



Needing treatment: a WWI surgical field pannier

Also in this issue

Celebrating the Conservation Awards!

The aftermath of a fire

An economical storage solution



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Looking towards future trends in conservation and discussing current challenges faced by the sector.

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& Art Gallery



NOVEMBER 2015 Issue 61



From the Editor

The first issue of Icon News saw the light of day in November 2005 and now here we are exactly ten years later with issue 61. I don't know whether it was serendipity or great planning that saw a round of the Conservation Awards take place in Icon's 10th anniversary year but it was an inspired move. Congratulations to all the winners and short-listed runners-up and indeed all those who took part! Thanks are also due to the many members of Icon and elsewhere whose sterling efforts in screening, judging, organising and sponsoring made it all happen. You can read about the event on page 8 and, in her column, our CEO Alison Richmond reflects on how the Awards mirror what Icon stands for.

Icon has a way to go before it catches up with the British Museum's Hirayama Studio, celebrating its 21st anniversary this autumn. You can read more about this unusual conservation studio on page 22 and we send all good wishes to the studio's colleagues, friends, partners, supporters and generous benefactors.

The lessons of a library fire bring us down to earth, just in case we risk getting too complacent and self-congratulatory.

Lynette Gill



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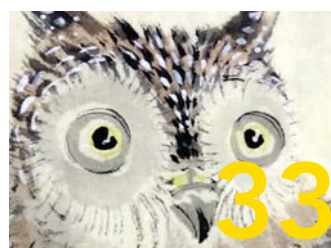
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Cover photo:
A No.1 Field Surgical Pannier from World War I, with largely intact contents, was recently made ready for display at a forthcoming Science Museum exhibition. See article on page 35
Credit: Kira Zumkley © Science Museum / Science & Society Picture Library

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professional update

From the Chief Executive



Photo: Matt Wrieford

ICON TEN YEARS ON

Alison Richmond ACR FIIC on what last month's Awards say about Icon

It is exactly ten years since Icon was founded and we decided to celebrate our 10th anniversary with a larger than ever awards programme. You can read all about the Icon Conservation Awards 2015 in this issue of Icon News. Thinking about how successful the event was, it occurred to me that the Awards programme is a mirror reflecting what Icon

stands for and is capable of.

- The Awards are a seamless whole, bringing together many different conservation disciplines, conservation practice and research.
- The Awards are only made possible through partnership. We have worked for over two years with our partners and sponsors beyond our own sector.
- The Awards are able to attract significant amounts of charitable funding, sponsorship and in-kind support which together cover the full cost of the whole programme.
- The Awards promote the highest achievements of our whole community – conservators, scientists, volunteers and others – to audiences well beyond our own profession.

This is exactly what our founders had in mind when, in 2005, the five of the twelve conservation bodies on the National Council for Conservation-Restoration (NCCR) came together to form Icon. It was to be a new kind of conservation body and the new body would be greater than the sum of its parts.

At the time, the conservation community was spread across many separate groups and organisations. There was duplication of administration and governance, as well as of membership, with many being members of more than one organisation. With a critical mass of members, anticipated to be around 3000, Icon would be the leading membership body for the conservation community and it would be able to establish economies of scale. It would represent members in all disciplines from both the public and the private sectors. It was also to accommodate the existing special interest groups in its new structure.

Although we have not yet reached the original target for membership, (partially due to an over ambitious target), and convergence has not always been smooth sailing, we have managed to build a bona fide professional association (according to the definition established by PARN*) with the prerequisite governance structures, communications systems,

code of conduct, complaints procedure, and CPD requirements. We also now have an administration team and systems that are fit for purpose and effectively support members and Groups.

From the outset Icon was to be inclusive and unite the conservation profession with the wider conservation community. This was a very important concept to the founders of Icon. Our new body wasn't just for conservators, it was for everyone involved in conservation. This is the right approach. Conservation is not an activity that is carried out only by conservators, it is truly multi-disciplinary and, at times, requires the collaboration of others, including curators, owners, librarians, archivists, artists, craftspeople, teachers, scientists, structural engineers, art historians, architects, surveyors, and volunteers.

Nor should we want to reserve the right to conserve when there is so much heritage to look after, involving many straightforward preventive measures, and so many people who can benefit from volunteering – sometimes in life-changing ways. That is why, for the first time, the awards recognised projects in which volunteers worked with a conservator – the conservator ensuring that our Professional Standards are at the heart of the project.

In 2005, the fragmentation of the sector was undermining our ability to influence policy and decision makers. With a shared clarity of purpose and a strong, credible, cohesive voice, Icon would be the lead voice for conservation and would be in a position to influence decisions that affect heritage.

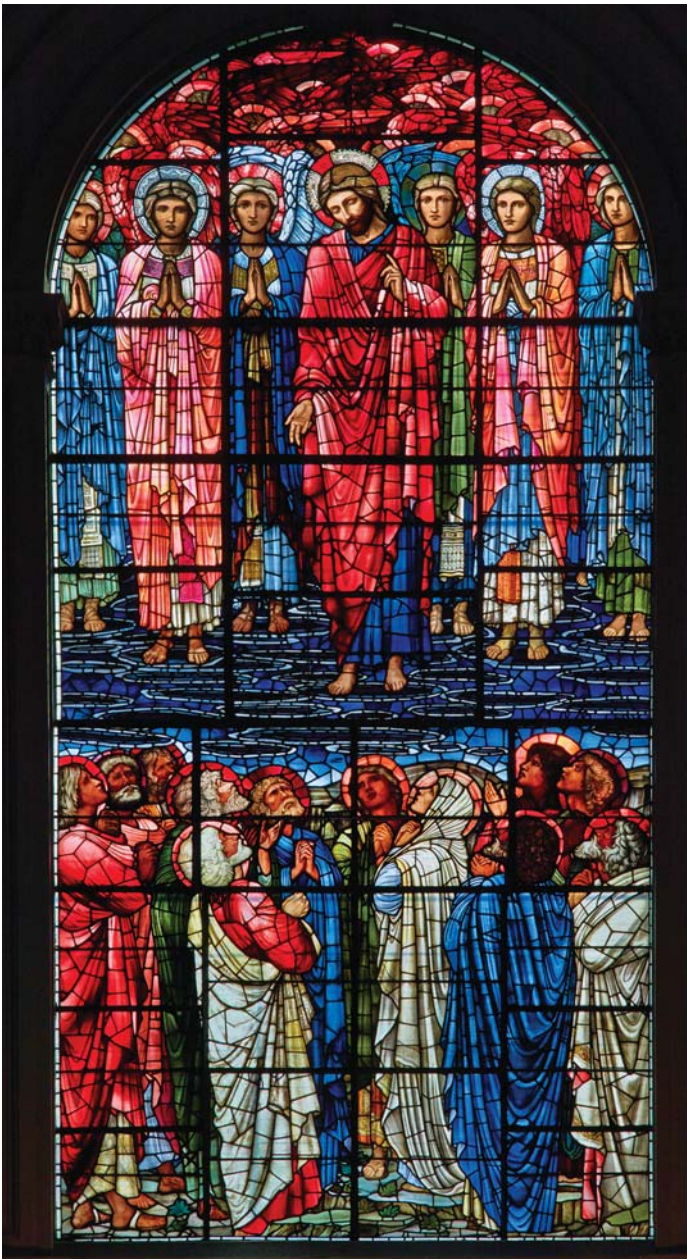
Having run this organisation for the last five years, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that we have only achieved what we have because we are taken seriously by others as the leader in the sector. One outstanding example is the significant role that Icon had as a witness in the House of Lords Enquiry into Science and Heritage in 2006/7 and again at the follow-up enquiry in 2012. To continue to be an effective voice and to work successfully with our partners we need to bring ever more clarity to our very small but overly complicated profession.

Icon has come a long way since 2005. Particularly in setting up a sustainable fit-for-purpose organisation. But there is much more to do. The trustees have set three strategic directions of travel that will be developed in more detail over the next eight months:

- Strengthen the support Icon gives to professional conservators
- Raise the public and policy profile of Icon
- Increase a wider membership and supporter base

With these, we will be building on our success to date and making greater strides in fulfilling our founders' aspirations.

* Professional Associations Research Network Professional Bodies: A User Guide Professor Andy Friedman, in press 2015.



A Burne-Jones window in Birmingham Cathedral

CALL FOR CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS

To serve on the Church of England's Cathedral Fabric Advisory Committees

ChurchCare, the buildings division of the Church of England, would like to hear from experienced conservation professionals with an interest in cathedrals and the time and specialist skills to serve on their voluntary Fabric Advisory Committees (FACs). Works on and around the Church of England's forty two cathedrals are controlled by a statutory planning system, of which FACs form a critical part.

Each cathedral has its own FAC: a committee of eight to ten expert members that provides the cathedral with advice on the care, conservation and development of the cathedral buildings, setting and contents. Each FAC is carefully constituted to contain expertise relevant to the cathedral's plans for its buildings and contents. We wish to build up a list of suitable candidates to serve on the FACs and are keen to build a strong conservation presence.

Expressions of interest are invited from competent and experienced specialists, including professionals in the



Medieval glass in Bristol Cathedral

conservation of buildings and/or objects, preventive conservation and environmental management, museums and collections management, and heritage management.

Although the role is voluntary, it presents a fantastic opportunity to contribute to the care and conservation of our rich ecclesiastical heritage and is great for CPD.

For more information on the role of FACs, and to express interest, please visit: <http://churchcare.co.uk/about-us/campaigns/news/931-expressions-of-interest-cathedral-fabric-advisory-committees> or email becky.clark@churchofengland.org. **The deadline is 30 November 2015.**

Janet Berry
ChurchCare
Janet.berry@churchofengland.org

A late 15thc misericord in the quire of Ripon Cathedral





© COWAC Photo: Meagen Smith

Alison Forsey, COWAC volunteer, working in front of bench space beneath windows used in pilot project

announcement lent added emphasis to exploit existing infrastructure, both space and plant goods.

From the conservation perspective, a number of conservators had completed internships and a number of redundancies had happened, thus creating a pool of people looking for space in which to work until a longer term solution was available. Additionally, a number of freelance conservators who would normally work in a home studio had projects that required larger scale equipment like fume cupboards or washing sinks. Therefore a group of people willing to try out our pilot scheme was approached to test the idea of renting bench space.

With management approval, preparing to rent space in the conservation studio required implementing additional health and safety procedures, agreeing security arrangements and setting up a charging process, all of which involved the wider archive team. Insurance for the renter and their objects was also evaluated and special procedures put in place for particularly high value items.

Fortunately, the robust volunteer programme run by the

Meagen Smith, book and paper conservator, working in studio space used in pilot project at City of Westminster Archive Centre

MAKING MORE OUT OF STUDIO SPACE

Conservation studio space rental at City of Westminster Archives

Finding bench space whilst a freelance conservator can be difficult. Colleagues with their own studios may offer space for a limited time but often there may not be long-term availability. For freelancers who have not yet built a reliable collection of clients, committing to studio rental and investing in heavier or bulky equipment, may not be a financially responsible option. For me, a question posed during a later plenary session of the 2013 Icon Conference in Glasgow has quietly echoed in my memory: 'Why can't larger institutions with empty benches rent out space?'

This echo grew louder for me during one of my recent projects. Whilst providing maternity cover as a book and paper conservator at City of Westminster Archives (COWAC) I managed and ran a pilot project to rent bench space in their conservation studio. The goal was to match the archive's increased revenue requirements with a need from freelance conservators for studio space available to rent on a flexible basis.

During the budgeting process for 2015–2016 and the future three years, the Conservative-led borough of City of Westminster, in common with all local Councils, is facing a challenging financial climate and increasing income is a key driver for all departments. The management team for COWAC, including Adrian Autton and Mary Enright, were already open to the idea of using the conservation studio to generate income for the service and the budgetary

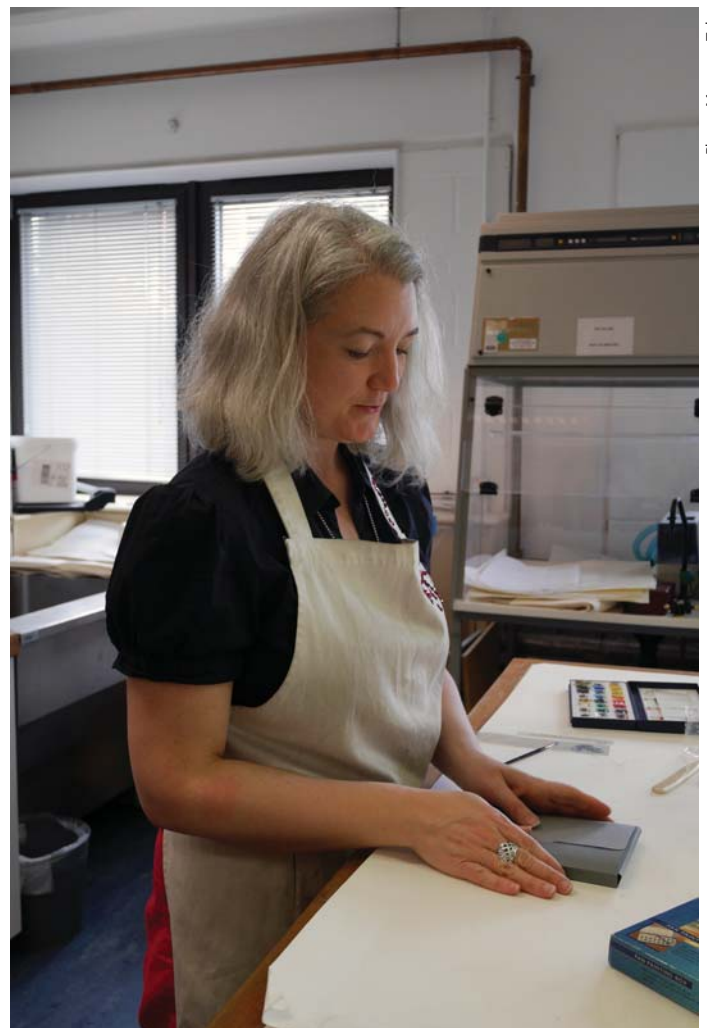


Photo: Margaret Tyler

archives over the previous years meant that many existing policies and procedures needed adjusting rather than creating from blank, such as use of the non-public areas like the staff kitchen or allocating parking space for delivery of objects to be conserved. Additionally, space allocation was thoroughly planned by specifically allocating areas in the studio to those who rented as well as providing secure storage within the studio.

