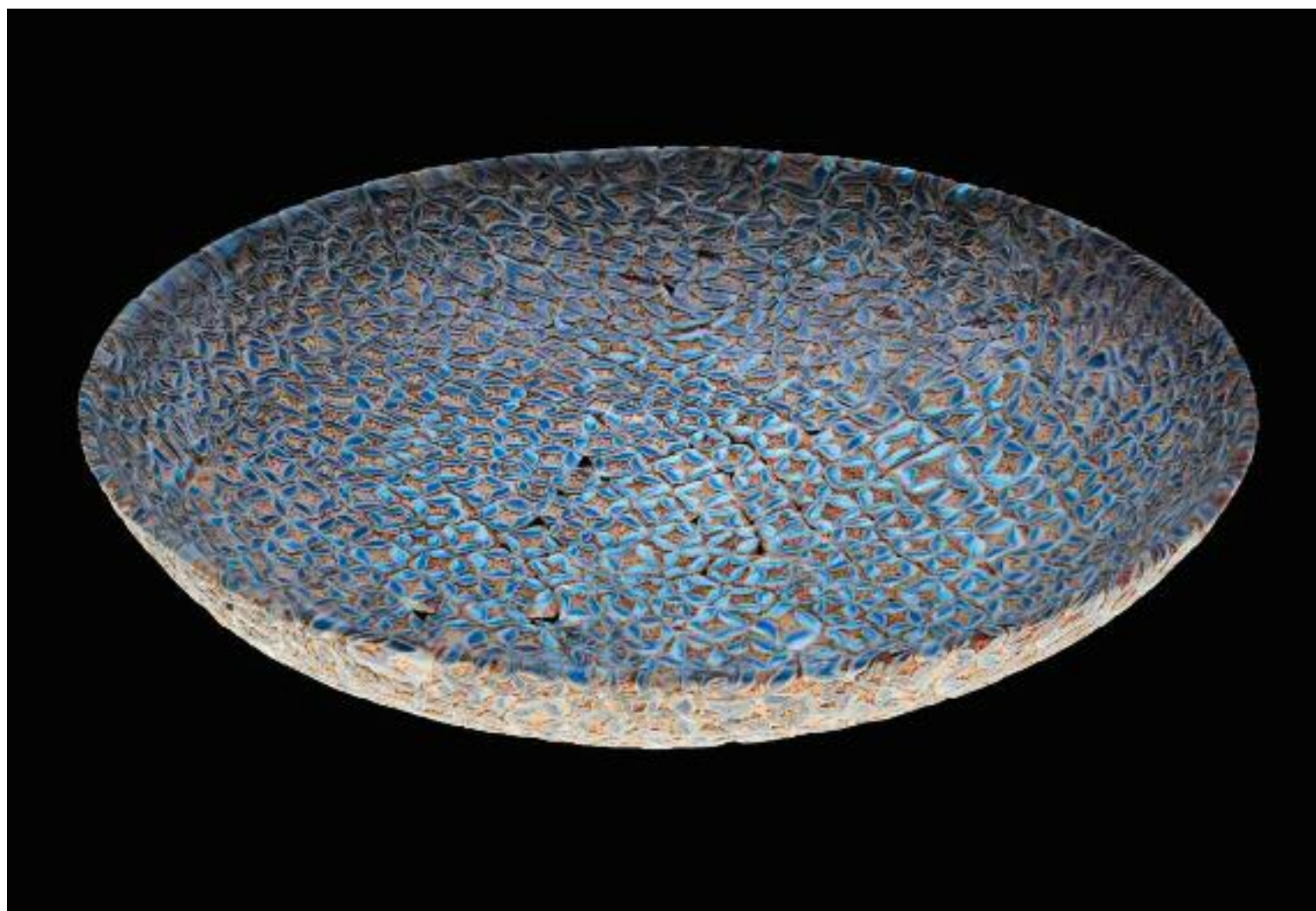




Buried for 2000 years: a Roman bowl

Also in this issue

Collections management: a new Code of Practice

Carpet conservation gains Royal approval

Saving Saxon timbers and filling floorboard gaps



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incorporating Blackwall Green

JULY 2009

Issue 23

Last month saw the arrival of two new members of staff to Icon: Jessica Wanamaker to the role of Chief Executive and Ros Buck, who takes up the post of Librarian and Information Manager at the Chantry Library. You can read about them on page 10. A warm welcome to them both.

It is also a great pleasure to report that the arcane world of carpet conservation was recognised with a Royal Warrant earlier in the year. Heather Tetley tells us about her career, the challenges posed by carpets and the differences between her approach and that of professional restorers, (but, sorry, no celebrity magazine style insights into the Royal Households).

At the other end of the career path, this issue has a strong thread of material from trainees, describing their placement experiences and a neat solution to a pest problem in the In Practice slot. It is good to see the next generation of conservators finding their feet in the profession. In the face of grave threats to the country's conservation training system and infrastructure, Icon's efforts to ensure that training opportunities are not lost become even more vital. As the strong competition for the next round of Icon/HLF internships shows, the demand is there.

Lynette Gill, Editor



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Cover photo: Conservation was recently completed on this rare Roman dish, which had been in the ground for nearly two thousand years before its discovery in London excavations last year. © Museum of London

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For September 2009 issue
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Event listings: 31 July
Adverts: 13 August

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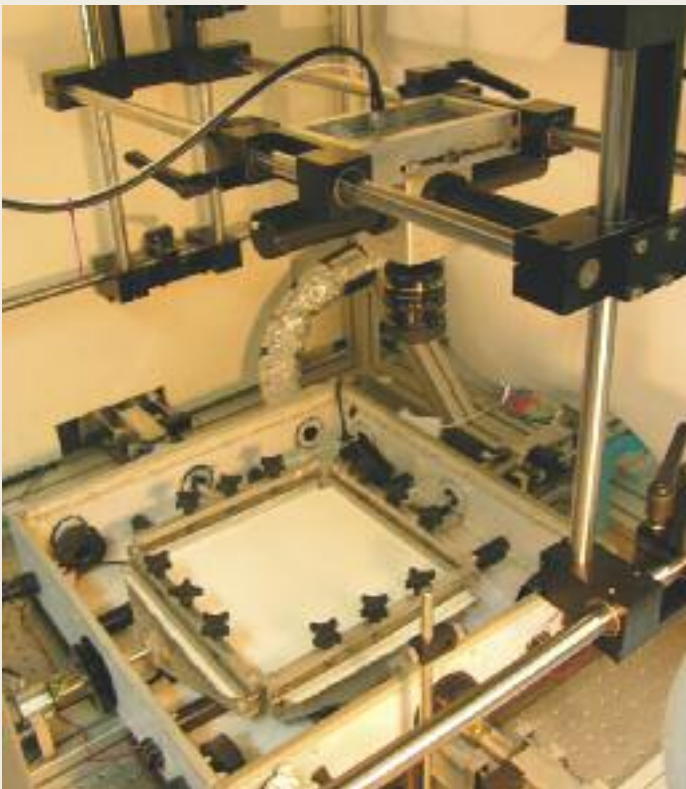
around & about

Tensioned Fabrics

The growing interest in investigating the physical properties of textiles was shown in a recent exhibition called *Tensioned fabrics in art and architecture*. It was one outcome of research to understand the behaviour of fabrics held under tension. The investigated materials were the canvas of canvas paintings and the fabrics used for stretched cloth roofing (such as the Millennium Dome), and the methodology was computational strain analysis. The fabrics' responses to load and environmental changes are recorded in strain maps – beautifully coloured representations of deformation. In the case of painting canvases, every detail can be modelled down to the number and position of the staples used, the effectiveness of the staples, the friction of the fabric and even how the fabric is wrapped around the corner of the stretcher. The work has implications for improving structural conservation treatments and for choices of fabric for living artists interested in innovative projects.

