of the six possible options. In this way, all the evidence and the issues concerning the value and significance of each phase of the history of the Great Hall could be presented to the Trustees, all the Kelmarsh stakeholders and conservation specialists and be openly discussed. It was hoped that by the end of the proceedings a logical way forward for the presentation of the Great Hall would emerge and this would facilitate the Trustees' decision making. The first step was to appoint a chair to moderate the debate and the subsequent audience discussion. Dr Anna Bülow, an Icon accredited conservator specialising in preventative conservation and heritage management, agreed to undertake this role and select the six specialists – and so The

Great Debate was created.

### **Helen Hughes** ACR

*Postscript: The Great Debate took place in front of an animated audience of heritage professionals and if you are wondering how it all turned out – what the arguments for each option were and the final decision – you can find the rest of Helen Hughes' fascinating report on the Icon website and the Kelmarsh Hall website. The event was hailed by all to be a great success. Perhaps this format offers a useful template for managing other 'values conflict disputes;?*

[www.icon.org.uk](http://www.icon.org.uk)  
[www.kelmarsh.com](http://www.kelmarsh.com)

## TALKS

### **FORGING AHEAD**

**Icon Paintings Group**  
London 8 November 2012.

This talk about the Jägers-Beltracchi Case and the evolving role of scientific and technical art historical analysis in authentication was given by **Dr Nicholas Eastaugh** of Art Access & Research Ltd., London, and the Pigmentum Project, University of Oxford. A fascinating presentation, it concerned a forger and his work, the fictional provenance to the forgeries and how the scam was unearthed. It was a popular event, in fact a sell-out. My interest in attending was twofold: to hear how technical analysis had been employed in the role of detecting the work of a forger and through that to widen my appreciation of how and why particular analytical methods might be employed and to listen to an intriguing tale.

The scam was discovered as a result of a forgery selling in 2006 for €2.88million. Entitled 'Red Painting with Horses' (1914), it was thought to be by Heinrich Campendonk (1889–1957) who was a member of De Blaue Reiter, when in fact it was a forgery created by Wolfgang Beltracchi, an art school dropout with some experience of restoring and reworking paintings.

The plausibility of the deception was reinforced with 'staged', 'historic' photographs and fake labels on the reverse of the painting. The background story was that a famous entrepreneur and collector Jägers (1912–1992) amassed a collection of work by artists regarded as 'degenerate' by the Nazis. In 1991, shortly before his death, he gave part of his collection to his granddaughter Helene Beltracchi. Heinrich Campendonk was amongst the many modern artists condemned by the Nazi party, indeed paintings by him were exhibited in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition in Munich in 1937.

Nicholas Eastaugh helpfully explained that the type of artist a forger seeks is one who is not too famous (to avoid arousing suspicion) but of sufficient profile to make forging work

by that artist sufficiently profitable. In this case, Wolfgang Beltracchi's forgery aroused suspicion because the painting sold for such a high price at auction. In 2008 Nicholas was asked to inspect 'Red Painting with Horses' to determine whether it was a fake or not. He found it to be a fake as pigments were present which postdate the painting's supposed date of 1914. Over time a number of other forgeries by Beltracchi were unearthed which had been thought to be by artists like Max Ernst and Andre Dérain.

Wolfgang Beltracchi and his wife Helen Beltracchi (who was an accomplice) were arrested in 2010 but by co-operating with the police he received a reduced six year jail sentence and Helen four years. It seems likely that in co-operating with the authorities he was economical in describing the extent and nature of his activities. Collectors and dealers in the art market may, too, have reasons for not wishing to unearth the full extent of a forger's activity in order to protect their investments and name.

With a range of forgeries to inspect it was possible to build a picture of the characteristic methods and materials employed by Wolfgang Beltracchi, as is the case for the work of any artist. For canvas he used old paintings, scraping, sanding and stripping away the original paint before painting the forgery; as a result of this the reverse of the canvases employed displayed similar staining qualities. Turning to the front, each forgery (whether supposed to be by Ernst, Dérain or Campendonk) displayed similar scratch/abrasion marks along with similar crack patterns. These and other features were used by Dr. Eastaugh to discover more forgeries by Beltracchi. Once one forgery is accepted into the fold it becomes easier to introduce other forgeries; hence Beltracchi's initial success. In a similar vein once one forgery is discovered others become easier to spot.