Management of the rental scheme was organised in a way to minimise conservator time by using an online booking system and providing a robust induction session so that clients renting studio space would be as self-sufficient as possible.

With all planning in place, Ann-Marie Miller, a book conservator and owner of Codex Conservation, used the studio for two weeks to help COWAC test the project. It was declared a success from both sides. In her feedback Ann-Marie stated: 'It was pretty much ideal as a temporary workspace. I was able to come in at my convenience'. In addition, Alison Forsey, a long standing volunteer said 'It was fascinating to see how another conservator works and added to my experience in the conservation studio'.

Managers at COWAC rated the pilot a success and put plans in place to make studio rental an on-going part of the archive's portfolio of services when the permanent conservator returned after maternity leave. With the end of my contract in June, I was pleased to know I'd quietened the echo from the Glasgow conference and proud to know I'd addressed two very pressing requirements within heritage.

Meagen Smith

Book and paper conservator

KNOLE CONSERVATION STUDIO

It is now six months since Dana Goodburn-Brown and I were appointed Knole Conservation Studio Manager as a job share post. The creation of the studio is part of the 'Inspired by Knole' project; the biggest conservation project the National Trust has undertaken, which has been designed to finally tackle some of the long standing conservation issues at Knole and transform the visitor experience.

One of the legacies of the project will be the Conservation Studio, a permanent feature at Knole, which will continue to offer conservation services, analysis, research and investigation, and promote conservation to the public.

To set up a studio from scratch is a daunting task; not only does the space need to be multidisciplinary; it will also be open to the public seven days a week. It needs to be a flexible space: for the first three years work will focus mainly on the Knole collection and be funded through the project, beyond that the business must support itself and break even.

Both Dana and I recognise that this is a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate the work conservators do, whilst also carrying out much needed conservation work. We have the opportunity through the studio, to not only engage with the public, but also to offer work placements, skills training and



An architect's view of how the studio will look once finished

support for new conservators, students, interns and volunteers.

Day 1 saw us getting straight into detail: we had to make a decision on where every plug socket needed to go in the new Studio – for those used to building projects, this would probably be no surprise but considering we didn't yet have a building to look at, this was obviously quite a challenge. The advice given by all was you can never have too many!

We have then embarked on a tour of conservation studios here in the UK. It has been a fantastic experience for us but also extremely useful for planning our space. The task of planning a studio from scratch that will enable different types of conservation to be carried out, and also future flexibility, is considerable and we needed expert advice.

From Windsor Castle to the Science Museum, conservators have been generous with their time and knowledge. We have learnt what has and hasn't worked in their studios; what are the vital pieces of equipment and what will sit in a corner gathering dust; how to work with architects and designers to come up with a plan that keeps everyone happy; and do we need a noisy pod or not! We have seen that conservators are extremely creative people who come up with ingenious solutions to problems – who knew that massage tables, dentists chairs and motorbike jacks could be so useful in a conservation studio!

The results enabled us to plan in detail the layout of the

A view of building work to the Knole studio at roof level



Photo: National Trust



One of Knole's tapestries illustrates how vital the studio's work will be

studio space and have given us some great contacts and support in the conservation profession. Knole, and the plans for 'Inspired by Knole', continue to excite and interest people and this will build over the coming months leading up to the studio opening in 2016.

Our next task is to build our team. We will need conservators to join us so we can fulfil our objectives to the Heritage Lottery Fund and start to conserve the incredible collection at Knole. We also need to plan beyond this and start to build a sustainable conservation business for the future. And we want to continue to offer our visitors an interesting, informative and exciting experience.

We will be recruiting a team of conservators to work in the studio, in the first instance focusing on furniture, frames, paintings and upholstery. There will be a strong emphasis on research and analysis whilst we unpick the secrets of Knole's collection. We also want our team to share our passion for opening up the conservation profession to the public, to interest people who may never have been to a museum before and share in the excitement of new discoveries about the pieces we are conserving, as well as the skills and methods we use to analyse, record, stabilise and prepare items for display.

The Knole Conservation Studio aims to excel in work-based learning, training and support for up and coming conservators of the future. We will embrace innovation wherever possible and are delighted that we have formed a partnership with SEAHA* University College London for a three-year Heritage Science PhD studentship – 'Heritage Smells'.

The National Trust has established great partnership working with volunteers, and our new studio will continue and build on this tradition of sharing skills and harnessing the interest, energy and enthusiasm that volunteers bring to working with heritage.

If you are interested, have any advice: 'top tips' / 'do's & don'ts' for us, or would like to know more please do contact us on Siobhan.Barratt@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Opening day is pencilled in for July and recruitment is due to start in January so please be on the lookout if you think this will be the place for you!

Siobhan Barratt ACR

* Centre for Doctoral Training in Science and Engineering in Arts Heritage and Archaeology

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Book and Paper Group

The Book and Paper Group is delighted to be working with the Photographic Materials Group on a joint session for Icon Conference 2016. We recently sent out a call for papers and we hope to receive submissions on a wide variety of topics so that we have plenty to choose from!

Sadly, our Student Development Officer Joanna Baum will be leaving us in December. We wish Jo all the best and thank her for her initiatives and hard work in this position. Jo's role on the committee will therefore become available and the Group will be issuing an Iconnect for applications imminently. Keep an eye out if you are interested!

New volunteers for the CTR Committee are also needed to help organise the CTR's busy programme of events. Prospective volunteers should contact CTR Chair Françoise Richard (fr.conservation@gmail.com).

The recent Group Chairs' Committee meeting included a discussion with Caroline Peach, one of Icon's Interim Joint-Chairs. We discussed three new Task and Finish Group strands, as well as the areas of development that Icon wishes to expand. At the end of the meeting we had occasion to meet the new Chair of Icon's Board of Trustees, Siobhan Stevenson, who is very keen to establish good communications at all levels.

There are some great CTR events coming up and the Book and Paper Committee recently voted to introduce a cap on course prices for members in order to make them even more affordable.

Please check out our new Icon website, especially the calendar that lists our upcoming events. The site looks fantastic, but of course suggestions for further improvements are always welcome. If you have any suggestions, whether for the site, or for ways in which the Book & Paper Group can help conservators, please do get in touch!

Isabelle Egan ACR Group Chair

Book and Paper CTR Update

The Book and Paper CTR is preparing an inspiring program of workshops and lectures over the coming months that will appeal to professionals across disciplines.

Historian Professor Richard Gameson and scientists Professor Andrew Beeby and Dr Kate Nicholson will give an evening lecture on **identifying pigments in medieval manuscripts** using Raman spectroscopy. The lecture will take place at the Wellcome Trust in London on 18 January 2016. Identifying materials used in illuminated manuscripts reveals information on both the technology of illumination and the evolution of the medieval palette. The speakers' trans-disciplinary approach allows them to acquire specific data in a non-invasive manner, and interpret information gathered from medieval manuscripts throughout the British Isles and Northern Europe. The lecture will include a demonstration of their portable analytical equipment.

A series of workshops on bespoke housing for books and manuscripts will start with a three-day practical workshop on **making preservation boxes for scrolls**. Conservators Claudia Benvenuto and Veronica Zoppi will teach participants how to produce a multi-function box that provides adequate room for storage, a safe surface for handling, and an ideal support for display. The course will take place at the British Library from 7 to 9 March 2016.

A workshop on **parchment conservation** will be held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge from 22 to 24 March 2016. The workshop will cover both theory and practice. A variety of themes will be addressed, including: material transformation from animal skin to manuscript; codicology for conservators; recent developments in conservation science and their influence on practical conservation; and how scientific research into historic parchment helps inform other areas of research.

Detailed programs and booking information for each event will be released in due course.

Françoise Richard ACR (Chair, Book and Paper CTR)
fr.conservation@gmail.com

Metals Group

The Metals Committee wishes to thank Rozemarijn van der Molen, who has stepped down from the Committee due to a move. Her place on the Committee has been filled by Gates Sofer, Conservator at Tate. Welcome, Gates!

Photographic Materials Group

The Icon Photographic Materials Group's AGM and afternoon colloquium 'Photography: A Victorian Sensation in Focus' took place in Edinburgh on 15 September 2015. The event,

which included an accompanied visit to the exhibition 'Photography: a Victorian Sensation' at National Museums Scotland, and talks by the conservators, curatorial and exhibition design staff involved, was a sell out. A review of the event will be published in an upcoming issue of Icon News, and the chair's report from the AGM is available for Group members on the Icon website:

<http://icon.org.uk/groups/photographic-materials>

By the time of publication, our second historic processes workshop held in collaboration with the Icon Book & Paper Group will have taken place. This second workshop at Lux Darkroom in London focussed on salt printing, and sold out in record time. We are looking to organise similar events outwith the London area. If any of our members have any ideas for possible venues, then please get in touch, and look out for further announcements as details are finalised.

Stone & Wall Painting Group

ICON CONFERENCE 2016: *Turn and Face the Change: Conservation in the 21st Century* is Icon's third triennial conference and takes place 15–17 June 2016 at Aston University, Birmingham. The Stone & Wall Painting Group session at the conference aims to focus on the following topics:

- What are the current trends in treatment?
- How is the profession using new technologies, techniques and science?

The Group has released a call for papers. If you would like to present a paper please send a brief (approx. 250 word) abstract / proposal to: Lizzie Wooley or Lynne Humphries on swpconference@gmail.com.

Textile Group

There are two events planned for December. Due to its previous popularity there is another chance to do the 'Understanding Tapestry Back to Basics' course. This is run by Caron Penney and is designed specifically for textile conservators wishing to understand more about tapestry weaving. It will enable participants to gain a deeper insight into both contemporary and historical weaving techniques through a practical workshop over two days. The course will run on Thursday 10 and Friday 11 December at the Heritage Skills Centre in Lincoln.

On Saturday 5 December there will be a visit to Whitworth Art Gallery with a behind the scenes tour of the textile store and current exhibition 'Art Textiles' with textile conservator Ann French. There is also the possibility of a visit to Platt Hall Costume Gallery and an evening social event, in conjunction with this.

Please contact alice.beth.brown@gmail.com for further details of both these events and to book a place.

Further details of these events and upcoming events can be found on the website and on facebook

Conservation Awards 2015

A Conservation Awards ceremony is always enjoyable and past occasions have always generated excitement and enthusiasm. Icon, though we say it ourselves, is good at this kind of thing. The 2015 Awards were no exception. The sense of occasion was palpable, with a terrific buzz of excitement before, during and after the ceremony.

It started with the venue. The splendid HQ of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers – a stone's throw from the Houses of Parliament – was itself a winner, its elegance and sumptuousness adding enormously to the glamour and status of the event. With her welcome to the evening, the tone was set by our Chief Executive, Alison Richmond. Bounding (no other word for it) onto the podium, she warned us to 'fasten our seatbelts for a whirlwind tour of some fantastic projects'.

Then there was the brilliant choice of host for the evening: Tim Marlow, Artistic Director of the Royal Academy of Arts and a great broadcaster on arts topics. Enthusiastic, funny and interested, with a light touch he kept the flow of 'the Oscars

Tim Marlow: a terrific compere for the evening



Paul Hampartsoumian



Paul Hampartsoumian

Tate's Patricia Smithen and Bronwyn Ormsby collect the Anna Plowden Trust Award from Baroness Sharp



Paul Hampartsoumian

Jm Mitchell and the Paisley Fountain project leader Elaine Troup (r) with their Award for the Conservation of an Industrial Heritage Artefact. Isabel Pollock (l) presented it on behalf of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

Members of Group 199: the Award for Volunteering in the Conservation of an Industrial Heritage Artefact made it all worthwhile



Paul Hampartsoumian



Triumph for a former Icon Intern! Gemma McBader of Cardiff University won the Pilgrim Trust Student Conservator of the Year Award

of conservation' going at a great pace. With six awards and each one with several entries, there were a great many visuals and descriptions to get through, yet the audience's attention was held throughout. (Tim's own vote for best title of the night was for the Imperial War Museum's project 'War against Dust: space vacuums, air bazookas and duster drones'.) Reflecting on the projects at the end, he commented: 'What you do is heroic and rather humbling' – high praise indeed.