The research resulted from a collaboration between the University of Warwick, the Courtauld Institute of Art and industry partners, and was funded by the AHRC/EPSRC research scheme 'Designing for the 21st Century' (AH/E5018154/1). The Tensioned Fabrics research complements another AHRC-funded project: Towards In-Situ

Strain measurement using a Biaxial Tensile Tester with a 3D Electronic Speckle Pattern Interferometer

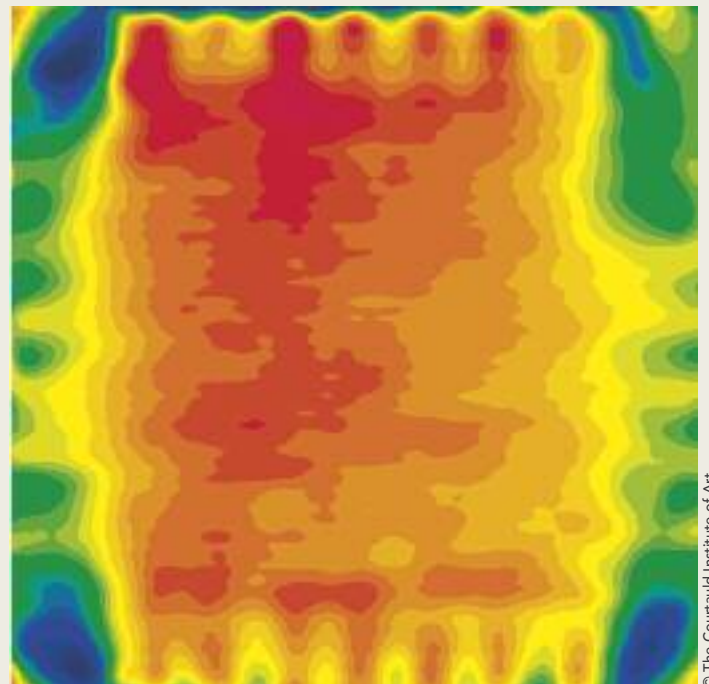


© The University of Warwick

Computational strain map, corner image

Monitoring of Tapestry Degradation using Strain-Based Engineering Techniques, which is being undertaken by the University of Southampton, via its Engineering Department, the Textile Conservation Centre, and industry partners including the National Trust and English Heritage (AID120414).

A strain map in canvas over the entire painting (no folds). Areas of highest strain concentration are shown in red.



© The Courtauld Institute of Art



The Gateshead Bridge

European accolades

This year's European prizes for cultural heritage, awarded by the European Union and Europa Nostra, reached their conclusion in June when, out of one hundred and thirty eight applicants, twenty eight projects were chosen for an Award and, from their number, seven were selected to receive a Grand Prize and a reward of 10k euros. One of the seven, in the conservation category, was the High Level Bridge in Gateshead in North East England, built by Robert Stephenson and opened by Queen Victoria in 1849. The jury was impressed with the level of engineering professionalism from original research into the fatigue performance of cast iron down to the restoration of the original lamp standards; the granting of a Grand Prize represented the importance of retaining engineering icons of our industrial heritage in day-to-day use.

The three other UK winners of Awards in the conservation category all came from Scotland. Stanley Mills on the river Tay near Perth was chosen in recognition of the sponsors' prolonged determination to save and respectfully re-use a

The winning team on the bridge



Stanley Mills before and after rescue



water-powered, industrial textile manufacturing site from 1786. The Pier Arts Centre in Stromness in Orkney was praised for the conservation and refurbishment of warehouse premises to hold an important art collection in suitable conditions. And finally, a local community's success in saving a rare surviving example of a vernacular earth building tradition was



Inside Stanley Mills before and after its rescue



more around & about



The Logie Schoolhouse before and after its conservation



recognised: complete and virtually unaltered, the Logie Schoolhouse in Craigo was built in the early 19thC of mud and straw. Abandoned in 1990, with help and support from National Trust for Scotland it has been conserved and converted to housing use, reviving skills and interest in the local earth building tradition.

Henry VIII – a visual treat

The British Library's exhibition *Henry VIII: Man and Monarch* provides a rich feast of original source materials, not just treasures from the BL's own holdings of documents and books - though those are fascinating enough - but portraits, armour, tapestry, plate and jewellery. This has enabled some striking juxtapositions, such as a love letter to Anne Boleyn lent by the Vatican alongside the very writing desk on which it was probably composed (from the Victoria & Albert Museum). Particularly vibrant is the assemblage of portraits, including the earliest surviving one of Henry on loan from Denver and on display in the UK for the first time. One object which needed conservation attention, carried out by the BL's Yunsun



A detail of the 1539/40 coastal map showing a previous repair in an area where the scroll was folded



Careful repair



The conserved map in situ in the exhibition

Choi, is a giant map of the south west coast from Exeter to Land's End. Made in 1539/40 in response to the threat of invasion, this coastal survey shows forts, beacons, landing sites and places where musters could be accommodated and new forts built, with later annotations indicating whether they were or not. The exhibition runs for seven days a week until 6 September.

Yunsun Choi at work on the map, correcting lifting



Collection Care Videos

The Preservation Section of the Collection Care Department at the British Library has produced a series of nine short videos under the heading **'Using the Collections'** which show ways to handle a variety of collection items safely.

Unlike a museum, most of the Library's holdings can be ordered by readers for use in the Reading Rooms. Wear and tear and other damage to items arising from handling and use are among the greatest risks to the collection.

This is the latest in a series of initiatives to reduce risks to collection items by encouraging careful use, so the library and its users can help towards the long term preservation of the collections. Although primarily aimed at readers, the videos can also be used in staff training and when staff are advising readers on the best way to handle items.

Each short video listed below, shows items in a particular format with demonstrations of how they can be used. The videos are linked to the opening screens of the reading room PCs and are on the British Library website and we hope they will be a useful reference for other institutions with similar collections.

1. Caring for the Collections – Introduction
2. Using gloves with collection items
3. Using books
4. Using books in boxes and other book types
5. Using folded items
6. Using rolled items
7. Using loose leaf material
8. Using prints and drawings
9. Using other formats

The videos can be viewed on the British Library website at <http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/ccare/collectioncarevideos/index.html> or by going to <http://www.bl.uk> and typing 'collection care videos' in the search box.



Conservation in Focus

24 to 26 March 2010



NEWS

Conservation comes to Wales

Icon is welcomed to Cardiff

Icon is delighted to announce that Cardiff City Council and the National Museum of Wales have recognised Icon's international reputation as a lead body for the heritage sector by hosting receptions at CF10.

The first reception will welcome delegates to Cardiff and will be held on the evening of Wednesday 24 March in the classical marbled hall of the National Museum of Wales. Then Cardiff Castle will host delegates for an evening reception on Thursday 25 March. The reception will be held in the Castle's newly built and award winning interpretation centre. Delegates will be offered private guided tours around Cardiff Castle's stunning and recently conserved interiors.