There were for me two particularly memorable aspects of the talk: first, the method of sampling and, secondly, the skills base for the art historian. A number of tiny paint samples were taken, these were much smaller than those required for cross sections and the aim was to identify the palette being used. Being smaller than cross sections it was possible to take more samples. The second aspect was a recommendation that technical art historians are required in the field of buying and selling paintings to protect collectors from the work of a forger. He also felt that the successful introduction of forgeries into the oeuvre of accepted work is similar to allowing a virus into a computer system, thereby infecting the knowledge base.

I found the presentation rewarding and informative, coming away thinking how important it is to look carefully at what one is seeing and avoid slipping into seeing what one expects to see.

With thanks to Clare Finn and Francis Downing for organising the evening.  
**Peter Martindale** ACR

### **CONSERVATION, MORTALITY AND THE MEANING OF LIFE**

**The 15th Annual Plenderleith lecture**  
**Icon Scotland Group**  
29 November 2012 Glasgow

Traditionally the annual 'Plenderleith' is held in Edinburgh but this year it was held at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow – a great success, as the event was sold out. The Plenderleith 'crystal' anniversary, sponsored by Historic Scotland, was preceded by the Icon Scotland Group General Meeting.

**Dr. Mark O'Neill**, Director of Policy and Research at Glasgow Life, chose the challenging topic of 'mortality' for his lecture. Drawing us at full-speed into the topic of his speech by alluding to the 'non-rational aspects' of conservation.

Mark started by observing the strangeness of what we do if we look from an alien perspective: we are preserving and displaying dead things as if they have eternal life. 'Museums are about death', he quoted from P. D. James, and conservators have a unique position at the centre of this argument. He proposed that the link between the words 'museum' and 'mausoleum' is not just phonetic but historic with conservators acting as the embalmers of museums. He contrasted the policies of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), the USA's largest museum, and those of the conglomerate of museums grouped under Glasgow Life. Philippe de Montebello, former director of the Met, argued against making copies of the Buddhas of Bamiyan but ran a museum full of replicas. These might be authentic Roman versions of Greek statues, but in 1300 years' time today's replicas will be just as 'ancient' – there is no such thing as an 'authentic copy' or a permanent exhibition.

Mark drew attention to the Japanese concept of wabi-sabi which centres on the acceptance of transience and imperfection: nothing lasts, nothing is finished and nothing is perfect. Notably Japan now mostly follows

### **At the Plenderleith lecture**



Western-style conservation, but the shrine buildings at Naikū and Gekū are still rebuilt every twenty years without loss of perceived authenticity. Turned nearer to home, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow, re-opened its doors to great acclaim in 2006 after a three-year refurbishment. However, *The Burlington Magazine* published a controversial review accusing the Museum of appealing to the lowest common denominator. In a rare public response Mark noted that, despite fear of 'letting the masses in' (an age-old concern in the museum world), to date no major harm has been caused by this practice to the collections on display. He questioned if the protection of our collections really is a matter of life and death?

Mark confided with his audience that he feels Ernest Becker's classic psychological and philosophical book *The Denial of Death* supports his argument that western culture provides ways of denying mortality. He read this book only five years ago but had been debating issues of immortality at Glasgow museums much longer. 'Terror Management Theory' (human behaviour motivated by fear of death) builds on Becker's writings stating that we use symbols to represent continuity. Conservators, as protectors of 'immortal' symbols in their physical forms, are at the centre of the tension between the ephemeral and the eternal. Attitudes in conservation tend towards the premise that objects should not die.

Mark suggested an adverse consequence of our current museum culture is that we dampen down experience, including the life of things, to stop death. Where others believe that the public has no business looking at what conservators do (the 'cooking' of conservation) Mark takes the opposite approach. The Glasgow Life conservators share their 'cooking', working on objects on public display. Consequently, Glasgow museums showcase a celebration of life rather than death. 'Engagement' is the mot du jour here.

During discussion one question was where is the communication blockage between curators, conservators and the public? Mark proposed that there are blockages at all levels of museum culture, where each group stereotypes another. He argued for the quality of self-awareness, and to search out colleagues who want to co-operate. Conservation ethics was also touched on.

If there is one thing we should take away from this lecture, it would be the appreciation of transience. We, as conservators, need to counter the myth of Platonic objects that do not decay. Mark gave us a memorable evening and discussions started in the Royal Concert Hall will carry on.