If there was one aspect that distinguished this event from its predecessors, it was the very welcome presence of people from outside the immediate conservation community – especially the volunteers, demonstrating a wider age-range than is usual for professional conservators – and the great and

For Resurrecting the Coffin Works, Deborah Magnoler flanked by Sarah Hayes and Simon Buteux of the Birmingham Conservation Trust display their Award for Conservation in the Community, presented by Carole Milner (r)



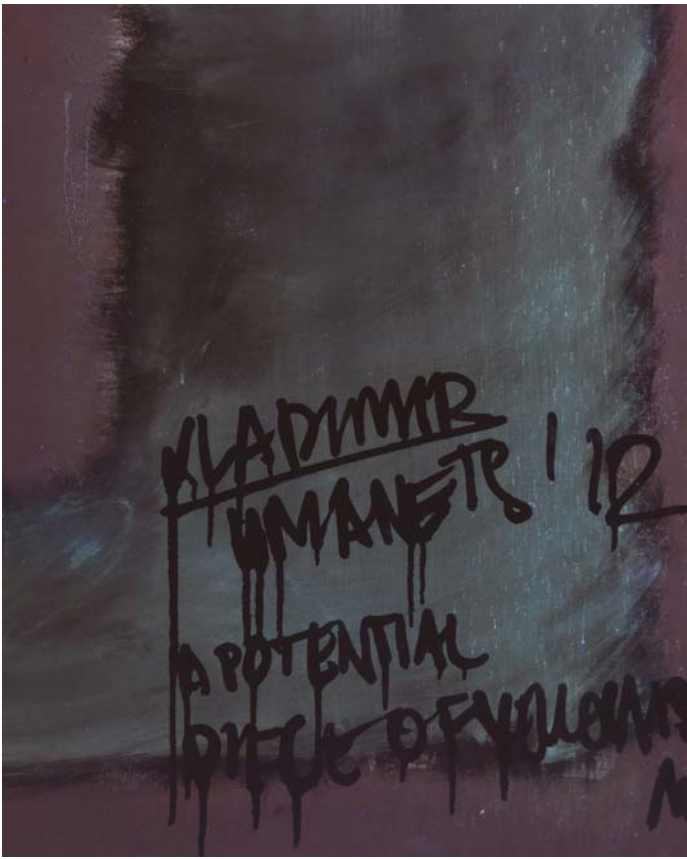
A team effort: Icon CEO Alison Richmond with Icon staff Katie Allen (l) and Julia Jablonska (r) who worked their socks off, as did all the office, to make the Awards a success

the good from important organisations, such as Historic England, the National Trust and NADFAS (the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies), all of whom we hope were impressed by the quality of the work on show, not to mention the glitz of an Icon occasion.

It was also a distinct coup to have a statement of support from HRH The Prince of Wales as the foreword to the printed programme. What better accolade could there have been than this extract: 'I would like to congratulate all the winners of the 2015 Awards, and those involved in all the other competing projects, as well as everyone who has played a part in organizing and supporting the Awards programme and Icon's 10th anniversary event'.

Deborah Cane holds the Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation, with Simon Cane and Kayleigh Fuller. Georgina Naylor of the Pilgrim Trust (r) made the presentation for the Staffordshire Hoard project





Mark Rothko *Black on Maroon* 1958 (detail, before conservation, under UV light)

First up was the Anna Plowden Trust Award for Research and Innovation in Conservation, where the winner was Tate's project to conserve the Rothko painting *Black on Maroon* – described by Tim Marlow as 'sublime and important' – following its vandalism with indelible ink. The presentation was made by Baroness Sharp of Guildford, an indefatigable champion over the past ten years for the preservation of cultural heritage and the need for investment in training, research and new technologies.

The next two awards were sponsored by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and were presented by its Past President, Professor Isobel Pollock OBE, whose comments revealed some striking parallels between engineering and conservation: 'We think engineering is beautiful' (and we Iconites surely think that about conservation?) and 'a key challenge is how to retain and promote traditional skills and knowledge and contextual experience'.

The Award for the Conservation of an Industrial Heritage Artefact was given to Renfrewshire Council and Jim Mitchell for the restoration of the Grand Fountain in Paisley. The Award for Volunteering in the Conservation of an Industrial Heritage Artefact went to Group 199, volunteers at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, for their project – 13,000



The state of the keel of Steam Pinnace 199

Steam Pinnace 199 back in action





The Ethiopian Emperor's Shield which won Gemma McBader the Student Conservator of the Year Award

hours of volunteer work – to save the 1911 naval vessel Steam Pinnacle 199, the last representative of the 634 steam pinnaces originally built, which once exchanged hands for a fiver!.

The next two awards were made by The Pilgrim Trust, which has been involved in the Conservation Awards since 1999, and, as its Director Georgina Nayler noted, a supporter of conservation going back to the 1930s, with many grants given for conservation projects over the years. The Trust, she told us, are 'keen to encourage people into conservation from a wide variety of backgrounds and to encourage you to promote conservation to the public'.

From an invidious choice of terrific projects for the Student Conservator of the Year Award, the award was collected by Gemma McBader for her work on a 19th-century Ethiopian emperor's shield. (Cardiff University will begin to think they have an entitlement to the trophy as they provided the winner at the last round of the awards in 2010!)

The Staffordshire Hoard team picked up The Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation, which recognises excellence in conserving an individual or collection of cultural heritage objects in the UK. Three of the four shortlisted projects were on a grand scale and all were worthy projects. But the Hoard was a popular choice because, notwithstanding our familiarity with it, it has that 'wow' factor - what the judges rightly described as 'the pin-up poster project of the sector'.

The final presentation of the night was the Award for Conservation in the Community, recognising just what volunteers can achieve working with conservators. It was presented by Carole Milner, a founder and former Board

member of Icon, who noted that the themes of access and outreach were close to her heart. Sharing, friendship and fun were to be had from volunteering projects, which 'changes lives and communities'. Four inspiring projects were shortlisted for this award and the winner was Resurrecting the Coffin Works, the rescue of a Victorian factory in Birmingham, where high conservation standards were allied with excellent community engagement and public access where none previously existed.

The formal proceedings were wound up by joint Chair of Icon's Board of Trustees Caroline Peach, who thanked all the

Staffordshire Hoard objects before conservation



© Birmingham Museums Trust



Pommel caps from the Staffordshire Hoard

participants in the Awards for the dazzling breadth of projects. The contributions of the members of the screening panels and the judges were recognised, as were the presenters of the awards, the project managers Cranberry Media and the Icon staff team. She also expressed Icon's gratitude to our partners in the Awards and the principal and corporate sponsor Beko plc, whose commitment had made the Awards happen.

Perhaps some ardent professionals amongst us might have craved a little more detail, especially of the winning projects, but this was an event for everyone, and by steering clear of the minutiae we engaged with many more people – an approach which maybe conservators and Icon need to adopt on other occasions. After all, details, if you want them, are available from other sources including Icon's and the winners' websites.

Perhaps the best parts of the event were the thank-you speeches by the winners; their triumphant and eloquent project leaders delivered heartfelt, genuine thanks and pride. Here are some snapshots:

- Tate's Rothko project team referred to the amazing show of

support they had received. The project was 'a wonderful example of what our community can do' and demonstrated the importance of doing research to understand new problems and devise successful treatments.

- Renfrewshire's Conservation Officer, Elaine Troup, related how the restoration of Paisley's Grand Fountain had given a very deprived community great pride. She praised Jim Mitchell's commitment and passion for the project.
- Gemma McBader thanked Icon for introducing her to conservation through one of our internships in 2009.
- Deborah Cane thanked everyone who got behind the Staffordshire Hoard project and was especially proud of Simon Cane's achievement in finding the funding for the work and keeping the Hoard in the Midlands.
- Group 199 were 'knocked out' by their award. They had stuck with their project through thick and thin and experienced 'the depths of despair. Tonight has made it all worthwhile. Thanks a million'.
- Deborah Magnoler spoke eloquently of the Coffin Works project's importance to a small family museum and urged us all to visit it!

Volunteers gave new life to the Coffin Works, home of the Newman Brothers Museum, and won the Award for Conservation in the Community





The 19thC factory known as the Coffin Works – positively Dickensian

In short, it was a great evening and, if asked for Icon News' favourite project, we would have to confess to a soft spot for all those we have featured in articles – the Hoard, the Fountain and the Swiss Garden. But winners and runners up alike were all fascinating, especially The Skeleton Crew. Simply because organising a team of volunteers at the Cambridge Museum of Zoology to pack four million specimens would daunt the bravest of conservators but to judge by the images and the time-lapse video (see it at <http://tinyurl.com/pojl7w9>) they all had such fun!

The factory courtyard – a unique setting for celebrations



THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

CONSERVATION RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

A grant of up to £80,000 is available to a UK public institution to enable a Senior Conservator (employed by the institution) to pursue a research project sabbatical for a maximum of 2 years with their post to be back-filled by an externally recruited Junior Conservator.

The grant is for the salary and on-costs of the Junior Conservator, and the project costs of the work undertaken by the Senior Conservator. Unless otherwise advised, previously unsuccessful applicants may reapply.

Closing date: 4 March 2016

See foundation.clothworkers.co.uk/fellowship for further details and application form.

Previous Clothworker Conservation Fellowships

Courtauld Institute of Art, £35,000, 6 month project – conservation and study of a painting by Manet

English Heritage, £37,500, 1 year project – improving the care and conservation of archaeological copper and stone

Tate, £80,000, 2 year project – study of early 20th century paintings by Picabia, Picasso, and Ernst

Glasgow Museums, £80,000, 2 year project – research into, and conservation of, 15th century stained glass windows from the Carmelite Church at Boppard-on-Rhine

British Museum, £37,600, 2 year part-time project – research into, and conservation and storage of naturally-mummified Nilotic human remains

Pitt Rivers Museum, £80,000, 2 year project – conservation of objects in the Cook-voyage collection

Courtauld Institute of Art, £65,500, 2 year part-time project – conservation and study of a major painting by Gerino da Pistoia

Tate, £80,000, 2 year project – conservation of and research on British paintings from 1530–1790

New Icon staff



Ella Swindells joins Icon as the new Membership Officer. She writes:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to join Icon as the new Membership Officer. After graduating in Classics from Exeter University I began my career working with the Royal Collection Trust at Windsor Castle as a front of house representative dealing mainly with members of the public. During my time at Windsor Castle I also volunteered at the Wycombe Museum and graduated to an administrative role supporting staff with the vast range of minor tasks required to keep a local museum on its feet. I continue to support the Wycombe Museum and particularly enjoy making a difference at a local level.

I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to be part of such a dedicated team at Icon and look forward to the opportunity of learning more about heritage conservation and to meeting many of the Icon's members at upcoming events.

Ella's normal working days will be Tuesday to Friday. She can be contacted by phone at 02031 426 786, or email at eswindells@icon.org.uk

Departures



This spring, Icon member **Ffion Howells** joined the membership team on a temporary contract to help process the flood of renewal forms that arrived with the introduction of Icon's new Code of Conduct. However, her role rapidly evolved and ultimately extended to a full seven months, as Ffion graciously agreed to temporarily backfill the role of Membership Officer, following Katherine Cresser's departure, while recruitment for the post was underway. By the end of her time she was responsible for all day-to-day membership administration and looked after the Conservation Register.

'It's been very interesting to gain an insight into Icon's operations,' says the freelance conservator. With a degree from City and Guilds, Ffion relished the chance to delve further into the field. 'I've enjoyed getting to know many more of the members and learning all about their many successes. It was also such a delight to see names I recognised coming across my desk!' Ffion has now returned full-time to her work as a freelance object conservator. She will be sorely missed at the Icon office.

Welcome to these new members

We'd like to extend a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in August and September 2015. We hope to see you at an Icon event soon.

Atara Aberman
Student

Ioanna Akritidou
Student

Antonia Carmichael-Harris
Associate

Helen Baguley
Student

Giulia Bellato
The University of Edinburgh
Student

Curtis Bobsin
C Bobsin Organs, LLC
Associate

Jessica Byler
Student

Yuqi Chock
West Dean College
Student

Rachel Davis
BBC Music Library and
Northumbria University
Student

Erica Foden-Lenahan
The London Library
Associate

Nora Frankel
Student

Nelson Garcia
Northumbria University
Student

Christopher Garrand
Christopher Garrand
Consultancy
Associate

Rosy Gladstone
Supporter

Sarah Graham
University of Glasgow
Associate

Lynsey Haworth
Historic Scotland
Associate

Anthea Henton
TwelveQuarters
Associate

Jacqueline Johnson
Associate

Sophia Jordan-Mowery
Associate

Paige Keith
Student

Courtney Kemnitz
Student

Sarah Knighton
Associate

Laura Kolkena
University of Amsterdam
Student

Natasa Krsmanovic
Queen's University
Student

Neil Mahrer
Jersey Heritage
Associate

Monika Meyer
Associate

Kim Mulder
Associate

Tanya Nakamoto
Student

Bevan O'Daly
Student

Jess Orr
Science UK Ltd
Associate

Marie Poisbelaud
Associate

Sarah Pounder
Associate

Nancie Ravenel
Shelburne Museum
Associate

Branwen Roberts
Associate

Kimberly Roche
Student

James Rospo
Pierra Restoration Limited
Associate

In memory

Diana Savova
Associate

Jerrod Seifert
Associate

Michelle Sherer
Student

Isana Skeete
Student

Rupert Stevens
Anthony Beech Furniture
Conservation & Restoration
Associate

Julia Taube
Student

Meredith Thomas
Student

Paul Turner
Bowes Museum
Student

Ula Gabriele Vaiciunaite
Associate

Tina Velasco Rodriguez
Associate

Nick Webb
Associate

Matthew Webster
Messenger Conservation
Associate

Patrick White
Icon Staff

Thomas Wicks
Associate

Alice Woodward
Northumbria University
Student



Photograph: Mike Scott. By kind permission of the Great Steward of Scotland's Dumfries House Trust

The sudden death of **Sally Cheyne** in September has robbed conservation in Scotland of a passionate and highly skilled practitioner. Her work, however, lives on in many places throughout Scotland. This short piece commemorates her important contribution to just one of those places, Dumfries House in Ayrshire.