Support for CF10

Icon is also pleased to launch the logo for CF10 and thanks Design World Cardiff for donating the design.



Icon has been in discussion with several sponsors and funders and will announce details of their support in the next edition of Icon News. We are grateful to all those who have already offered support. Anyone interested in sponsoring the conference or booking a trade stand should contact conference organisers on CF10@icon.org.uk

Student poster competition

Student members of Icon are being given an opportunity to showcase their talents during CF10 with a student poster competition. This will be open to groups and individuals from abroad and the UK who are currently in conservation or conservation science training (whether this be an institution, apprenticeship, private practice, etc) and are student members of Icon.

Students will be asked to submit a project, which they believe can showcase: ethical issues; challenges to old or new treatment methodologies; the use of new technology; insight into the conservation decision making process or a contribution to sustainability. Students will also be asked to describe the significance of their project to the professional community, culture, heritage or society as a whole. Qualifying projects may be in progress or have been finished in the last four years (since March 2006). More details of the competition will follow, but it is expected that the deadline for electronic submission of posters will be December 2009. Students who have submitted short-listed posters will be invited to submit a hardcopy A2 version of their poster for display and final judging during the conference.

PACR clinic

A PACR clinic will be held in National Museum Cardiff on the afternoon of Wednesday 24 March. The clinic is for potential PACR candidates who are working towards the next application deadline. The aim of the clinic is to support candidates working on their application and address any queries they have about how to complete their form.

The keep of Cardiff castle where the Thursday reception will be held



professional update

From the London office

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

I want to briefly update you on the recent activities of the Board; as many of you will know, you can find the minutes of our meetings on the website.

On June 16, the Board was very pleased to welcome Jessica Wanamaker as our new Chief Executive of Icon. Jessica will be working closely with our existing Operations Director, AnnMarie Newbigin, and other members of staff to enhance communications and services to members. In addition, Jessica will take a lead role in strengthening our strategic partnerships, steering our advocacy activities and developing a sustainable organisation that will enable us to fulfill our charitable objectives, meet our key performance goals and exceed members' expectations.

We are also pleased to welcome Rosalind Buck as the new Chantry Librarian and Information Manager and look forward to developing our resources in this area with Ros's help and expertise.

I believe that a strong management team and committed staff coupled with a proactive Board of Trustees will ensure our success in representing your interests as the conservation profession at the highest levels and with the greatest impact in the Cultural Heritage Sector.

With this in mind, I am pleased to report that Jessica was able to attend our recent 3 June Board meeting held in Cardiff and the following planning day, where we worked intensively on our strategic plan for Icon. With Jessica now on board, we are working to develop the details of our strategy and plans for the next three years and will seek to consult with our members in the near future on these plans.

In addition, I want to report that, based on our initial review of our financial position for the year ending 31 March 2009, we are in a much better position than we had anticipated a year ago. However, we continue to face the challenge of building our resources in order to meet all our goals and regard your support and participation as vital to our cause.

In the coming months, you can expect to hear from both the Board and our Chief Executive, Jessica, through both featured articles in Icon News and emails. Please send us any questions, ideas or comments for consideration to anewbigin@icon.org.uk.

Diane Gwilt

Chair of the Board of Trustees

SCIENCE STRATEGY NEWS

The National Heritage Science Strategy, which published its first report (The role of science in the management of UK heritage) at the end of May, has now produced a summary of responses to this report which is available on-line. It will be

releasing its next report at the end of this month. This second report looks at the 'use of science to enhance our understanding of the past'. Report 1 and the summary of responses to it from the sector are currently available on the NHSS website: www.heritagesciencestrategy.org.uk. Report 2 will also be published there at the end of July. For further information about the development of the national heritage science strategy, please contact the project coordinator Jim Williams, nhss@english-heritage.org.uk

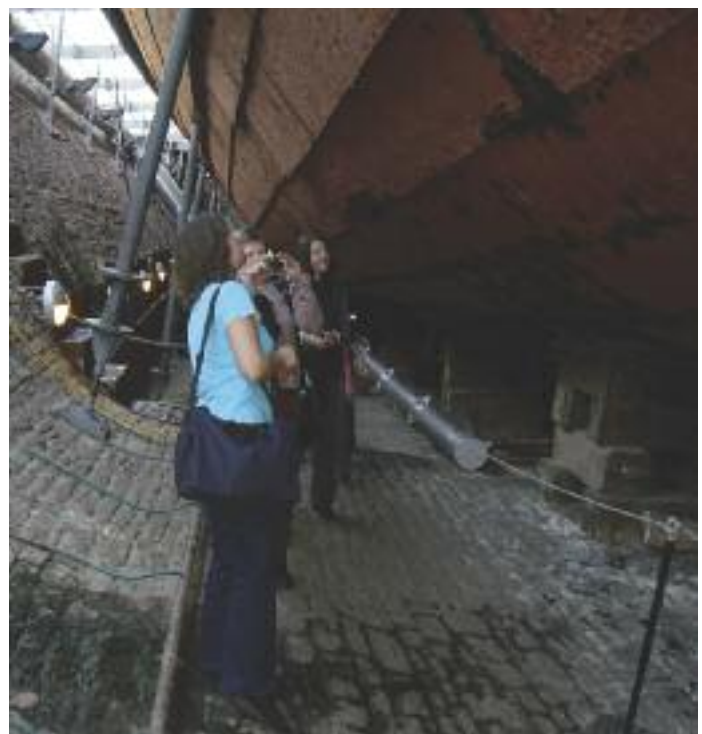
From the training office

CURRENT INTERNSHIPS NEWS

Current Icon Interns in the West region got together in May with invited friends at ss Great Britain. The day involved a tour of the award-winning conservation project and excellent presentations from Rhian Tritton (Director of Museum and Educational Services) and project conservator Shane Casey from Eura Conservation. Interns also took the opportunity to deliver short presentations to the group on their own work over the last year.

East region Interns had already had practice in speaking to an interested and vocal audience – giving a series of short updates during the afternoon programme of a meeting of the East Anglia Conservators Forum, held at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge earlier in May. Hosts Julie Dawson and her intern Andor Vince presided over a well-attended and organised day.

Interns and friends at the ss Great Britain



RECRUITING 2009 INTERNS

Icon was pleased to receive over 180 applications for the eight internships advertised in May Icon News. The response to the placements for those with non-traditional training and backgrounds was particularly strong, reflecting the demand there is for new routes into the profession. Interviews for these places will take place in July with a view to an early September start. We hope to profile the new appointees in the November Icon News.

ICON INTERNSHIPS

Icon hopes to expand its provision of Internships beyond the timescale of funding provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund. We are very pleased to be working with both Historic Royal Palaces and Nicolas Boyes Stone Conservation on this, and are seeking other approaches from employers, charitable trusts, friends' organisations and individuals who are interested in setting up and funding an Internship through Icon. For more details see the Internships area of the Icon website and the 'Setting up an Icon Internship' page.

TECHNICIAN QUALIFICATION UPDATE

Thirty candidates are working towards the qualification this year, including staff from new partner employers: Hampshire Museums, York Glaziers Trust, the Royal Household and Norfolk Record Office. The first assessments are expected to take place this Summer, so Icon hopes to welcome a new batch of CTQ 'graduates' by the Autumn. As you can see, the qualification is relevant for a wide variety of candidates from different work contexts, so do get in touch with Carol Brown at Icon (0131 240 5032 or training@icon.org.uk) if you are an employer interested in joining the scheme in future.