**Anna Zwagerman**

HLF/Icon Preventive Conservation Intern  
National Trust for Scotland



Ron Martin explains the workings of the acetate store

## VISIT

### BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE: COLD STORAGE FACILITY

Icon Photographic Materials Group  
Gaydon Warwickshire 18 October 2012

*All delegates enjoyed a sunny day at this fascinating site followed by lunch at a lovely countryside pub, which gave us a chance to meet other conservators and to chat about the day and general photographic conservation issues.*

Following on from the article in Icon News November 2011 (Issue 37) on the unveiling of the British Film Institute's new sub-zero and low humidity storage unit, Icon's Photographic Material Group decided it was a must-see and a visit was duly planned. So one October morning we converged on the store location – an isolated woodland hilltop, close to the Fosse Way – armed with unseasonably warm clothing for the tour ahead.

An initial introductory talk on the new building's construction and day-to-day operation was given by **Ron Martin**, Head of Collections Management, and **Robert Ewart**, Vaults Manager, Gaydon. Ron outlined the detailed consultation process involved in choosing the store's temperature and relative humidity parameters which are set at  $-5^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$  and 35% RH. While the new PD5454:2012 cold storage range for acetate and nitrate is recommended at  $-15^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , the BFI have chosen a higher temperature range that they feel confident reduces the risk of film degradation while balancing the energy costs of a lower sub-zero setting.

The new, 450,000-canister store is roughly the size of a football pitch and houses a combination of acetate and nitrate master film. There are six large acetate store rooms down the centre of the building with two fire protected corridors, one either side and then thirty smaller nitrate cells on the outside sides of the building. Storage conditions are controlled by air-handling, chilling and dehumidification plant, all located on the roof, and any potential sources of ignition have been designed out. The building is cleverly designed to ensure that, in the event of a nitrate fire, it would be contained within a single nitrate storage cell. Early detection and damper systems would activate and special doors or pressure relief panels would open outwards ensuring that the rest of the collection remained unaffected.

A refrigerated van is constantly moving film



These Thermoclipper crates provide an economic and effective acclimatisation container

back and forwards to the BFI's Conservation Centre in Berkhamsted. For acclimatisation of stored film to ambient room temperature, the BFI team consulted on all the possible options. After testing, they chose insulated Thermoclipper crates, which are designed for the food industry but are used here as a pragmatic solution to moving archive between different environmental zones. After twenty four hours in an acclimatisation cell ( $21^{\circ}\text{C} / 50\% \text{RH}$ ), the film rises to thermal equilibrium and so is ready for either transport out of the complex or for use within it.

The implications for the four members of staff who work on the twenty one acre site include wearing lone-working devices which provide an alarm in a 'man down' situation, limiting sub-zero working periods to forty five minutes with appropriate PPE and having annual health checks and first-aid training.

Once the PhMG group had grasped the building's design, we toggled up and headed into the stores. Entering a room at  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  is certainly cold, but possibly not as cold as I'd anticipated. One other surprise was being in the acetate stores and still being able to smell vinegar. The cold environment slows down the decomposition of the film but doesn't halt it completely, and so the tell-tale off-gassing is still detectable. Needless to say, after twenty minutes looking around the stores, the cold started to permeate through all the layers of clothing and we were glad to head outside to the sunshine.

Looking into the future, the BFI is hoping that the hill-top site will accommodate a second facility for collaborative storage. It will be interesting to hear how the building behaves as it reaches equilibrium and is formally handed over by the builders to the BFI at the end of this year, and whether the 'cool' £9m price tag proves money well spent. The PhMG group certainly enjoyed their tour and look forward to hearing of the store's progress.

**Bridget Warrington**

Churchill Archives Centre

## MARIOTA STONE

### The Return of a West Highland celebrity

by Christa Gerdwilker ACR – Historic Scotland Stone Conservator

#### Introduction

Last summer saw the much anticipated return of the restored 'Mariota Stone' to its home: the old kirkyard of the ruined Kilvickeon Parish Church in the hills above Bunesan, on the Ross of Mull.

The intricately carved stone from the early 16th century is a fine example of late medieval West Highland sculpture and is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments Act. A rare Latin inscription dedicates the stone to 'Mariota, daughter of...' with the remaining inscription sadly illegible, leaving her story hidden in the past.