In June 2010 the Dumfries House Trust invited Sally Cheyne and Owen Davison of The Conservation Studio, Edinburgh, to uncover a 'lost' decorative scheme which had once covered the walls and ceilings of the Pewter Corridor in the House. The intricate polychromatic design had been painted over with grey oil-based paint in the 1960s. Sally and Owen were appointed on the strength of their considerable experience in easel and structural painting and, in carrying out the complex work, made the first major mark in the large scale conservation programme, which has seen Dumfries House revitalised since.

The painstaking and meticulous removal of the top layer of paint took three months gradually revealing the original wall painting in

its full detail, which formed the basis for the subsequent dramatic reinstatement of the pattern in the rest of the corridor. Exposed to the public touring the house throughout the project, Sally and Owen managed to make visitors feel part of this historic 'excavation' by generously sharing some insights into their work. Today this completed section stands as a great example of conservation forming the scientific and scholarly basis for an 'authentic' reconstruction of the past and adds an invaluable educational dimension to any tour of the house.

The Conservation Studio went on to clean and conserve important paintings at Dumfries House. Sensitive and effective conservation treatment has not only contributed to a much better understanding of the paintings, but has restored their visual and aesthetic integrity to a very high degree. A careful intervention on the painted Victorian ceiling decoration in the front hall and the reinstatement of an original paint scheme on a set of 18th century needlework-covered chairs followed.

Whether there was 'more Sally' or 'more Owen' in any of the projects in this varied job portfolio, their work consistently involved an open and ongoing dialogue with the client and with one another which was informed by their professional competence and the shared love for their chosen profession. The results have benefitted greatly from this dynamic relationship and Sally as an individual and professional will be sadly missed by all.

Having held Sally in high professional and affectionate personal regard I can take some consolation from the fact that her imprint on just this house will exist for many, many years to come and that her name will be mentioned alongside Owen's to generations of future visitors.

Charlotte Rostek, Curator of Dumfries House

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WEST DEAN COLLEGE 

CONSERVATION SHORT COURSES

Conservation of Plastics 10% discount to Icon members
29 February - 3 March 2016
Course leader: Yvonne Shashoua

Art and Object Handling 10% discount to Icon members
14 - 18 March 2016
Course leader: John Bracken

Conservation of Leather 10% discount to Icon members
18 - 21 April 2016
Course leader: Yvette Fletcher



cpd@westdean.org.uk
www.westdean.org.uk/college
West Dean College, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 11th Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Conservation will be held on Monday 30th November 2015 at 5.00 p.m. at the St. Bride Foundation, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 8EQ, to consider the following business:

Ordinary Resolution 1: To receive the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2015.

Ordinary Resolution 2: To authorise the Trustees to appoint the auditors to serve until the end of the next Annual General Meeting and to authorise the Trustees to decide the remuneration to be paid to the auditors.

A member of the Institute of Conservation who is entitled to attend and vote at the meeting (being a paid up Accredited, Associate, Graduate or Student Member) is entitled to appoint a proxy, who need not be a member of the Institute of Conservation, to attend and vote instead of them. Proxy forms may be appointed via the web portal or to the registered office so long as they are received before 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 26th November 2015. Those received later will not be counted.

Proxy voting forms are available on-line via our electronic voting system or if you do not have an email address, please phone the office at 0203 142 6785.

We will advise you of any changes or additions to the Agenda as soon as they become available.

Members are invited to stay on after closure of business for a glass of wine.

So that we can estimate numbers for catering please let us know if you are planning to attend by sending an email to membership@icon.org.uk

Simon Green, Company Secretary
1st November 2015



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Dealing with the aftermath of a fire

Iwan Bryn James ACR, Conservation Unit Head of the National Library of Wales, discusses the 2013 fire at the Library from a conservator's perspective

THE FIRE

Friday 26 April 2013 will be etched in the memories of NLW staff for years to come. As we evacuated the building that fateful afternoon, most of us thought that the fire bells would soon stop ringing. But, once outside, we could see white smoke billowing from the roof of what is known as the Third Library Building (TLB) – the last major extension built at the Library in the 1990s. From the car park, the main assembly point at the southern side of the building, we could see flames spreading quite rapidly along the roof ridge of the TLB office block. The fire was caused accidentally by an external contractor using a blow torch to carry out roof repairs above the Acquisitions Unit. This has been the only major fire at the Library in its hundred-year history.

The emergency services responded quickly and two or three

The roof ablaze above Acquisitions

fire appliances were at the scene within ten minutes.

Unfortunately, it took some time to solve a problem with the water supply, and with this in mind, you can imagine the panic amongst us as the fire took hold. It was a traumatic experience for members of staff, readers and bystanders alike. Many were in a state of shock, and most of us felt quite helpless as we could do nothing but watch the unfolding disaster.

We were obviously concerned about fellow members of staff and visitors, but we were told quite early that all members of the three hundred strong staff and all the hundred or so readers (and roof contractors) were all safe and accounted for. Our concern was then diverted towards our iconic building and its unique and irreplaceable collections.

With the situation still in the hands of fire officers, our internal



Photo: Michael Jones (NLW Photographer)

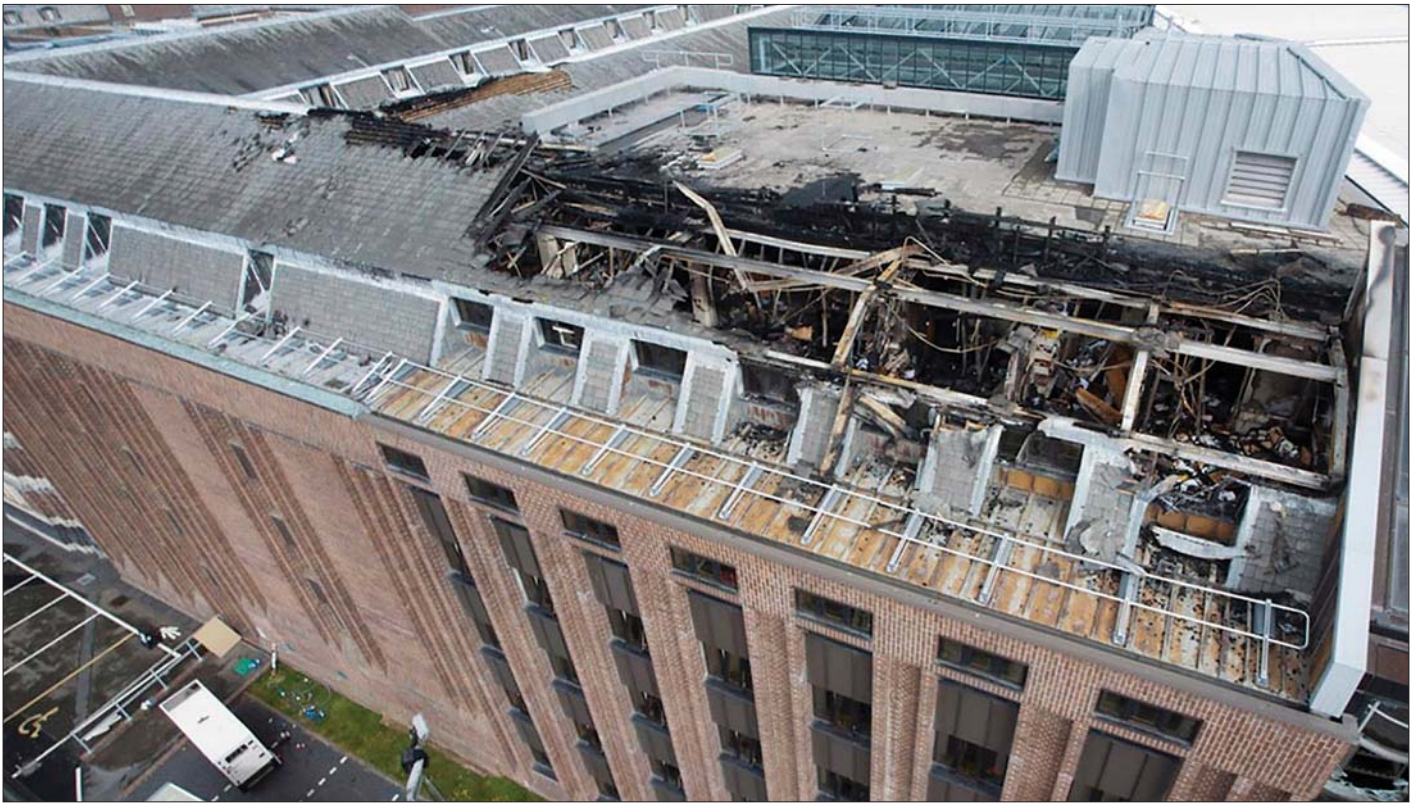


Photo: Michael Jones NLW

The damage from above.

emergency response/salvage team had time to get together to assess the situation. This team is an important part of the Library's detailed Emergency Plan and consists of about fifteen NLW staff, mainly from Conservation. Because we subscribe to Harwell Document Restoration Services, the archival salvage experts, they were also contacted during this time so that they could begin to plan their long journey to Aberystwyth.

THE DAMAGE

It took fifty firefighters four hours to get the fire fully under control. By then, the top floor of the TLB office block had suffered serious fire damage and an extensive part of the roof had caved in. The five floors directly below the gutted top floor suffered severe water damage so that over seventy people lost their offices. Over two years after the fire many members of staff are still working in makeshift and temporary relocated offices.

Fortunately, because the affected area was an office block, only a small percentage of our collections were damaged in the incident. However, there were a number of newly-acquired items being processed in the Acquisitions Unit. The items acquired by this unit are not the brand new publications hot from the press, but newly bought or donated 'older' printed books, manuscripts, photographs, archives, maps, paintings, or any other object or archival collection deemed to be of cultural significance to Wales.

THE SALVAGE OPERATION

Once the blaze was under control early that Friday evening, our salvage team was allowed into the Preventive Unit to prepare that area (in anticipation) for the sorting and drying of water-damaged items. No other staff members apart from security staff were allowed in at this time – having too many

people is dangerous and difficult to control and monitor. We gathered as many drying materials and as much equipment as we could find – blotters, absorbent papers, drying felts, trestles, fans etc. (we have six disaster trolleys full of useful items). We also used this time to acquire as many trolleys as we could find to transfer damaged items from the affected areas.

At around 7 pm, in the company of fire officers, we were allowed access to the top floor where our first priority was the contents of 'y Gawell', or 'the Cage', which is a holding area for processed new acquisitions situated next door to the burnt-out offices. Although the roof and attic space above the Cage were badly damaged by the flames, the Cage itself escaped direct fire damage. Luckily, the hundreds of items held in this area had already been processed, and had been housed in new archival boxes.

These new boxes, although wet on the outside, protected most of their contents from the worst effects of water damage, and under the supervision of fire officers, our salvage team was allowed to remove all these items on the evening of the fire. We formed a human chain to carry over one hundred cratefuls of items to safety down three flights of stairs (all the lifts were out of action) and along Book Stack 1 to Preventive Conservation on the other side of the building, where they were successfully dried and re-boxed over the following days. If left wet for a longer period of time, these materials would have become mouldy. Amongst the items from 'the Cage' were works from the Gwyneth Lewis collection, works and papers by the artist Maurice Sheppard, Super Ted cartoon transparencies from the early days of S4C, and large framed paintings (unboxed) by Kyffin Williams.

Later that evening, after emptying the 'Cage', we were allowed to enter the water-damaged offices directly beneath the gutted top floor. Water was seeping through all the ceilings, and all the carpets were soaking wet. All items that were on the floors were placed on desks, and we covered



Inside the Acquisitions Unit

bookshelves, PCs and many other items with plastic sheets in all the sixty or so affected offices. I have estimated that we used 1km of plastic during the night, and this action saved many items from becoming even wetter than they were. These items were mostly office materials, but water did find its way into parts of Book Stack 2 and other storage areas where many oil paintings had to be moved to safety on the Friday night.

THE SALVAGE WORK CONTINUES

Water also affected some Ordnance Survey maps stored in the Bibliographical Unit office on the second floor. These maps were successfully dried at NLW between large drying felts. Priority was given to volumes and magazines printed on art paper as these pages have to be separated before they dry, otherwise they will congeal into one inseparable mass. All the affected offices were emptied during the following week by our salvage team. This was a massive and heroic task involving the relocating and drying of thousands of items. Our salvage team also filled one hundred and forty crates with hundreds of the worst affected items from the gutted top floor. These were taken away by Harwell Document Restoration Services and were successfully dried in bulk in their large drying chambers before being returned to the Library at a later date.

The main IT office situated on the ground floor was also badly flooded, and many computers were water damaged. These were dried using dehumidifiers over the following weeks, and most of their data was saved. It is also worth noting that the hard drive from a melted PC on the gutted top floor was still in working order when it was inserted into a new PC.