MISCELLANY

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND

The May edition of Icon News reported the breadth and depth of cost-cutting processes taking place within the National Trust for Scotland. At the conclusion of the consultation period in mid-May, cuts have been in the order of 20% across the organisation and, within the Collections Conservation team of 7 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts, there is a loss of 1.2 FTE posts. It has also been announced that the process is underway of selling Wemyss House, the Trust's HQ in the centre of Edinburgh, and finding alternative premises in the Edinburgh area.

ARCHIVES POLICY CONSULTATION

The Government is asking people for their views on its proposed new policy on publicly funded archives. The policy has been developed by The National Archives, together with

the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in England and CyMAL in Wales. The consultation document, *Archives for the 21st century*, has been published at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archivesconsultation. Comments on the policy proposals are welcome from all parties interested in archives including local authorities, universities, individual information professionals, archival organisations and the general public. The consultation exercise runs until **12 August 2009**.

NPG DIRECTORY

British picture restorers, 1630–1950 is a new online resource that has just been published on the National Portrait Gallery website. Find it in the research section of www.npg.org.uk. Compiled by chief curator Jacob Simon, it is a directory of leading picture, paper and sculpture restorers, active in Britain before 1950, who worked on major collections or who advertised extensively in art periodicals. Many worked in London but others were based in Bath, Derby, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hull, Leamington, Manchester, Nottingham and Plymouth. Picture restoration only became a specialised trade during the course of the 19th century and so the directory includes dealers, print publishers and a few artists. But it excludes most artists' suppliers and framemakers who only offered an occasional restoration service. The collections covered in some depth in this directory include the Royal Collection, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Wallace Collection, the Soane Museum and the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood. It is hoped to treat the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum and National Trust properties in more detail in a subsequent edition.

It is intended to revise and expand the directory on a regular basis. Contributions and corrections are welcome to Jacob Simon at jsimon@npg.org.uk

AUTUMN DIARY DATES

A very interesting day is promised at Canterbury Cathedral on October 15 with a conservation symposium to present and discuss the outcome of a monitoring project started in 2008. The results are helping Cathedral conservators to increase their understanding of the causes of deterioration and develop more holistic programmes to safeguard both the building itself and the many treasures which it houses. Conservators from a range of disciplines will be taking part, covering books and manuscripts, textiles, painted surfaces and stained glass windows. More details can be found in the leaflet about the symposium included with this issue of Icon News.

Admission is free to Icon members at the Historic Buildings, Parks and Gardens Event 2009, which takes place at The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London on 17 November. If you are involved in the conservation of historic buildings or their contents and want to attend, contact 01462 896688 or email events@hall-mccartney.co.uk.

Code of practice for cultural collections management

COLLECTIONS TRUST/BSI CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CULTURAL COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

A new *Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management* (BSI PAS 197) has been launched by the British Standards Institute with support from Icon and the Collections Trust. The purpose of the Code is to create a shared definition of professional Collections Management in museums, archives, libraries and other types of Collecting organisation.

The *Code of Practice* takes the form of a 'Publicly-Available Specification' – essentially a BSI standard which is developed through consensus within a professional community. The development of the standard included over 1200 comments from organisations across museums, archives and libraries in the UK and internationally.

At the heart of the standard is the principle that the different activities and priorities of Collections Management should be treated holistically, and that they should clearly support the strategic purpose of the organisation as well as the needs of its audiences.

The standard includes updated definitions of a range of key concepts, including the processes of acquiring and disposing of objects from collections. It maps the equivalent processes between museums, archives and libraries as well as demonstrating where their practices diverge.

The structure of the standard links the mission of the organisation with its Collections Management policies. It then demonstrates how four key areas of practice relate to and reinforce each other:

- Collections Development
- Collections Information
- Collections Access
- Collections Care and Conservation

As the sector comes under increasing pressure to deliver extended services with less money, it is more important than ever that professional practice is both cost-efficient and effective. The aim of the standard is to ensure that individual organisations develop frameworks for Collections Management which deliver maximum value and reduce inefficiency.

The main audiences for the *Code of Practice* are senior managers, funders and policymakers responsible for developing overall strategies for Collections Management. It isn't intended to be a 'how-to' guide for practitioners, although it can be used for the purpose of advocating for Collections Management within an organisation.

In his Foreword to the *Code of Practice*, Former Secretary of



State for Culture, Media and Sport Andy Burnham comments, 'The BSI *Code of Practice for Collections Management* draws on the past decade of professional knowledge and its aim is to provide senior managers with the tools they need to embed Collections at the heart of strategic development.'

While the standard is not compulsory, the Collections Trust is in discussions with funding agencies including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to ensure that it is embedded into future funding programmes. Discussions are also underway to ensure that it is incorporated into the requirements of broader standards programmes such as the Museum Accreditation Scheme managed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

Copies of the *Code of Practice* can be purchased from the BSI – find out more at <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/news/004912.html>. The Collections

Trust is also developing a *Practical Guide to the Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management*. Intended for use by practitioners, this Practical Guide uses examples and case studies drawn from current practice to illustrate the key principles of the standard.

Nick Poole, CEO, Collections Trust



ICON'S NEW CEO

Jessica Wanamaker brings to the post of Icon's new Chief Executive a wealth of varied training and experience. From studies in political economy and theatre administration, she then trained and worked as a solicitor in the City of London before moving on to local government for eight years both as an officer and as an elected councillor in the London Borough of Southwark, where she remains an Honorary Alderman

For the past ten years she has been working on both sides of the Atlantic in the not for profit sector, as director, consultant or fundraiser for organisations connected with the arts, culture and regeneration. In the UK this has included Grange Park Opera, Pimlico Opera, the Royal Opera House, British Youth Opera and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and in New York the Drama League and the Theatre Museum.

Most recently she has been serving as Chief Executive of what is now the East London Community Foundation, working with some of the most diverse and excluded communities in the country. She plans to continue involvement with the Foundation on a volunteer basis and is similarly involved with the United St Saviours Charitable Trust, and the St Barts and London Hospital Charitable Foundation where she acts as a Board Adviser.

Ms Wanamaker told Icon News that she is passionate about the arts and cultural heritage and believes that they are not only critical to the development of personal, community and public identity and but also to the creation of a sound and vibrant national economy.

ICON'S NEW LIBRARIAN

Icon's new librarian and information manager, Ros Buck, took up her post at the Chantry Library in Oxford in mid June. Here she tells Icon News readers a little bit about herself:

'My experience of working in libraries is quite extensive, and certainly varied. Previous positions include posts at Stratford upon Avon public library, and at the Oxford College of Further Education and Sir Michael Sobell House in Oxford, before joining Oxfam, where I have been for the past fifteen years. During my spell at Oxfam, I had the opportunity to travel as far afield as Senegal, Zimbabwe (pre the current troubles), Bangladesh and Thailand, helping set up and establish resource centres for Oxfam staff. My experiences there have helped to shape my enthusiastic approach to my work. Recently, in my spare time, I have qualified as an aromatherapist, a subject which has interested me for some time. I also enjoy walking and I am participating in Trailwalker – a charity walk across the South Downs later this year'.



MEDAL WINNER

As announced in our last issue, this year's Plowden Medal has been awarded to Professor Nicholas Pickwoad and the presentation was made by HRH The Princess Royal at the Royal Warrant Holders' Association Lunch on 2 June.