However, she was obviously an important figure as is evident from the elaborate design of the tapered recumbent graveslab. The pyrite-rich West Highland slate features a large flower-headed cross above the inscription panel and a slender double-sided central stem with a stepped base. Beasts appear to be fighting to either side of the stem with interwoven foliage patterns spiralling from their tails.

The stone was originally set directly into the boggy grounds of the kirkyard. Root, soil and moisture penetration had led to the unnoticed delamination of the stone below ground. Heavy compression, possibly due to grass cutting machinery going over the fragile stone, cracked the upper surface into several sections.

Historic Scotland was informed of the damage by its local monument warden. However, in the relatively short space of time between the damage being reported and the stone being uplifted, the richly decorated central fragment of the delaminated upper bed was removed by an unknown person.

This theft resulted in much local outcry and dismay, demonstrating the strong affiliation amongst the local community with its ancestral heritage. Unfortunately, despite extensive local investigations, the whereabouts of the missing section remains unknown.

#### Conservation processes

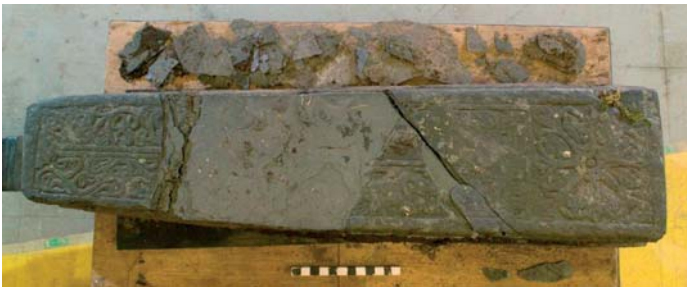
Following their careful recording and uplift, the fragments of the Mariota Stone were taken to Historic Scotland's Conservation workshop in Edinburgh for treatment.

A sound lower section remained which was of sufficient thickness to bed the many loose, and often very thin, upper fragments on. The top surfaces were protected with starch-paste applied Japanese tissue to allow the safe handling of the fragile carved surfaces.

The main fragments were carefully separated and cleaned with dry brushing to remove thick layers of soil. A great number of smaller slivers of slate could not be re-located but did not bear carved detail and were mostly discarded whereas all remaining carved surfaces were retained.



The damaged Mariota Stone, prior to the theft of the large middle section



The Stone on arrival at Historic Scotland Conservation Centre

Emergency consolidation was carried out by injecting 10% (w/v) Paraloid B72 in acetone into the many fragile cracks and thin areas of delamination to stabilise the surfaces. Fragile edges were further protected by being pointed with a fine acrylic mortar slurry consisting of 10% (w/v) Paraloid B72 in acetone mixed with fine crushed slate dust.

The surfaces were then steam cleaned at low pressure to remove more engrained dirt. The tissue was also removed during this process. This revealed many more loose areas where soil had previously held layers of slate in place.

Following cleaning, the stone was allowed to dry out after which consolidation with injections of 10% Paraloid B72 in acetone into all cracks continued. Where necessary, openings were temporarily sealed with cyclododecane (evaporating wax) to prevent the resin leaking out of the stone.

Detached stone flakes were re-adhered with HMG Paraloid B72. The larger sections and especially the upper carved layers were bedded on polyester resin pads which allowed an often tight fit of the interlocking parts while filling larger gaps where necessary. The hollow areas were then filled as much as possible with acrylic mortar consisting of fine sand mixed with 10% Paraloid B72 in acetone.

The stone was braced and turned and the cleaning and injection treatment was repeated to ensure that good contact between the layers was established and that they are all securely fixed. The fragile edges, larger open bedding planes, gaps and undercuts on all sides were filled with colour-

The Mariota Stone after cleaning and consolidation treatment



Removed surface fragments and lower layers after dry brush-cleaning

matched acrylic mortar consisting of fine schist sand, bronze powder, raw sienna and lamp black pigments to match the surrounding stonework.

### Reconstruction of the missing section

Prior to returning the stone to site, the decision was taken to replicate the missing section. This was to be done in an easily reversible manner so that it could be substituted easily in case the original part reappears at some point. At the same time, the reconstruction had to be fixed securely enough so as not to 'go walking' either and had to be sufficiently durable to withstand an exterior, albeit not exposed, climate.