CASE STUDY OF ONE BOOK

Although the vast majority of items affected by this tragedy were office materials, there were a number of newly-acquired unique archival items that were listed as lost or seriously damaged in the fire. One of these items was a rare book printed in 1595 called 'Six bookes of politickes or civil doctrine' by Justus Lipsius. When the fire bells rang, this volume was being processed by our Gifts and Receipts Librarian and was left on his desk in his office on the top floor. Because of the severity of the fire it was taken for granted that this volume had been completely destroyed.

However, during the following week, after a structural engineer had deemed the top floor safe enough to enter, our salvage team (wearing PPE) were able to recover a charred, distorted and totally soaked black object from the remains of our Acquisition Librarian's desk that was covered with rubble from the collapsed roof. Due to the severity of the situation with thousands of other objects in need of rescuing, the



Salvaging items from a burnt office



Members of the NLW salvage team



Damaged 1595 volume 'Six bookes of politickes or civil doctrine' by Justus Lipsius



remains of this rare volume were vacuum packed and frozen (at the NLW) to enable us to dry and treat the item at a later and more convenient date.

The item was defrosted at the end of 2013 – a good six months after the fire. The package was carefully opened, revealing the wet charred remains of the volume. Although the original limp vellum covers were badly burnt, shrivelled and distorted due to high temperatures and the use of water to extinguish the fire, the paper pages within the volume were in a surprisingly good condition with only the first and last few pages, and the edges of most pages, exhibiting burn or scorch marks.

Elgar Pugh, one of our most experienced senior conservators, successfully dried the volume before cleaning all the pages with a soft brush. The pages were then washed, resized, and repaired and strengthened with a compatible archival quality handmade paper (and a transparent Japanese tissue) adhered with gelatine.

The repaired sections were then sewn together on a traditional sewing frame before being bound in a new limp vellum binding. Although the original covers were damaged beyond repair, only a very small percentage of the information held within this volume was lost. Surprisingly, about 95% of this volume is still readable, and this proves that even in the worst fires, all is not lost.

ANOTHER LUCKY ESCAPE

Another item listed as being completely lost was an 1873 Enclosure Map of the Capel Iwan area in Carmarthenshire. The scorched remains of this large rolled map were discovered in its metal container the week following the fire. It measured 1.20 by 4 metres, and comprised eight large pieces of Whatman Wove paper pasted onto a linen backing.

Two members of the NLW Conservation Unit, Dilwyn Williams (ARA Cert.) and John Jenkins (ARA Cert.), used smoke sponges to dry clean the paper sections before separating them from the damaged linen. They were then washed on a suction table to remove water stains before being adhered with wheat starch paste onto a new linen backing on our large wallboard. Lost areas were infilled with a compatible hand-made paper. Scorched areas were also consolidated with 2% Klucel G in IMS. Once again, as with the conserved rare volume, 95% of the information held on this map is still accessible, and once treated, it was possible to scan the item and produce a digitally enhanced copy.

TWO YEARS ON

At the beginning of 2015, almost two years after the fire, the task of defrosting and cleaning thousands of water damaged volumes and documents was successfully completed by Bill Harries and Emma Thomas from our conservation cleaning

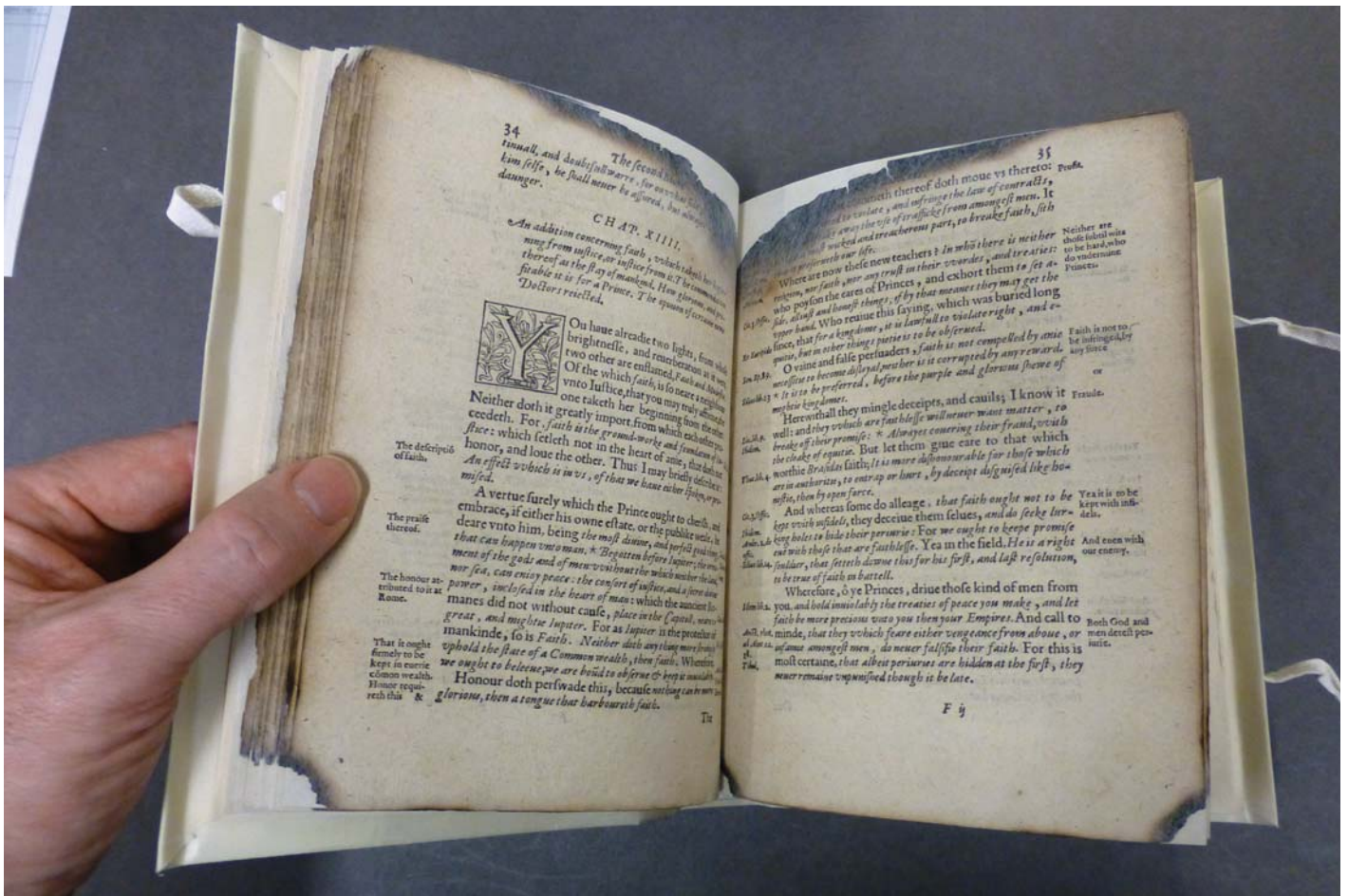


Photo: Iwan Bryn James, NLW

After treatment: the 'Six bookes of politickes or civil doctrine'

team. Some prioritised items are still in need of further conservation treatment but, at last, some sense of normality is beginning to return to the Library. The burnt-out top floor has recently been renovated and is now home to the relocated IT department. By the end of this year, the remaining water-damaged offices will also be ready for other members of staff.

LESSONS LEARNED

Many lessons were learnt from this disaster. Not only is a detailed and tailored emergency plan essential for all institutions, relevant staff must be prepared and trained beforehand to carry out any salvage operation. Health and safety is of utmost importance, and personal protective equipment and other materials necessary to deal with a disaster must be at hand.

In an archive or any other office or workplace where valuable items are being processed or catalogued, the amount of such items kept on your desk at any one time should be kept to a minimum. Unique artefacts should be returned to their cells or storage areas once you have finished with them, and should not be kept in offices overnight or over weekends. It was noticed that items kept in closed cupboards or cabinets escaped the worst effects of the NLW fire. Therefore, if you do need to have valuable items in your office, it would be advisable to store them in appropriate closed cabinets when you have to go elsewhere, even for short periods of time.

As we know, boxes offer physical protection and a microclimate that will extend the life of a book. Following the NLW fire it was observed that thousands of boxed items had escaped the worst effects of fire, smoke and water damage.

Boxing your collections is therefore of paramount importance.

In the worst of fires, all is not lost. Even a charred black, distorted and saturated volume can still retain 95% of its original information. Therefore, if you are faced with a similar disaster think twice before throwing a burnt object into the skip. Many unique and valuable damaged items that could be classed as beyond repair can, in fact, be saved by experienced archive conservators. It's very difficult to burn a book!

The 'Six bookes of politickes or civil doctrine' in a new limp vellum binding



Photo: Iwan Bryn James, NLW

around and about

Congratulations to the Hirayama Studio!

This Autumn the Hirayama Conservation Studio for Eastern Art on Paper and Silk at the British Museum is celebrating its 'coming of age' twenty first anniversary.

The Eastern Art on Paper and Silk Section is dedicated to conserving the British Museum's East Asian pictorial art collection. Drawing on expertise from both Japanese and Chinese Master scroll mounters, the Hirayama Studio is one of a few studios of its kind in the West, using traditional East Asian techniques and materials combined with best practice in modern silk and paper conservation.

We are unique in having both Japanese and Chinese experts working closely together, who are also proactive in passing on their invaluable experience through training others in this complex field. We also work closely in collaboration with visiting scroll mounters from both Japanese and Chinese institutions.

Situated in the bespoke Hirayama Studio, our conservators work on objects from Japan, China, Korea, and many other Asian countries. Objects worked on include hanging scrolls, handscrolls, folding screens, fans, albums, books, panel paintings and prints, as well as Indian and Middle Eastern painted miniatures. Nearly all our tools and materials are imported from East Asia, from our brushes and pigments, to our tatami flooring and huge scroll mounting benches.



© Trustees of the British Museum

Professor Hirayama opening the studio in 1994

Recent major projects include conservation treatment of, and scientific research into, the world-famous Admonitions Scroll in preparation for its redisplay in the British Museum, as well as comprehensive remounting treatments in preparation for major British Museum exhibitions such as Shunga and Ming.

There is lots more information and nice images on our recent blog post:

<http://blog.britishmuseum.org/2015/10/14/coming-of-age-the-hirayama-studio-celebrates-21-years-conserving-the-british-museums-magnificent-asian-paintings-collection/>

Hirayama Studio Staff

Recent Hirayama Studio staff (l-r) Valentina Marabini, Keisuke Sugiyama, Qiu Jin Xian, Mee Jung Kim & Carol Weiss



© Trustees of the British Museum



The people of Paisley gather to enjoy their newly-restored Fountain

A Triple Crown

Conservation Awards are obviously a lot like buses: you wait for ages and then three come along at once!

So it is for Jim Mitchell ACR, who, as you surely remember, was the author of our serial about the resurrection of the Grand Fountain in Paisley. He was the winner in our Conservation Awards last month in the category for the Conservation of an Industrial Heritage Artefact. Earlier this year, he won the Conservation Category in the Museums + Heritage Awards for Excellence 2015 and now the news has just come through that he has won this year's Marsh Award for Excellence in the Conservation of a Public Sculpture or Fountain.

This Award is run in partnership with the Public Monuments & Sculpture Association (PMSA) and recognises an individual or group responsible for the restoration of a public sculpture for the benefit of the wider public. Jim follows in the footsteps of Rupert Harris Conservation which won the Award last year.

Jim told Icon News that he is of course delighted with all of

A not so grand looking Fountain before conservation work began



these awards but the one that means the most to him is the professional recognition that comes from winning in our Conservation Awards. (Icon News of course feels rather smug about having the prescience to see what a great story the Fountain was and to publish it as the work unfolded, from issue 48 in September 2013 through to issue 54 a year later.)

A detail of the Fountain in all its new found splendour



Branching out

If you enjoy a good thriller and like the idea of a heroine who doesn't wait for a male to come along and rescue her from a tight spot and who, moreover, uses her knowledge of materials science to get out of that tight spot, then you will enjoy *A rarer gift than gold*. Why this sudden interest at Icon News in thrillers? Because heroine Abigail Argent, a bronze restorer and patineur who gets caught up in the classic myth of alchemy, was created by Icon member Lucy Branch ACR, herself a conservator of sculptural and architectural bronze. Icon News set out to learn more.

Lucy, it turns out, is the managing director of the sixty-year old family firm Antique Bronze Ltd. She is proud of the fact that it is a true family business with her parents, husband and several cousins all working alongside each other every day. During her time at the helm she has steered the company to be part of the conservation community. *'When I began working, our company was fairly isolated from it. I was proud of our work and the care we took with the objects but I hope I've added an interest and a dialogue with the outside world which has made us better conservators'*.

But that is not the end of the story. Lucy is also the mother of three children and she acts as an assessor for the PACR accreditation scheme. If you wonder what kind of a superwoman has time to write a novel as well, rest assured she comes across as reassuringly human. Asked when she finds time to read – she has written a book review for us on page 25! – she responds that it's *'mostly while cleaning my teeth and while cooking, which is why dinner is always burned in our house'*. She also noted wistfully the desirability of a mute button for children.

As for when she found time to write, it all came about during a period of illness about four years ago. *'For a while, I was very restricted. I had to lessen my commitments and reduce my workload significantly. I struggled with this change in pace and began to think over a story I had sketched out in my early twenties. It was very rough and had considerable flaws but the*

main thread, I felt, had some merit. It took about two years to rewrite between my poor health, part-time work and a young family. Mostly, I worked at night after the kids went to bed. I did not let myself sit on the sofa – that was fatal as it was nearly impossible to get up again! I always made myself a cup of tea, and went straight to the computer'.