Richard Watling, Chairman of the Plowden Committee comments: 'We are delighted to present the 2009 Medal to Nicholas, his innovative work, born out of an in-depth knowledge of bookbinding combined with a scholar's understanding for the conservation of the book and historical library, has had a fundamental effect on current practice and will stand as a reference point for future generations of conservation professionals.'

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Louise Robertson, a paper conservator at The Glasgow School of Art in Scotland, has been chosen as the lucky recipient of this year's Nicholas Hadgraft Memorial Scholarship. Now in its fifth year, the scholarship, awarded by Conservation By Design (CXD), offers £1000 towards the cost of attending the Book Conservation Summer School held in the medieval Italian town of Montefiascone. The school runs for four weeks during July and August and each week features a different course and tutor. Louise intends to attend two courses at the end of August: Late 18thC French Binding Structures and the Ethiopian Bindings Workshop.

She won her award in the face of tough competition. CXD's managing director, Mike Brown said: 'We have received entries from all over the world, including the USA, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Italy and Germany. The quality and number of entries we receive grows each year and is testament to the high regard in which the Scholarship is held within the conservation sector'.





Need a Holiday?

INTERESTED IN RAISING MONEY FOR Icon?

Coming soon: an opportunity to combine both these worthy objectives in one fell swoop

Plans are afoot for a raffle to raise funds for Icon

The prize will be a week in Summer 2010 at this charming house in the picturesque Tarn area of France in the Aveyron Gorge. It sleeps seven and has a swimming pool

Tickets will cost £30 each and the number for sale will be limited to 500

Look out for more details in the future in Icon News and on the website



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Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales where the Wednesday conference reception will be held.

Call for Papers



Icon has agreed the themes for next year's Conservation in Focus two day conference in Cardiff. On the first day there will be plenary sessions for all Icon members and on the second day Icon groups will host half-day events. Many of the groups are now planning their events, so look out for updates to follow.

The themes for Day One on 25 March 2010 will be:

1 Evidence based decision making in conservation

Papers could encompass:

- Scientific analysis
- Survey work leading to action
- Experimental environmental control
- Review of historical treatments
- Research leading to innovative treatment.

2 A sustainable future for UK conservation

This theme covers social, environmental or economic sustainability and papers could discuss issues such as:

- The future of conservation training
- Conservation solutions that are driven by financial restraints
- Environmental factors as a central criterion for conservation decisions
- The contribution of conservation to a sustainable community.

Icon is now issuing a call for papers for Day One. Please submit 200–400 word abstracts to CF10@icon.org.uk by 31 August 2009.

A selection of papers from both Day One and Day Two will be published in a special issue of the *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* to be published in spring 2011. These will be subject to peer review, and will need to be submitted at the CF10 conference in March 2010. Further details and guidelines for publication will be issued in October 2009, following the selection of papers for the conference.

A thousand glass petals

A beautiful Roman millefiori bowl was recently discovered in London excavations. Liz Goodman, Conservator at Museum of London Archaeology, and MOL Roman Curator Jenny Hall describe the nature, significance and reassembly of this rare survivor

In September 2008, *L-P: Archaeology* director Guy Hunt brought into the Museum of London conservation lab a Stewart box containing bags of damp, muddy fragments of glass. *In situ* this had been a complete glass bowl which was part of an important burial group. The object had been found at the end of the day and concerns about its safety meant that they had decided to excavate it rather than block lift it. Unfortunately the bowl was now in many pieces.

The glass bowl in situ, showing the whole of the cremation burial. The large ceramic vessel above is an additional cremation



© L-P: Archaeology



© MOL

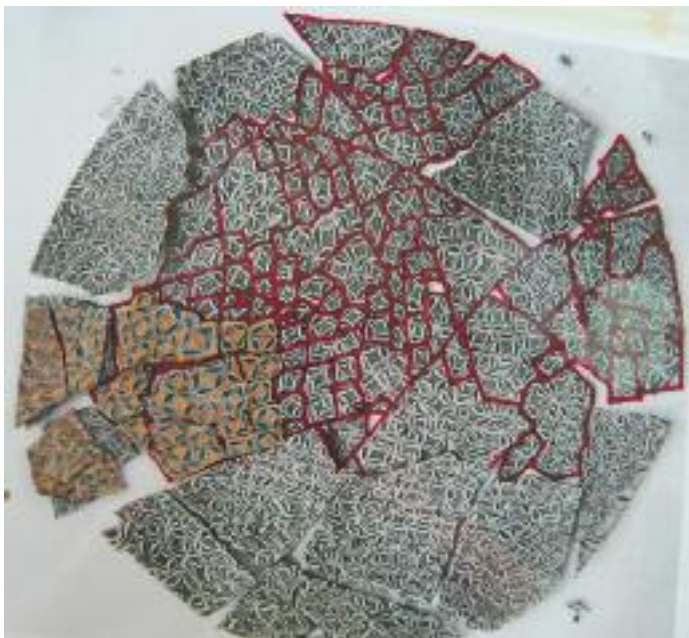
Liz Goodman with the conserved millefiori bowl.

The site near Aldgate was excavated from April to September 2008 and uncovered part of the eastern cemetery of Roman London. It continued the process of recording this extensive eastern cemetery which, by law, lay outside the city wall. This site and previous excavations in the area have found both cremations and inhumations (burial of the body) that spanned nearly 400 years of Roman occupation from the late 1st to early 5th century AD.

At the eastern end of the site, were the remains of a stone mausoleum and a possible funerary structure as well as an area of intense burials. One particular cremation burial was found to be unusually rich in the type and number of grave goods. The cremated remains of a Roman Londoner had been buried, perhaps in a textile bag, inside a wooden casket, of which only the metal fittings had survived. Seven ceramic jars and flagons and three glass vessels were also ranged along the sides of the casket, while a fourth, a glass dish, had probably been placed on top of the wooden lid.

This final glass vessel is a Roman polychrome dish, made in a style known as millefiori, which consists of a repetitive pattern of hundreds of glass petals. Originally the blue translucent petals bordered with white would have been embedded in a bright red opaque glass matrix. The glass, when discovered, had been buried in the damp soil for nearly two thousand years and the deep colour of the opaque red matrix was still visible. The true colour has diminished as the glass dried and now only traces of the red colour remain around the rim. The blue petals, however, survive in all their glory.

Such dishes were a work of art in themselves as it needed skilled craftsmen who could first make up the 'canes' which, when cut through would show the required pattern, similar to the wording in a stick of seaside rock. In this case, this would have been a central red core with four blue glass rods ranged



During consolidation, the photograph is marked with all the joins to allow the correct placement of the fragments.