To prepare the stone, all delamination edges in the missing surface areas were pointed with colour-matched acrylic mortar to fill any undercuts. The stone gap was lined with cling film onto which dimensionally stable pre-coloured black cold clay (epoxy putty) was applied in a thin layer and pressed onto the stone substrate to pick up all the underlying surface detail. A layer of multi-axial glass-fibre netting was pressed into the soft epoxy putty and a further layer of epoxy putty was then pressed on top of this to the thickness and level of the surrounding stonework. The putty penetrated the netting and connected between the two layers, thus ensuring that a solid glassfibre reinforced epoxy putty panel was being formed.

Once the putty started to harden slightly the surface was polished with a wet trowel which flattened and levelled the surface to a degree. However, the surface was left generally slightly uneven so as to closer resemble the surrounding worn stone surfaces.

A drawing of the missing middle section was traced from a RCAHMS record photo from 1978 and scaled to the size of the actual stone. The design was indented into the still slightly soft putty by pressing a chisel edge along the traced drawing. Once hard, the design was carved in shallow relief.

The pre-manufactured colour of the putty was not a sufficiently close colour match and the carving process had turned the surface grey. Subsequently, several thin acrylic paint washes were applied to colour-match the fill to the surrounding stone. The protective cling film was removed and the fill fits dry into the surface gap.

The fill panel was adhered onto the stone with the reversible and stable adhesive Paraloid B72 (70% w/v in acetone). This was applied around the perimeter of the fill and in spots. The



The Mariota Stone with reconstructed central panel

joint between the fill and stone edges was pointed with acrylic mortar. By injecting acetone underneath the fill and into the acrylic pointing mortar, the adhesive is easily reversible and the fill could be removed, should the original surface section be found.

The fragile nature of the stone and the unavoidable use of impermeable resins in the conservation and restoration of the stone meant that it could not be returned to the ground but needs to be housed in a sheltered environment, protected from moisture.

#### Return of the stone

In May 2012 the Mariota Stone was returned by the Historic Scotland stone conservation team to Tigh na Rois, the Ross of Mull Historical Centre in Bunessan. This had been particularly requested by the local community who wanted to celebrate the return of the stone with a week of events, coinciding with Scotland's Festival of Museums. This was to allow as many

people as possible to see the stone before it was returned to its remote home in Kilvickeon kirkyard.

Here, local people had constructed a timber chest to house the stone, raised off the ground and protected from the elements. An interpretation panel and a hydraulically lifted lid allow the informed viewing of the stone.

The return of the stone to its home in Kilvickeon kirkyard was celebrated by the local community with a church service on site and featured on STV national news in July 2012.

The Mariota Stone on display in Tigh na Rois (Ross of Mull Historical Centre)



Stone shelter box for the Mariota Stone in Kilvickeon kirkyard



## **TINT AND SHINE: experimenting with papercoatings on a visit to Griffen Mill** **by Fiona McLees, a Heritage Council Intern at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin**

As most paper and book conservators will be aware, there are very few handmade paper mills still in existence across the UK and Ireland. Griffen Mill based in County Mayo, Ireland, is one of the few surviving mills to make handmade papers of a quality suitable for conservation purposes, as well as creating papers for bookbinders, printmakers and watercolourists. Owned and run solely by Christine and Mike Gibbs, the company works closely with its clients to develop papers for specific purposes and this responsive way of operating has led to the creation of several Islamic-style papers such as *Akbar*, *Samarqand*, and *Ginger Lily*. As the Chester Beatty Library has a large collection of Persian, Indian, Turkish and Mamluk manuscripts these papers are of particular use within our conservation studio, and we correspond with Griffen Mill regularly to order papers and ask advice. Last Spring the owners of Griffen Mill kindly allowed four conservators from the Library to visit in order to select endpapers for a particular book conservation project.

The trip began with a visit to the 'wet end' of the Mill, where the pulping and sheet formation takes place. Depending on the type of paper to be made, the Mill uses a variety of different fibres including abaca, jute, cotton, esparto and linen. The fibres are pulped in a Victorian Hollander beater for the required amount of time (which may vary from 60 to 240 minutes depending on the qualities desired in the finished product), and the resultant pulp is then transferred to the vat and diluted with water.