She attributes to Alison Richmond, Icon's CEO, the discipline of this routine. Alison was her personal tutor when she studied for a



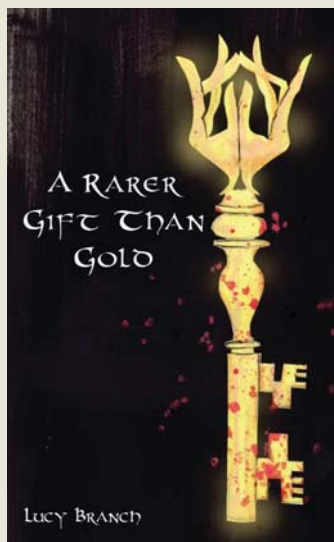
Lucy Branch at work on a statue of Red Rum at Aintree

Masters degree on the RCA/ V&A postgraduate conservation programme a few years ago, something she decided to do as a structured form of professional development. *'Between work and being a mum, studying at night was my only free time. Both back then and now, I manage about one and a half hours per night. I give myself Friday and Saturday night off. It is amazing what you can achieve by totting-up small increments of time'*.

The novel has had a great reception and it generated a lot of interest from the press in her work as a conservator. *'For me', says Lucy, 'this has been win-win because even if I don't manage to hook a reader, conservation is being promoted anyway.'* Time Out featured her as a conservator, she appeared on Radio 4's Midweek and the BBC World Service visited some of the sites where she is working. She also did a mini-documentary on her work on the statue of Charles I in Whitehall.

It is not a plot spoiler to reveal that a big loose end remains at the end of the novel and this obviously prompted the question whether Lucy was planning a sequel: *'My first book has whetted my appetite and I have two books drafted at present. One is a spin-off of A Rarer Gift Than Gold rather than a direct sequel, but I think the plot that has me most excited at the moment is a murder/mystery with a ceramics' conservator as the central character'*. Watch this space!

Lucy has two copies of her novel to give away. So the first two readers to email Icon News (news@icon.org.uk) will be the lucky recipients. Please put *A Rarer Gift than Gold* in the subject box. Other readers will have to ask for a copy in their Christmas list or may find it a useful present idea for others. Lucy's passion for metals shines through, the chemistry is interesting (truly) and the combination of alchemy and skulduggery makes for a great read.



BOOKS

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE CONSERVATION OF WORKS OF ART ON PAPER

Margaret Holben Ellis, ed.

Getty Publications 2015

ISBN: 9781606064320 608pp

This is the seventh volume in the Getty Conservation Institute's series *Readings in Conservation*, which are conceived as a selection of seminal writings on conservation aimed at beginners in the profession. The themes of the book are brought to us via a blend of articles, letters, poems, fables, and anecdotes. Editor Margaret Holben Ellis steers the reader through ninety-five readings, which form a repository and history of reflections about art on paper conservation practice and are combined with present day readings in each of the eight parts of the book.

The history of western handmade papers is often overlooked, along with the shattering impact that the mechanisation of papermaking had on the trade and on the quality of paper. Part I, entitled *The Powers of Paper*, rectifies this by taking us to the early days of the papermaking trade – pre both Fourdrinier and Louis Nicolas Robert – with its world of apprentices, journeymen and masters, and the skills they brought to the making of paper. Eden Phillpotts's charming tale, 'Storm in a Teacup', focuses on the sheer degree of skill required by the vat man, who, in this story, loses his 'shake' under the spell of love.

Part II is entitled *The Mastery of Drawing, Printmaking: Multiple originals*, and discusses printing methods, as well as covering debate on the authentic touch of the artist found in prints. *Paper is Part of the Picture* examines the physicality of paper, watermarks and optical brighteners, while *Deterioration and Change: Paper "Yellow'd with Their Age"* has the inspiring Henk J Porck's questioning of the absolute validity of accelerated ageing. *Deterioration and Change: Media "Even in Their Partial Ruin Marvelous"* contains fascinating detail on the adulteration of media and pigments and reminds us of the sheer magnitude of components used in inks. *Treatment: Limits and Limitations* has fewer historical writings, but has introspective papers on treatments and – refreshingly – does not shirk from addressing sensitive issues such as retouching and restoration, notably through Jane McAusland's paper on the deluded ideal of reversibility for all treatments. The final part, *The Paper Conservator: Going beyond the Bench*, reflects thoughtfully on where conservation is today. A considered piece by Salvador Muñoz Viñas places the conservator as the keystone for maintaining and reinforcing meaning in objects.

The historic pieces in this collection are



often responses to some pivotal change in manufacture, whether of paper or media (such as watercolours and inks) and are no less interesting than the more modern writings. The surprise is that a lot of apparently recent considerations in conservation are in fact not new. The authors of many of the readings from unexpectedly early sources come from varying professions and trades, which perhaps reflects the hybrid that is today's conservator. Some readings muse upon the pencil as the tool of thinkers, planners, drafters, architects and engineers (and dare I add the conservator?), and how it has often been preferred to pen and ink. Derrida's *Paper or me, you know...* shows paper as the projection of the mind and a part of the creation process, while Biasi's *A Paradoxical Substance* argues that we often ignore the role of paper in the transmission of knowledge throughout history.

The inclusion of introductory notes to each piece and an introduction to each part by the editor is one of the great strengths of this book. These provide the reader with the perspective and historical context of the reading, along with commentaries from more contemporary sources. The editorial voice at no point sinks too far into the background and it maintains a clear structure and direction. Even old stalwarts of conservation, such as Chris Cople's discussion, *Conservation's Skills: Judgement, Method and Decision Making*, are commented upon with a fresh perspective.

The book ably sets out and succeeds in establishing the antecedents of modern conservation practice and sets the milestones for on-going study. Part I perhaps dwelt overlong on historical articles and included a poem that went on too long, but that is purely a personal preference. A full list of further reading as well as a very helpful index at the end of the book are also included in this pleasurable and sophisticated 'pick and mix' of writings on conservation.

Isabelle Egan ACR (Independent Conservator)



THE WOODEN WALLS OF THERMOPYLAE Nick Brown

Clink Street Publishing 2015

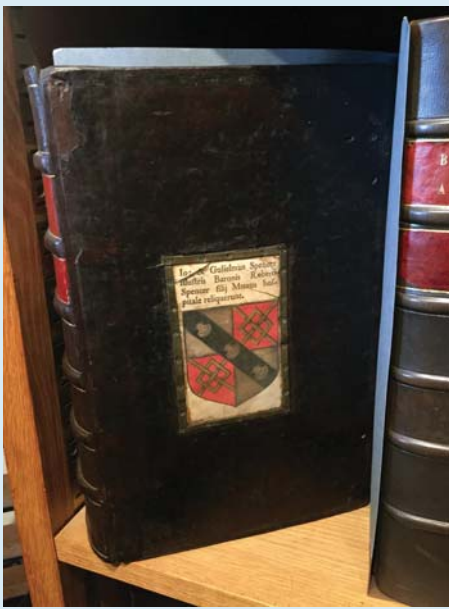
ISBN: 9781909477612 342pp

This is a book which will particularly appeal to archaeological conservators though anyone who enjoys good historical fiction will like it too. Although it is the second in a series by Nick Brown, an academic in archaeology and ancient history, it can also be read as a stand-alone novel. Written as a memoir set in Ancient Greece, it continues the story of a boy, now a man, whose life as a soldier is forced upon him. Known as the Luck Bringer, the main character is a witness to the political strife leading up to the battle of Thermopylae where the Spartans, hugely undermanned, faced an invading Persian army.

Brown is an author so thoroughly at home in this era that he presents the reader with an environment which is effortless to imagine. The story is fast-paced with a graphic storyline, but the author's historical knowledge radiates through his writing bringing the scenes that the main character witnesses to life and giving them a very authentic feel. Not a paragraph goes by without him dropping some divine detail about the fabric of the ancient world: how the objects would have looked, how the honey-cakes would have tasted and how the bitter-herbs would have smelt.

The main character, Mandrocles, though flawed, is very likeable and guides us through the experience of how life must have been at a time where control of your own destiny was almost impossible for men like him. It is a story about cut-throat politics and cruel battles but it's also about one man's loves and regrets.

Lucy Branch ACR



In Winchester College Fellows' Library, Simon Green was fascinated by the thin transparent sheet, processed from natural horn, covering the coat of arms on this c.500 year old book

CONFERENCES

PAPER HISTORY AROUND WINCHESTER 26th Annual Conference of the British Association of Paper Historians Winchester 2–4 October 2015

Although the British Association of Paper Historians (BAPH) is a purely voluntary organization, over the last two decades it has built an enviable reputation for the academic quality of its journal *The Quarterly* and the half dozen meetings and visits it organizes every year, supplemented by a very useful newsletter. This year twenty seven delegates assembled at the renowned Overton Mill in south Hampshire; now part of De La Rue plc, which is the world's largest commercial banknote printer and passport manufacturer.

The oldest part of the modern business had humbler beginnings when Henry Portal, a Huguenot refugee from France, founded the papermaking business when he obtained the lease of Bere Mill (near Overton) in 1710. In 1724 he gained a contract to make paper for Bank of England notes. For many years Portal were based at Laverstoke Papermill, also nearby, which is now splendidly restored as the headquarters of Bombay Sapphire Gin (which I felt obliged to visit though hors de conference).

The present Overton Mill was built in 1922 and remains arguably the leading manufacturer of banknote paper in the world. Because of the need for security, visits to Overton are strictly controlled and a mill tour is a rare privilege. A number of staff gave us an excellent tour starting with the mould workshops where the water marks are made, via the No 3 paper machine to the conversion department which adds many security features and includes highly automated methods of assuring quality.

The conference itself was based in the very comfortable Winchester Royal Hotel.



Librarian Richard Foster points out library treasures to BAPH members

Following the AGM, a highlight was a visit to the Winchester College Fellows' Library, hosted by Dr **Richard Foster**. His main role is as a history teacher and it is amazing that he can also care for the library, which is housed in nine separate rooms spread throughout this historic building connected by numerous stairways. The College has nine Grade I, four Grade II* and eighty Grade II listed buildings which are themselves a conservation challenge, as they also have to function as a modern school. Winchester College claims to be the oldest school in continuous operation in the UK dating back to March 1394. From the earliest days, its Fellows built up a remarkable collection of books as well as retaining an extensive archive. Dr Foster had laid out several displays of treasures which we were allowed to observe closely with much examination of watermarks.

Papers were presented to delegates on Sunday morning. These included a fascinating talk by **Irene Campden**: 'Text book washing carried out on *'Emblemator'* by *Andreas Alciati (1492-1550)*'. This was a best seller in its time and well used so it was dirty and needed some repair. As a papermaker, I never fail to be amazed at how paper, and in this case a whole book, can be safely immersed in a bath of water and washed. As an aside, www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/conservation has a lot of detailed case studies and is worth a visit. **Peter Bower** gave a fascinating talk on Winfred Knight's use of paper, which should be of interest to paper conservators and art historians.

I have tried to give a light-touch review of this event. No doubt some of the talks will appear in the *Quarterly*. BAPH is a small and friendly organisation. Historically it was mainly run by and appreciated by those from the ever shrinking British paper industry. Increasingly it has attracted paper conservators. www.baph.org.uk/ is well worth

a visit. The *Quarterly* is indexed up to 2014 and non-members can buy individual copies. However the smart way to receive the *Quarterly* is of course to join!

Simon Barcham Green
Papermaker & Icon's Business Manager

BHI CLOCK & WATCH CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION FORUM British Horological Institute Upton Hall, 5 September 2015

Following a welcome from **Kenneth Cobb**, **Alison Richmond** ACR, Icon's CEO, gave the first talk on The Conservation Profession in the UK in which she explained the formation and purpose of Icon and its status as both a professional body and a charity that champions high standards of conservation of cultural heritage. She went on to discuss how Icon administers the Professional Standards in conservation and how these form the basis for the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), for the entry-level qualification (Conservation Technician Qualification) and the work-based learning framework for internships and placements.

Alison reported that the accredited professional is now recognised by the heritage industry and valued by employers and commissioners and the attainment of ACR status is underpinned by a CPD review every few years. Looking ahead, Icon needs to continue to influence the heritage conservation market by leading sector wide strategies, marketing its members' skills, continuing to engage the young, underpinning workplace learning schemes and supporting its members and their salaries.

Addressing *Conservation Training and Education in Horology*, **Matthew Read** ACR noted that current horology courses teach students standard practices to acquire the skill set needed by leading repair,

restoration and conservation firms.

Conservation needs a quality assured complementary skill set which fosters the critical thinking that challenges accepted horological processes and practices. The conservator is accountable for an assessment of the object's holistic condition and treatment proposals that may include addressing compromises to bench craft practices and customer requirements. Once proposals are agreed, undertaking the treatment and recording it in detail are all part of a conservator's responsibilities.

Matthew discussed Icon's CPD as there is no such requirement for BHI membership. He also noted that few professionals can take a year out to train as a conservator yet there is a demand for accredited horological conservators. He finished by inviting the audience to assess an object: a cheap 1920s' clock covered in a 1960s' patterned sticky back plastic sheet used to 'tart it up'. It was a useful exercise addressing the issues of objectivity and the heart.