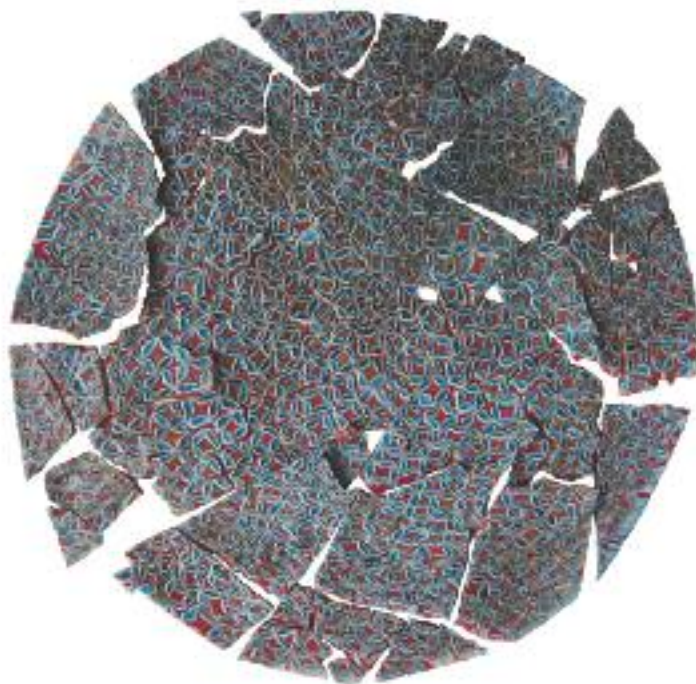
around and an outer layer of red which were fused together by heat and then left to harden. The canes were sliced and closely laid out to form the overall pattern, heated and pressed together. The dish was then gently moulded to its curved shape while still malleable. It was then polished to produce a smooth surface and a decorative groove cut around the external surface, a short distance below the rim.

The dish is extremely rare and an unprecedented find, not only from London but from across the western Roman empire. The complexity of its manufacture indicates that the dish was a highly-prized and valuable item in the Roman period; somewhere in the eastern empire has been suggested as a possible place of manufacture.

When received, the glass was damp, covered in a layer of soil. The vessel had broken/fragmented around the blue/white elements, except where there were new breaks. The red glass was in poor condition compared to the blue/white elements. All the glass was pitted on the outside but the red glass was pitted on both sides and its surface was lower than the blue/white elements. When dry the red glass lost its colour, changing to a slightly iridescent pink/white colour. It is possible to see the remains of the soil in the pits of the red glass, even after conservation, as the corrosion holes go through the glass.

The overriding consideration for treatment was to keep it simple without comprising the object. The initial work consisted of wet cleaning each fragment of the bulk of the soil to reveal the pattern of millefiori and then piecing together all the fragments. As the bowl had been excavated on site in sections, each section was cleaned and reconstructed and only when all prepared, the sections brought together. This was probably the longest part of the job, as some of the glass had broken down into its constituent canes and it was only the joins between the blue and white glass that indicated how to reconstruct.

All the fragments were kept wet, to allow the site excavator to photograph the whole object before drying changed the appearance. Once recorded it was allowed to slowly air dry



After cleaning, before controlled air drying.

over two weeks. Each fragment was then recleaned, as required. This process revealed how fragile the red glass had become, so it was decided to consolidate the glass with Paraloid B72 5% in acetone. To ensure that no joins were lost, two photographs of the bowl, with all the joins marked on were placed under sheets of Melinex, which then allowed fragments to be moved from one tray to another.

In reconstructing the bowl, it was decided that direct application of Paraloid B72 was the best option. It was considered that other adhesives would be stronger than the glass and that joins, especially in the base of the bowl, were too poor to allow processes such as capillary action to be effective. Small sections were reconstructed initially using fragments that locked together tightly and then these larger sections were put together to complete the vessel. To prevent the bowl from collapsing during reconstruction, it was necessary to rebuild the bowl upside down. This had the added advantage of being able to check the curvature and correct alignment of the major fragments. In addition the bowl was not flat bottomed and any other approach would have been more challenging. During reconstruction it became

One of the sections during the process of piecing the fragments together.



apparent that the base area was so fragmented that true alignment became difficult.

Another problem then encountered was how to invert the vessel safely and support the object. It was decided to make a permanent support mount for the bowl; Epopast 400 (an epoxy paste) was chosen as it was strong but lightweight. The first step in this process was to cover the bowl in a layer of cling film and then apply a release layer of M tissue and Vaseline. The Epopast layer was then draped over the bowl and allowed to set overnight. The glass was then inverted in its support mount and the joins on the bowl rim marked onto the Epopast support to allow the bowl to be correctly located.

The bowl and support were then again inverted and the release layer removed. Having created the support the bowl needed, it was now possible to deal with the distortion encountered in the base. The support was lined with aluminium foil and a square of silicon release paper placed over the most fragile and distorted area around the base. The glass bowl was once again inverted so that it sat in its support with the silicon release paper *in situ*. This allowed the addition of a small amount of acetone on the joins that were out of alignment. This had the effect of softening the B72 enough to allow the joins to be reset in their correct places.

One of the concerns in doing this was the inadvertent removal of vital B72. It was evident that the joins in this vulnerable area were so poor that excess adhesive then had to be syringed between the fragments. Once set it was possible to remove any excess with acetone and invert the bowl so it was free standing on its rim and to recheck the alignments and add any further adhesive that was required.

The support mount could now be finished, and was lined with Tyvek. The intention is for the bowl to sit in this mount during transport and storage. The bowl has since been on temporary



During reconstruction

display at Museum of London Docklands to show this beautiful object to the general public. It is hoped that it will find a permanent home on display at the Museum of London some time in the future.

Start of the reconstruction process



Being photographed with the bowl as part of the press call.

In Praise of Carpet Conservation

In January 2009 Heather Tetley ACR of The Tetley Workshop was granted a Warrant of Appointment for Carpet Conservation to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Icon News asked her to write a piece for us so that we can all celebrate this honour for her and for conservation

The award coincides with our 20th anniversary as a workshop specialising in conservation of carpets and we are very grateful for the opportunity we have had to work for Her Majesty The Queen through much of that time.

The Tetley workshop has been through several incarnations since its conception twenty years ago as the Carpet Conservation Workshop: two recessions, voluntary liquidation, changes of policy within the institutions and the ups and down of interior decoration fashion within the private sector, to name but a few. Particularly significant were the changes of funding policy from English Heritage to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the change of policy from restoration to conservation in The Royal Household when the new Master of the Royal Household brought it into line with the award-winning conservation policy of the Royal Collection. Then there were the two great fires at Uppark and Windsor which, thanks to the National Trust and the Royal Collection, raised the profile of historic house conservation and led the way to involve the public's imagination and active interest in conservation and, subsequently, in the very high standard of craftsmanship and skills in Britain.

But there is still a long way to go for a change of attitude from the government funding bodies, which may only come from a change in our own attitude and a joint concerted effort to bring our profession more into the public consciousness. The shocking news of the closure of the Textile Conservation Centre, and with it the realisation that we need to come out of the studio and take our place amongst our peers, needs to be acted upon. It is certainly one of the factors behind our decision to apply for the Royal Warrant for Carpet Conservation

Looking back, I have realised how interesting the past two decades and more have been and what a debt of gratitude we owe to the Royal Household and the Royal Collection for the opportunities to work with their wonderful carpets.

Coming from an arts school background, rather than a scientific or academic degree, I practised successfully as a goldsmith designer/craftswoman and specialist teacher for a decade, before becoming interested in the symbolism of oriental tribal rugs. This led to a frustration with the techniques of even the finest restorers, which in turn led to a search for safe, well designed treatments for cleaning and repairing carpets and rugs. That question brought us into contact with conservation just at a time when conservators, too, were discontented with restoration treatment for historic



Heather Tetley in the Great Library at Harewood House June 2009

house carpets, for which the strict guidelines and treatments of museum conservation were not particularly suited.