The workshop uses a wide variety of paper moulds, some historic and some specially commissioned new moulds. We tried using a Royal-sized mould to make a sheet of paper each and were reminded of how difficult it is to make an even sheet of paper without any faults and just how much physical strength

Victorian Hollander Beater



is needed to lift the mould out of the vat. Equally, couching onto sheets of felt allowed further opportunity to introduce faults into the sheet as lack of pressure or misplacement on the stack could disrupt the newly formed sheet. To achieve the daily target of approximately eight hundred first-rate sheets, which was the expected output of a good papermaker around 1850, would certainly take years of practice.

Piles of the newly formed sheets interleaved with felts are then pressed in a hydraulic press in order to expel excess water, before being moved into the 'dry end' where the paper is then restraint dried. This allows it to dry in a controlled way and minimises cockling. Finally, if required, the sheets can be calendared in order to provide a smoother surface. For this purpose Griffen Mill uses a heavy machine affectionately nicknamed 'the pig flattener', which took two days to install in the workshop using a winch and moving it only a couple of inches at a time.

Christine and Mike have a vast understanding of papermaking and paper history, including knowledge of historic recipes and techniques. This kind of information can be invaluable to the paper conservator in order to understand more fully the materials that we are working with. Islamic paper recipes and preparation techniques are particularly interesting as they can include a vast array of unusual additions: starch and protein based surface coatings, dyes made from saffron, tea, henna and numerous other organic substances, and even cucumber seed mucilage used as a sizing agent.

Whilst we were there we undertook some investigations into the ingredients and methods used for creating the kind of surface tints and coatings that are found on Islamic papers

The 'pig flattener' in use





Couching a sheet of paper onto felt

and we also tried burnishing the surface to get a high shine. Historically, Islamic papers were carefully prepared prior to any calligraphy or illumination, using processes such as tinting, coating and burnishing. Surface coatings and sizes were used to create a smooth glossy, non-absorbent surface, vital to allow the reed pen used for calligraphy to move smoothly across the paper. Burnishing brings a beautiful gloss to the paper and contributes to the stiffer 'drape' that characterises paper from the Islamic world.

Experimenting with historic recipes can be useful for many reasons: first, trying some of the techniques ourselves helps us understand more deeply how and why certain effects were achieved and learn more about artists' working practices; secondly, it can help to build the conservator's visual recognition of materials and this may influence which treatment can be undertaken. Following personal experience of using duck egg ahar, when I am next confronted with a particularly glossy Islamic paper I will recall the possibility that this may indicate a protein coating. A third benefit is that the conservator can make mock-ups to see how the materials react to certain treatments; and finally, some of these methods may be appropriate to adapt and incorporate into conservation treatments, such as burnishing or toning repair papers.

Below are some of the coatings and dyes that we experimented with based on historic recipes:

- *gum tragacanth*: soaked in cold water for forty five minutes and then strained. We painted this on in two layers, allowing it to dry in between. Although it did not initially produce a particularly glossy appearance, following burnishing it moved well, felt beautiful and displayed a soft sheen.
- *duck egg ahar*: using the whites of duck eggs mixed 50/50 with water to which we added a few lumps of alum. The mixture was then moved around using fingers to agitate it. It is supposed to eventually curdle, although we found if this did happen it certainly was not visibly evident. After agitating it for about thirty minutes we strained it. For a



Papermaking at the vat

more comprehensive recipe see the link at the bottom of this article. The ahar was painted on in two coats and was very shiny once dry. The surface burnished up really well.

- *tea and saffron tints*: white paper was not generally used by Islamic artists – instead a soft tint was preferred. We experimented with gently toning the paper using saffron and tea in water. This produces tones which could be used for sympathetic paper repairs, however the suitability of using organic pigments would have to be investigated further in order to determine both the pH level and stability of the dye.