In his presentation on *Managing Dynamic Objects in Museum Collections*, **Oliver Cooke**, MBHI and Clock Curator at the British Museum, queried the purpose of museums. At the BM it is to 'illuminate present and future generations' with examples from the past and present. The Clock and Watch department has over ten thousand items all accessible to the public. The new World Conservation & Exhibition Centre houses the Conservation and Scientific Research Department, which provides conservation services for the millions of items in its care through a recently introduced Collections Care Strategy, including a programme of active environmental monitoring.

However, the BM's clocks and watches are dynamic objects, so intrinsic wear is a major factor to be addressed. With the focus on preventative conservation, the strategy for deciding whether a clock should be active is determined by a risk assessment survey, balanced with, for instance, educational need. Oliver ran through a simple risk assessment about winding a clock, whereby skeleton clocks with a removable glass dome were seen as having a high risk of damage. Oliver also introduced the issue of running replicas to demonstrate principles, whereby the original is still on view but is kept intact with fewer future intervention processes.

Chris McKay FBHI addressed the topic of *Conservation of larger objects (Turret Clocks)*. He started with an example from the Australian War Museum where problems were posed by the treatment of a wartime Dodge truck used on patrol in the Sahara. A truck with a gun mounted on the back was restored to new – just like the real thing. However, the public expectation was completely different so the exhibit was changed to a Dodge and gun that had seen



Photo: Chris McKay FBHI

At the BHI event: (r to l) Icon CEO Alison Richmond, Oliver Cooke, Matthew Read, Ken Cobb, Keith Scobie Youngs, Chris McKay, Jonathan Betts

a number of years of action with little maintenance. Although non-horological, the example is useful in illustrating real issues. Chris used a series of 'before' and 'after' illustrations to discuss encountered issues and justified treatment methodologies. He reviewed modern adhesives, the use of waxes and recipes for lacquer that was of interest to those who work on domestic clocks. Finally, Chris addressed health and safety from the conservation viewpoint with a list of guidelines.

Keith Scobie-Youngs FBHI ACR works in the tower clock business where planning and coordination with key trades is a principal requirement. His talk, *Working with Others*, started with the obvious: your subcontractors' standard of work needs to be as good as yours. This comes about through the development of relationships.

On-site meetings are important both with the client, contractors and your subcontractors, and Keith stressed the need to go prepared. Quotations and reports should include as much relevant detail as possible, as they serve to show your professionalism and give the client confidence in your management and ultimately your work. Risk Assessment and Methods Statements (RAMS) are an essential part of a conservator's work and the client will be expecting them too.

Keith discussed a number of problems but pointed out that they were all used as learning points within his business. Conservation reports are of paramount importance and include condition, treatment and methodology all backed up with drawings and photographs. Finally, he ensures that the conservators involved work well as part of a team, that the project is delivered on time and on budget, but most importantly that it is finished to the highest standard possible.

Speaking on *Horological Practice in the*

Heritage Sector, **Jonathan Betts**, MBE FBHI pointed out that conservation practices differ from conventional horological practices. The latter, along with traditional tuition, craft skills and knowledge lead to reliable and useful timekeepers with polished cases and clockwork that show off a practitioner's skills; the time spent and work undertaken lead to objects that look like new. These attributes are encouraged by collectors and dealers who place a value on a nice looking antique and pass this expectation on to the owner.

Clocks and watches are documents reflecting the past. We should explain why there should be an interest in preserving them, since they embody a complex mixture of history, use and social history. Jonathan argued that, although restoration has its place (for instance to replace broken or missing parts), it is the removal of a clock's history and other changes, in pursuit of a normalisation process that is going on in the restoration world. He went on to discuss the National Trust's philosophy 'to preserve objects for the future' and 'forever, for everyone'. With these in mind, many of its clocks are not going. But the Trust recognises that it needs to meet the visitor's expectations and to this end some clocks are kept running. Others, however, would not be wound because, for instance, a glass cover can easily be broken when winding. Jonathan ended with a plea to wake up to heritage conservation as the way forward.

Thanks are due to all the speakers for a thought-provoking day with some inspirational presentations. The BHI are to be congratulated on hosting a successful Forum.

Kenneth Cobb C.Eng. & Icon Pathway Forum organiser

**ENWROUGHT IN GOLD AND SILVER
LIGHT: Textiles for beauty and function**
The Oxford Conservators' Group 5th
Conservation Forum,
Oxford 6 October 2015

This year's Oxford Conservators' Group (OCG) Conservation Forum was the finale of a cluster of textile-related events enjoyed by members. These included our first grand day out, where a small group of members journeyed into rural West Berkshire to see the magnificent seventeenth century Wintour vestment exhibition at Douai Abbey near Newbury. Immediately prior to the Forum, colleagues at the Ashmolean Museum presented two drop-in textile viewing sessions to enable members to see at close hand the intricacy and beauty of both the textile makers', and the textile conservators', art.

Each year, the OCG Forum aims to provide the widest appeal to our diverse membership, bringing together all conservation disciplines. The use of textiles both as objects and components seemed to cross many conservation borders, and the short papers presented at the Forum demonstrated how textiles had been incorporated and recreated to form remarkable archives, hidden surprises and exceptional individual objects. There was also time to address some of the conservation issues surrounding their ongoing use and care.

Our first speaker was **Liz Rose**, Textile Conservator at the British Library, who took us around the world in four collections. Liz is the British Library's first textile conservator to be appointed with the specific aim of finding textile objects in a collection of over 150 million items, and once discovered prioritise them for treatment.

Using the structure of the collection areas of the library – Asian and African, Contemporary British, Western Heritage and European and American – Liz picked out some of her textile discoveries to show the diversity of the objects she found in what is ostensibly a book-based collection. The range was remarkable: from a fourth century Buddhist silk fragment from Miran to a nineteenth century Burmese, talismanic tabard via t-shirts and teddy bears. The collection rationale behind these textile objects was the importance of the written information they contained and the securing of the integrity of the collections.

Liz's role has been to conserve and re-house items to allow readers to access this information and ensure safe storage when not in use, a considerable challenge given the fragility and size of some of the items. Liz concluded her presentation with a photographic time-lapse of her work on a project to conserve two flags from the East India Company Records, degraded to such an extent that they were the ghosts of the objects they once were.



Photograph of May Hamilton Beattie attached to a travel document

For our next presentation we moved from textiles hidden in collections to an archive specifically for the study of textiles, in this case carpets. **Kathy Clough**, Archives Assistant for the Beattie Archive at the Ashmolean Museum, introduced us to the remarkable May Hamilton Beattie, a scientist by training but a distinguished scholar in the field of carpet studies by choice, and her many-layered archive of ninety carpets, carpet and fibre samples and supporting research material bequeathed to the Ashmolean Museum in 2000.

In this very personal collection, Kathy showed us the detailed structure of Beattie's research, with carpet samples being supported by evidence of fibre and dye analysis, written and photographic records and published material. Whilst it was important to maintain the original order of the collection, set in place by May Beattie, it

was clear that the preservation needs of some items were incompatible with their present physical position in the archive material. Kathy took us through the cataloguing and preservation methods she had used to maintain the clear connections within the collection, and with the intelligent use of housing had ensured minimal separation of items from Beattie's original schema.

The story of the Beattie Archive was further contextualised by **Sue Stanton**, Textile Conservator at the Ashmolean Museum, who used the introduction of the archive into the museum's textile collections as an exemplar of how new acquisitions can impact on existing items in terms of pest management. Sue outlined the freezing and isolation procedures introduced to manage the pest risk from the Beattie Archive, a process which is ongoing as Kathy discovers further textile elements.

Textile binding from Henry VIII's library: MS317 before treatment



A shared interest and appreciation of the work of other conservation disciplines was a constant thread in our next joint presentation on the treatment of textile bindings from the library of Henry VIII. **Jane Eagan**, Head of Conservation at the Oxford Conservation Consortium, and **Sabina Pugh**, Senior Book Conservator at the Bodleian Library, described the investigation of a group of medieval manuscripts thought to have been recovered in velvet on entry into the royal library at the time of Henry VIII, and the conservation treatment of one manuscript in depth.

Jane Eagan began by outlining the characteristics of the velvet covering, drawing on her conservation treatment of three manuscripts belonging to The Queen's College. She then showed evidence of the re-covering process, and the removal of earlier binding elements, still visible beneath the current bindings. Sabina Pugh then gave a presentation of her treatment of one of these manuscripts from the Bodleian Library collection. In general, whilst the original medieval binding structure was largely maintained, the manuscripts had been re-covered in a hardwearing mixed linen and wool velvet textile known as fustian in the sixteenth century.

Both presenters had both worked collaboratively with textile conservator and historian Maria Hayward, who repaired the Tudor textile covering material. Both presentations revealed tantalising hidden clues to the original medieval bindings that had been removed or adapted by the Henrician binders, and demonstrated the speed and economy with which the binders



© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Detail from *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*, WA 1994.142. From the Ashmolean's 17th century embroidery collections

worked when recovering. This was sharply contrasted with the meticulous and thoughtful work of Jane, Sabina and Maria to return sympathetically these remarkable objects to functionality.

For our final presentation, **Sue Stanton** returned to speak about her work to shed light on some of the fascinating constructional details in the Ashmolean's

seventeenth century embroidery collections uncovered by microscopic and x-ray analysis. Using objects from the Mallett and Feller collections, Sue led us through the complex construction techniques employed by the non-professional embroiderers who made these beautiful objects, using a variety of textile media including metals, pearls, feathers, bone, and both human and animal hair.

She compared the current and historic conservation and preservation approaches to the two collections, based on her knowledge both of their provenance and of the previous treatments that individual objects had undergone. As these collections contained items for display and research, the importance of enabling access to all areas of the objects was clear.

Using her treatment to remount one of the embroideries, *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*, as an exemplar, Sue showed how the use of non-invasive repair techniques had reinstated losses without impacting on the original object and clever re-housing had revealed areas previously concealed by the original mount. Her work also enabled access to the noticeably less light damaged reverse of the embroidery, showing the true nature of its significantly more vivid original colour scheme.

As both a visual feast and a showcase for learning through collaborative working, innovative conservation techniques and imaginative handling, housing and display methods, this year's OCG Forum did not disappoint.

Victoria Stevens ACR

MS317 after treatment

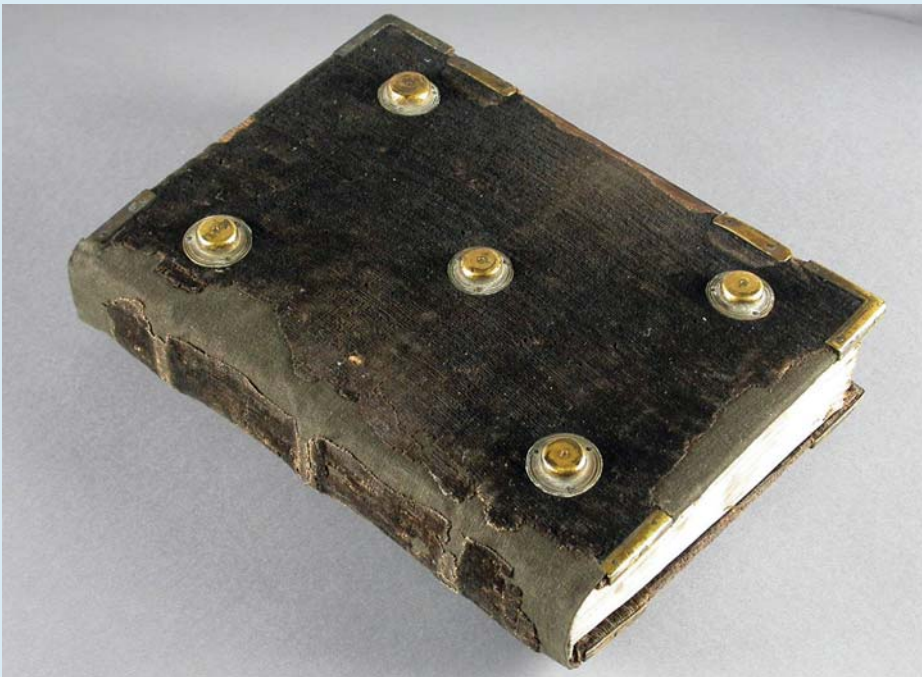


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COURSES

FRENCH UPHOLSTERY

Icon Furniture and Wood Group

Buckinghamshire New University
20–24 July 2015

'What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter – a soothing, calming influence on the mind, rather like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue.' (Henri Matisse)

The experts in French Upholstery are of course the French themselves, and with Laurent Laine, the former head of the upholstery programme at Ecole Boulle – one of the leading furniture schools in Paris – we had the exciting opportunity to learn from the best in the field.

The National School of Furniture at Bucks New University hosted the recent French Upholstery course, organized by Dr Ernest Riall from Icon's Furniture and Wood Group. As an MA Furniture: Conservation & Decorative Arts student, I had the privilege to take part in this course, which was definitely an eye-opening experience within the highly regarded realms of French Upholstery.

The French attitude to the upholstery process tends to be very sensitive, or should I say very 'organic'. Despite the fact that the whole process is planned to the final details, they also use their 'feel'. The webbing is sized in 'palms', the tack-lifter is called a 'Bambi foot' as its shape inspires such an image. In short, there is a raw, instinctive emotional involvement in the process.

Laurent is an enthusiastic French upholsterer; he is absolutely absorbed in this work, and takes the art of upholstery seriously with the utmost respect and dignity.