Working closely with the National Trust textile conservators, the workshop developed treatments which, whilst dealing with the problems of carpets with a high level of public use, nevertheless were thought out and undertaken within the ethics and methods of conservation practice, both remedial and preventative. This entailed using the well-established methods of textile conservation, such as, in the case of wet cleaning, the use of non-ionic, non additive detergents. However for very large carpets and for wet cleaning in situ, innovation was needed, so methods were developed of using modified upholstery cleaning machines, where close monitoring of RH and pH showed us that wet cleaning with these machines was a safe method. For stitching and support treatments, the established methods used for tapestry conservation are very suitable for carpets with the addition of the possible use of carpet knotting, when the demands for display require a high level of visual or protective infill. At the same time, preventative conservation and handling – particularly of very large carpets – and the problems of drugget (a protective overlay), underfelt and visitor flow become resolved through research and experience.

The guidelines of conservation ethics have enabled the



Securing the edge of an Agre carpet from Buckingham Palace in the studio

development of conservation treatments which are safe both for carpets and for the public, which both protect the conservator and the object whilst giving structure to conservation treatment. So, for instance, the ethic of reversibility safeguards objects from irreversible change, whilst the free exchange of information allows open discussion about problems and solutions: a far cry from the secrecy of carpet restoration which does not divulge its methods and treatments to other restorers or to the owners.

The methods of conservation treatment for carpets and rugs within a museum or in an historic house display share similar requirements: how best to undertake the treatment with safety for the object, its historical integrity, its future and the people concerned, as well as size, weight and type of damage. However, in historic house settings, historic carpets also present the unique problem of being walked upon, even if not by the public, then often by the house staff, so that without compromising the textile, the conservation treatment has to withstand footwear and the movement of druggets and the carpets caused by visitor flow. Man (woman or child) can therefore be added as a consideration equally for remedial conservation as for preventative conservation, alongside the other usual problems of museum display, such as moth, mice and mould.

Over the past twenty years, from a small beginning and an interest in safe treatments, the workshop has been privileged to work on many very exciting projects in wonderful places. Collections usually comprise a variety of world carpets from European to oriental carpets, but British carpets have become our specialization, Axminsters, Chenilles & powerloom Wiltons, from Cothele House in Cornwall and The Argory in Ulster for the National Trust to The Castle of Mey in the far north, via Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle for the



Rolling the dining room carpet at Basildon Park as part of the National Trust's 'meet the conservator' programme

Royal Collection and the Royal Household in the south. From Brodsworth Hall for English Heritage to Harewood House to name but a few, and not to mention the many carpets from private clients. Textile conservators who over the years have worked for the workshop are in key conservation studios and private practice across the country. I want to thank all the many conservators and collections managers who have given encouragement, advice, support and general help to the workshop and those who keep it going.

In a recent discussion with a colleague the subject of the philosophy of conservation came up, the question of what it is – amongst the wide variety of disciplines, types of practice, individual preferences and capabilities – which draws us into a definite body of people, or maybe 'what makes a conservator?'. We each have our particular leanings, for one conservator it is science, for another practical care of the object or collection, for another historic significance and value of provenance and so on. But what struck us most was the combination of skill, structure and freedom of thought; for however confined by our circumstances we may sometimes feel, it is the ethics of free exchange of information – the exchange of ideas in a continuous development of ideas and methods – which is what has lead conservation to be such a dynamic profession. Conservators work on the edge of potential, (so un-conservative), which leads us to use the breadth of the conservation profession to resolve the problem which we are facing at any one time. Our ability to work with complex scientific constructs as well as fine hands-on treatment, whilst understanding and caring for the future of our object in the wide range of treatments, makes for a unique profession with unique people.

So what I would like to celebrate is conservation and conservators and to make a toast to the possibility of gaining confidence in ourselves as we carefully work at the object in front of us and of using that confidence to acknowledge that although we have hitherto been rather a hidden treasure it is time we became visible.

Grateful acknowledgements to many people, but especially:

Jonathan Tetley – conservator/partner TTW

Ksynia Marko – National Trust

Val Blythe – V&A Museum

Jonathan Marsden, Sir Hugh Roberts and Edward Griffiths – Royal Collection & Royal Household

Links:

www.tetleyworkshop.co.uk

www.royalcollection.org.uk/egallery



1



2



3



4

A Kazak Rug acquired by HRH the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall during their recent visit to Turkey.

The rug had some damage, most noticeably this hole (1). After wet cleaning, linen holland patches were attached behind the damaged areas, secured with herringbone stitch and where needed lines of general support stitches in Guttman polyester thread 30 (2). The weak and damaged areas around the hole were couched onto the linen support patch with a laid couch stitch. Where necessary new woollen warps were introduced and secured into the linen patch. Lines of locked laid couch were placed across the loose warps every 2 knots/ wefts (3). The infill of new symmetrical (Turkish) knots was made over the warps and through into the linen (4). The new knots were placed at approximately the same count as the rug using Appleton's crewel wools. When complete the excess wool was cut to match the length of the surrounding carpet (5). Full treatment documentation was sent to the client.

When considering conservation treatment options for rugs which will continue to be used, infill options vary according to the situation and the provenance. The treatment for this rug was guided by its use and its owners' needs, it has a high level of finish, but wet cleaning, the support work and the visibility of the work were all consistent with conservation ethics. Had it been restored, it may well have been shampooed or wet-cleaned using a detergent with optical brighteners and other additives. The hole may well have been cut to a strong surrounding area, new warps and wefts using similar materials to the originals would have been secured into the rug itself, tunnelled alongside the original wars and wefts, before introducing the new knots. A skilled restorer would have finished the work so that it could not be easily detected. No documentation would have been expected.



5

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news from the groups

SCOTLAND GROUP

Recent events have included interesting visits to the Museum of Flight and Gladstone's Land – we hope to post reviews on the website soon. Our events team continues to work on activities for the rest of 2009 including the November Plenderleith Lecture. In forthcoming months we will also have visits to Rosslyn Chapel (confirmed for 20 August) and Click Netherfield (confirmed for 29 October). Further information on our events programme is posted on the Scotland Group webpage as soon as details are finalised. 2 July, 6 August, 3 September, 1 October, 5 November and 3 December are the dates for our regular pub group meetings - do join us at the Wash Bar (on top of the Mound in Edinburgh, <http://www.washbar.co.uk>) from 5:30pm onwards for conversation with friends and colleagues, drinks, and good food.

A grant to support conservators in the PACR process is now established. See previous issues of Icon News for detail of how the scheme works. An application form can be downloaded from the Scotland Group page of the website or is available by emailing scotland@icon.org.uk.

Committee meetings for 2009 will take place between 6-8pm

on 22 September and 8 December. Venue tbc.

The Icon Scotland Group Committee

Chair: **Linda Ramsay**
Vice Chair: **Kirsten Elliott**
Secretary: **Amanda Clydesdale**
Treasurer: **Audrey Wilson**
Vice Treasurer: **Gill Keay**
Events team: **Helen Creasy, Erica Kotze, Kirsten Elliott and Elizabeth Main**
Publications/ publicity team: **Stephen Umpleby and Ruth Honeybone**
Ordinary Committee Members: **Sophie Younger, Julian Watson, Mo Bingham**
Icon Scotland Member of the Board of Trustees: **Louise Lawson**
Observers: **Carol Brown, Craig Kennedy and Clare Meredith**

TEXTILE GROUP

We would like to thank everyone who was involved in this year's Forum and helped to make the day a success. We were also very grateful to the V&A for allowing us the use of their new lecture theatre and facilities. Please see Lynn Bathke's review of the day on page 28.