Burnishing paper





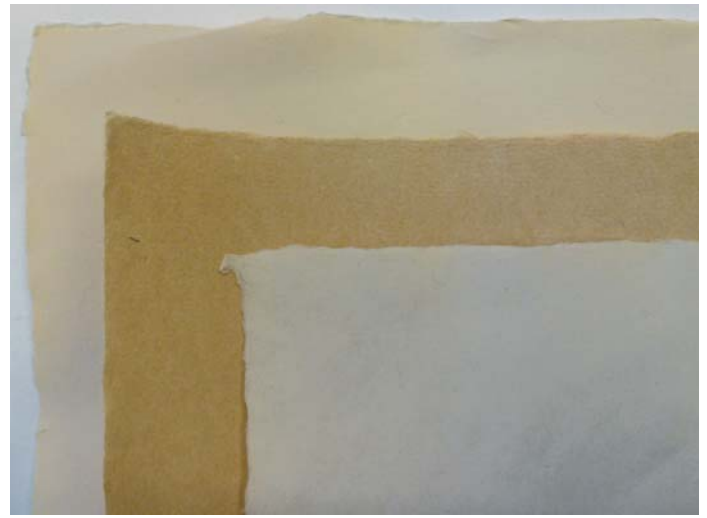
Fault in a newly couched sheet

- *gelatine*: mixing watercolour pigments with 4% gelatine in order to tint and shine at the same time. We use porcine-free gelatine when working with Islamic manuscripts, although historic recipes also record the use of fish glue as a surface size.
- *wheat starch paste*: again, mixing pigment with thin wheat starch paste in order to create a tone and gloss simultaneously. This might be a good way to tone up paper for repair of manuscripts and maybe gives depth rather than just a flat colour. It also stiffens the paper slightly which may be useful when trying to match the characteristics of highly burnished and sized papers.

To burnish a toned and coated paper it can be rested on any smooth surface. We used a table but curved wooden boards or stones were traditionally used; the curved surface would have limited the amount of movement needed from the papermaker as it reflects the natural reach of the arms. The paper could be rubbed with dry soap prior to burnishing in order to increase the slip of the burnishing stone on the surface. Stones such as agate were traditionally used, but anything smooth such as glass or conch shells were also used. We used a spherical glass paperweight which proved very easy to hold and additionally covered a large surface with each stroke (unlike using a bonefolder or small agate burnisher). Christine also has a flat round beach stone that has been professionally polished on one side; it, too, was comfortable to hold and was effective.

Occasionally Islamic papers can be seen which have patterns seemingly 'embedded' into the paper. Varying pressure by the burnisher can lead to visible differences in surface texture and gloss, so burnishing on top of a patterned surface such as carved wood could be done in order to create a subtle pattern in the paper (like taking a rubbing). We tried this by placing our sample papers over a paper doily, and indeed, a pattern could be raised very quickly.

Christine and Mike's experience of translating historical paper-making treatises into practical applications was invaluable during our experimentation. Discussing and recreating these traditional techniques really stimulated all of us into further discussions and research around the recipes and materials used in Islamic manuscript workshops. We also now have various reference samples in the Chester Beatty Library conservation studio demonstrating different surface finishes, which are not only useful for us but also handy for showing to



A selection of Griffen Mill papers – Samarqand, Ginger Lily, and Akbar

visitors when explaining the differences between European and Islamic papers.

For a paper conservator, a visit to a working paper mill can prove an excellent way to clarify the different processes involved in creating hand-made paper. Attempting to use a handmade mould and couch a newly formed sheet quickly reveals how the familiar characteristics and faults are created: the wrinkles where a couched sheet was slightly misplaced or spots where water dropped into the damp web of fibres. It also reveals the intense physical labour that was involved in making paper in a pre-industrial world and is still a part of paper-making for the surviving hand-made paper mills.

I would like to thank Christine and Mike at Griffen Mill for their generosity in sharing both their time and their extraordinary knowledge with us. Using their beautiful papers in the conservation studio is always a delight and learning more about how they are created was a real privilege.

[www.griffenmillhandmadepaper.com/](http://www.griffenmillhandmadepaper.com/)

For information about preparing paper for calligraphy:  
[www.zakariya.net/](http://www.zakariya.net/)

Further information about historic sizing and coating agents: Barkeshli, M. *Historical and Scientific Analysis on Sizing Materials Used in Iranian Manuscripts and Miniature Paintings*, The Book and Paper Group Annual 22 (2003) <http://filigranesandfibres.wordpress.com/>

#### Selecting endpapers for a 16th Century Qur'an





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## PROFILE

### Location

Southampton City Art Gallery,  
Southampton City Council, UK

### Artist

Joseph Mallord William Turner

### Title

*Fishermen upon a Lee-shore  
in Squally Weather, c. 1802*

### Medium

Oil on Canvas

### Glazing

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