Speed is of vital importance, but should not compromise quality. Laurent guided us personally on every step on the way, making sure that we utilized new methods and developed our skills, teaching us purpose and importance in every part of the process, particularly: using the correct and well prepared tools, planning, measuring and marking. With tools at the ready, it is necessary to examine your piece of furniture and plan ahead. Think, don't rush, measure, measure again, and mark. Best results are achieved if you get the right balance; bottom to top, from webbing to the top cover.

Starting from the bottom, one of the well known differences between French and English upholstery is the webbing: the French webbing is wider and is interlaced in a similar way to English, but with no gaps in between the rows of webbing. The buttoning process is one of the most planned processes in the French Upholsterer's work. As balancing is very



Photo: Atara Aberman

Laurent Laine explaining the setting out of the springs

important and the layout does not always allow for easy buttoning, you very often need to adjust the placing accordingly, leaving a clear frame of two centimetres around the seat without losing the balance. When a placing decision is made, we trace it onto the calico, which will then be sewn by a machine accordingly and carefully.

Another significant difference is the French stitching method. As the French like their seat to be much stiffer and taller, the final horse hair stitching is designed to keep it condensed and relatively high.

The intensive five day course allowed us to develop a project of our own or undertake a stool project. I happily re-upholstered the seat of a French armchair, and was extremely pleased with the results, as well as the new techniques and skills we had been taught. Other students undertook the stool project

and fully covered them; others did theirs in cross-section, so that you could see the layer structure.

Above all, it was a fantastic opportunity to be exposed to the traditional furniture making of another culture, which will be of the utmost importance to me when completing my final MA project – a French Louis XVI Settee.

Special thanks should go to Paul Tear MBE for providing tools and materials and supporting and encouraging us all throughout the week. Finally, my special thanks to NADFAS (the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies) for their financial support, which allowed me to participate on the course.

Atara Aberman

MA Conservation Student at Bucks University

The final French upholstered stool in cross section (without the top cover)



Photo: Atara Aberman

ROLLED PAPER STORAGE

Laura Cronin, Collections Assistant at the Horniman Museum, describes an inexpensive solution to a longstanding problem storing rolled paper artworks

Introducing the problem

At The Horniman Museum Study Collections Centre, we have around one hundred and fifty rolled paper items. Historically, these were stored in far from ideal conditions, but we recently undertook a project to improve their storage and accessibility.

The rolled objects had been placed in polythene tubing which successfully protected them from dust, but meant that many had become flattened; particularly at the ends where the tubing was stapled together. This issue was aggravated by the fact the items were stored on shelves, stacked on top of each other within narrow shelving (Fig. 1).

This storage system also made retrieval difficult and hazardous to the objects. We either had to pull all of them out where wooden shelves had warped and were stuck, or reach in, potentially putting pressure on other rolled items. Over time, this had added to the flattening process, particularly in the case of those made from delicate Japanese tissue, which was not strong enough to resist these pressures. Some had become so flattened that they had creases along the edges and thus were more folded than rolled (Figs.2 & 3).



Fig.1 The rolled works on paper as they were previously stored



Fig.2 One of the flattened art works

Fig.3 An example of the damage caused by flattening



The slippery nature of the plastic tubes had also meant that some items had fallen off their shelves onto those behind, or had even slipped between shelves, making them difficult to find. Though this was an ongoing area of concern, we had not yet come up with a solution for improvement given our resources.

A solution emerges

In 2013 we had a team away day to The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford to see their new Jameel Centre. This is an area for the study of Eastern Art, where collections have been made accessible to the public by appointment. It includes brand new storage areas with an impressive array of novel solutions. The highlight, for me at least, was a section of steel honeycomb, created especially for rolled paper.

It wasn't until months later, when we were yet again having trouble locating a rolled artwork that we finally decided to implement our own version of the wonderful honeycomb storage. I thought it might be possible to make a much cheaper, but effective version by using cardboard tubes. To implement this, we had one staff member in myself and one student placement, who could assist one day a week.

Preparatory steps

Our first action was to remove all of the rolled paper and temporarily store them in stackable trays (Fig.4). We then sorted them into size, then geographical area. This confirmed how many rolls we needed (as we did not trust the number located in this area on the database). We also added extra to allow for future acquisitions. After discussions with Conservation, we started with the most delicate paper objects that had been crushed and carefully rolled them onto Melinex



Fig.4 Rolled works being sorted and temporarily stored in bakers' trays

(Fig.5). This offered them some support and hopefully will ease the creases over time. This was the most expensive material we used, but we felt it would be worth the extra protection; it seemed counterintuitive to put the crushed

Fig.5 One of our placement students, Charlotte Mayhew, rolling Japanese tissue onto Melinex



Fig.6 Half of the cardboard tubes, glued together and placed within the racking

paper into a new storage area. Making them more rounded, would also ease their removal from the tubes.

Making our cardboard honeycomb

As acid-free rolls are still relatively expensive, we opted for standard cardboard tubes from a non-museum storage supplier. The rolled paper was to be stored with a barrier in-between, either the Melinex, or polythene tubing (for less fragile items), so that they would provide a level of protection from the acid. Rolls were ordered that would just fit the depth of our mobile racking and would accommodate the majority of our rolled artworks.

The rolls were glued together in rows using a glue gun, and glue which had been Oddie tested to prevent off-gassing. We made the stack in two sections, as the rolls began to get quite heavy when glued together. These were then placed directly within one of our mobile racking units, (Fig. 6) one on top of the other. Clearing the space for all of these tubes was not an easy task, even with all the rolled paper removed and temporarily stored in trays, there was still a lot of moving around to be done within our 'art on paper' section.

We ordered the storage tubes with closures for the front, but as they were backing onto the inside of the racking, we left them open at the back to allow for air circulation. The front closures were then individually numbered, so that each tube has its own container number on our database, making for much easier retrieval (Fig.7).

Designing the retrieval system

As the front plastic closures were very tight within the tubes, we decided to make handles from cotton tape for easier removal. For this, we came up with multiple ideas and had



Fig.7 All of the tubes within the racking. Each lid was numbered individually

other staff members test them for the most effective and fool-proof method (Fig.8).

Our final solution, incorporated a strip of cotton tape glued to the inside of the closure, which was then stapled to the bagging of the artwork stored within the tube (Fig.9). This prevents shorter items being pushed too far within the tube that they cannot be retrieved. It also means that when an item is removed, the tube number is taken away with it and returned with it, hopefully reducing the risk of it being put back in the wrong place.

Dealing with the larger items

As we had initially sorted our rolled papers by size, we knew that not all would fit neatly within our standardised main 'honeycomb' area. To accommodate these, we planned to use longer, wider rolls, which we glued together in smaller numbers, and fitted along the length of an adjoining rack.

These worked in exactly the same way, but with closures at both ends so that the papers would not fall out. We pierced holes in one end of the closures to allow for some ventilation. Each of these units was then fitted with handles, to allow easy and safe removal from the racking (Figs. 10 & 11).

The fact that these need to be removed from the racking before objects can be removed, means that they function more like boxes. However, the benefit is that the rolled paper items are more protected as they are not piled on top of each other and do not need to be searched through to find the one we are looking for.

With these rolls, we ordered a wider diameter since some of the longer pieces were also much wider when rolled. As some of the papers were long but narrow when rolled, some of the



Fig.9 Our chosen closure and removal method

tubes were able to accommodate several items within them. In this case, we did not attach each item to the lid as we did with the main set, as only one item may need to be retrieved at a time. Instead, we attached a length of cotton tape to the plastic or Melinex cover of each roll. On the opposite end of these, we fitted a piece of Velcro to the underside and marked the top with the object number. Each of these were then attached to an opposite piece of Velcro, which we attached to the inside of the tube. This allows us to open a tube, identify which object we want according to the number on the tape, and then retrieve this by unsticking and pulling the cotton tape (Fig. 12).

A satisfactory outcome

Though this project was not simple in many ways, it has allowed us to use very little of our general materials budget to great effect. We have managed to store the vast majority of our rolled paper items in this way, with only a few very long items left to be stored in an oversize box. They are now all supported and stored safely without any further risk of damage from flattening. Gone are the days when we need to

Fig.8 Staff members trying out different closures to find the most effective method





Fig.10 Collections Officer Helen Merrett removes the larger rolls from the racking

rummage through piles of papers. Whilst re-rolling many of them, we also saw some beautiful artworks, which reinforced why this was a very worthwhile project.

Fig.11 Larger rolls removed. The handles were only glued underneath, so the grip can move from the front to the top, allowing for smooth retrieval



Fig.12 A view inside one of the larger tubes. Each object has a numbered length of cotton tape attached, to make them easy to identify



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Melinex- PEL

the emerging conservator

CONSERVING A WW1 FIELD SURGICAL PANNIER

Louise Stewart Beck discusses the treatment of a complex object for an upcoming exhibition at the Science Museum, London

Passing through the conservation laboratory at the Science Museum recently was an English Field Surgical Pannier from the First World War. This kit is a particularly complete example of its type, with extensive contents in nearly unused condition. However, the hundred years between its manufacture and the present day had taken their toll on the object and there were several parts of it in poor condition. The aim of the conservation treatment was to stabilise the object and ensure that it would be suitable for display in an upcoming temporary exhibition. It was very important that the overall appearance of the object reflected its age and that it had seen war-time use while maintaining stabilisation and legibility as the over-arching goals of the conservation treatment.

MANY PARTS, MANY PROBLEMS

This particular surgical pannier still contains more than eighty five of its original parts, including unused consumables such as sterilised suture thread suspended in an iodised liquid. Each of the parts was documented and condition checked at the start of treatment, but most did not require anything more than a light surface clean in terms of conservation treatment. The two main focuses of the treatment thus became the degrading leather trim on the case itself and one specific part of the object which the curators were particularly interested in: a hot water bottle.

THE CHALLENGE OF RESHAPING

The hot water bottle at some point in its history had been rolled and folded, a position which it had adopted permanently due to hardening of its rubberised canvas surface. One of the most important treatment aims was to find a way to make the hot water bottle legible to visitors and appropriate for display. The initial response to the curator



A No. 1 Field Surgical Pannier from World War I, manufactured 1915-1916 and with much of its contents intact

who asked for the object to be re-shaped was that it would be unlikely, as once rubber has oxidised there is little that can be done to restore flexibility.

However, an article from 2000 by Flora Nuttgens and Zenzie Tinker (The Conservation of Rubberised Textiles: Two Case Histories) provided some hope. In this article, Nuttgens and Tinker discussed the possibility of using heat to re-shape a rubberised object, which can be successful if the hardening of the rubber is due to crystallisation rather than oxidation. The hot water bottle was rather robust in addition to being misshapen, but in its initial state was barely recognizable as a hot water bottle. As such, it was decided that this approach had benefits which would outweigh the risk.

The heating and reshaping process was done in under an hour, proving not only successful but fairly quick. The object was placed into the pre-heated laboratory oven at 60°C for five minute intervals, then removed and the shape gently modified by hand before being returned to the oven. The working time after each heating was only approximately thirty

The re-adhered corner of the leather trim. The hinges are not visible in this image but can be spotted when the lid is open



The hot water bottle before treatment, rolled and folded





Two views of the hot water bottle after treatment, showing one side fully reshaped and one side with remaining folds

seconds, as the rubber quickly returned to an inflexible state. This process was repeated six times, the point at which no further re-shaping could occur.

It proved possible to unroll the hot water bottle to its full length, but was not possible to unfold the canvas completely. The previously unexposed folded surface had some areas of loss and friability which did not respond well to an attempt at unfolding. This may indicate that a second and irreversible form of rubber degradation, oxidation, was present on these areas of the object.

Despite the incomplete reshaping of the object, the treatment successfully increased the legibility and improved the display potential of this part of the object.

CONSOLIDATION & STABILISATION

Further treatment was carried out on the leather trim of the case itself. The trim has degraded significantly and is subject to a bad case of red rot. The leather trim was thoroughly consolidated with three applications of 2.5% w/v Klucel G in isopropanol.

Part of the trim around the hinged lid of the object had come completely detached, but was easily relocated. Adhering it in place once located was another issue, however. The fragment only had one edge which made contact with the rest of the leather and was too friable to be adhered directly to the case. The join needed to be able to withstand some flexing as the case lid is opened and closed. A Japanese tissue hinge was considered, but dismissed due to the amount of bending and flexing that it would have to withstand.

The eventual decision was to use goldbeater's skin, a type of gut parchment, to create a series of small hinges. These were adhered across the join between the two pieces of leather

using 30% w/v Paraloid B72 in acetone, which provided a strong bond that did not cause staining in the leather. It was only necessary to add hinges on the flesh side of the leather, as the joint was strong and flexible enough and does not change the external appearance of the object. When the lid to the object is open, the hinging material is slightly visible, but does not detract from the overall appearance.

TREATMENT CONCLUSIONS

The overall success of this treatment and the methods used is promising for other similar objects within the Science Museum collections. Both treatments were novel to the museum's conservation department, and in their experimentation have provided a better understanding of the materials and methods available for the treatment of degraded rubber and leather objects.

FIND OUT MORE

Further information about forthcoming exhibitions at the Science Museum can be found at http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/coming_soon.aspx.

Follow the Science Museum blog at <http://blog.sciencemuseum.org.uk/insight/> for behind-the-scenes information from curators and conservators.

From July 2014 to July 2015 Louise Stewart Beck was a conservation intern at the Science Museum in London, working towards an upcoming exhibition about WWI medicine



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