The Forum in April also saw us welcome the new Chair of the Committee, Maria Jordan, Treatment Conservation Supervisor at Historic Royal Palaces and ordinary members Poppy Singer, freelance conservator, Alison Fairhurst, conservator at The Landi Company Ltd. and Roisin Morris, conservator at the V&A. We are very pleased they have joined us and we are looking forward to working with them on future events for the group. One of the major events we will be involved in next year is the Icon Conference 2010 – Conservation in Focus, which as you will have seen in the last issue of Icon News is to be held in Cardiff on 25 & 26 March 2010. Icon groups will be responsible for organising half day events on the second day of the conference.

More immediately we will be running the third in our Back to Basics Workshops on Dyeing – a review of current practice on 6 July with the possibility of a repeat on 20 July depending on demand. It will be held at the Textile Conservation Centre and promises to be an extremely useful session. We would like to thank Rosie Baker for organising the workshop and all the staff at the Textile Conservation Centre for allowing the use of the facilities.

Other events to look out for are a visit to Trimmings by Design factory in Derby on 14 September and a repeat of the Back to Basics Workshop on Enzymes at the Burrell, Glasgow on 6 November. Further details of all these events can be found in Listings and on the Icon group web pages. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at these events.

Please contact us if there are any particular visits, workshops or events you would like to see the group organise.

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Three home grown conservation students share their experience of the summer placement and a visitor from Germany describes her internship in Scotland

My placement at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton by Kate Perks

After completing my Graduate Diploma and before starting my MA in Conservation of Historic Objects at the University of Lincoln I undertook a six week work placement at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. The University had contacts with the Pavilion and many Lincoln students have gone there over the years, so it was good to be part of this continuing tradition. The Royal Pavilion is one of the most extraordinary buildings in Britain, built as the pleasure palace for George IV between 1815–1823 with an Indian style exterior and a Chinoiserie interior.

The senior conservator, Gordon Grant, took care of me and made sure that there was plenty for me to do. At this stage there was no one area I wished to specialise in so Gordon was able to let me try a variety of different conservation projects, allowing me to find out for myself where my interests lay. I spent time working alongside Ray Martin, Objects Conservator, where I worked on original wall sconces

Kate working on a gilded picture frame at the Royal Pavilion



Neef frame after treatment, with a portion of the frame during conservation inset

designed and painted by George IV's chief decorator, Frederic Grace. I also worked with Janet Brough, the Paintings Conservator, where I brought to exhibition standard two gilded picture frames.

One of these was the Neefs frame which was in poor condition. It was very dirty; much of the oil and water gilding had worn away; the old bronze paint was discoloured; the corners were bashed and some of the border and mouldings were missing. The outer, oil-gilded sections of the frame were cleaned using cotton wool swabs in hot water. The flat, inner, water-gilded section of the frame was consolidated using fish size and Japanese paper. The paper was removed using wetted cotton wool swabs and the surface very carefully cleaned.

The bronze paint was removed using Nitromors and the broken parts of the outer frame were built up using gesso. When set, this was filed down and smoothed before adding a yellow ochre bole. The frame was then water gilded along the entire outer edges. Replacement mouldings were made to replace any losses on the frame and these were also gilded. All the new gilding was then distressed using mica pearl lustre and raw umber acrylic paints to match the rest of the frame.

What I learnt most from my placement was the importance of

being flexible and being prepared to try anything. I was allowed to be involved in a wide range of tasks including a gallery re-hang at Brighton Museum and an inspection of the roof of the Royal Pavilion; experiences that enhanced my time at the Pavilion. I found the whole experience invaluable, increasing my confidence and my knowledge in the field of conservation. The placement also boosted my practical work on my return to University and made me a better trainee conservator overall.

My Placement at the Museum of London by Sarah Webb, 2nd year student at Cardiff University

I was helped with the arrangement of my placement by my personal tutor at Cardiff University and I found this to be very beneficial. My nerves and apprehension were somewhat calmed by the knowledge that I would be carrying out my month's placement with a current second year on my course.

Upon entering the realms of a fully functioning, working museum conservation laboratory I was both excited and apprehensive. Even though we had had experience working on objects at Cardiff, the thought of the unknown was slightly intimidating. I was, however, in the safest of hands with the team at the Museum of London. When I arrived, one thing that surprised me was the fact that they had a desk with a computer as well as a bench with objects. Also the diversity of their roles as conservators was interesting to learn.

I worked with a variety of objects ranging from an iron axe head to a ceramic witches bottle. Treatment of the axe and witches bottle involved cleaning and adhesion on the miscellaneous pieces, thereby learning about what adhesives I could use on different materials. I also had a chance to experience other aspects of the museum profession such as pest management, repackaging textiles and helping out at the conservation stand on 'National Archaeology Day' where I

The plaque-ridden teeth safely housed



Re-packaging textiles



The witch's bottle

spoke to the public about some aspects of the conservation profession. And I created a 'mouth guard' to protect a skeleton going on display for the Wellcome Collection. I enjoyed all of the tasks but making the 'mouth guard' for a skeleton with calculus on its teeth was the most challenging and exciting. The diversity of projects that I was set kept me interested and busy and I learnt about other aspects of this profession that may be helpful when deciding my future after graduation.

My placement was invaluable in helping me gain experience. From the perspective of a first year student I found that I gained confidence both in myself as a budding conservator and also in my ability to treat objects to the standard required by the Museum. My month at the Museum of London taught me important lessons and I felt welcome and relaxed throughout my stay. The most valuable advice that I can give is to embrace your placements, learn as much as you can, and don't be afraid to try something new.

I would like to thank Helen Ganiaris and the conservation team at the Museum of London for all the support and help they gave me.



My placement at the Ashmolean Museum by Sarah Jane Short, MA student at West Dean College

Finding a summer placement was more difficult than I thought it would be. Start researching, writing and emailing early, would be my advice if you are trying to find a place independently from your programme. I'd written and emailed to a number of institutions and practices without success. A little interjection from my tutor found me a place in the Conservation Department at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

It was important to me to undertake a body of work between my graduate and post-graduate diplomas to understand my development in an alternative environment to the student workshop. I wanted to be exposed to museum objects and glean tips and working practices from museum professionals. Dana Norris, Ceramics and Glass Conservator, oversaw my placement and chose some diverse objects for me to conserve. Her approach, in trusting me to work on some valuable and archeologically important objects, gave me a sense of purpose and lots of positivity.

One of the objects was an opaque glass vessel, or 'oinichoe', dating between 4th – 5thC BC from the Georgian Pichvni Expedition. Measuring 3 inches high to 2.5 inches wide, the oinichoe is to be displayed in the new galleries opening in November, but previous fills and a disjointed previous bond with protruding yellowing resin on the foot, were visually distracting; though not threatening to its overall stability. I had not met glass at this point during my studies, but I like a challenge, and after discussion and literature research, I replaced the old fills and stabilised the base. The outcome was both pleasing to the museum staff and to myself. It is heartening to believe that you and your host have both benefited from your post. This glass object, in particular, was a 'conservation highlight' for me. It fostered an interest and excitement in glass conservation and consequently marked a point where I gained an incredible amount of confidence in my working practice.

It was also interesting to see the broader role of the



The oinichoe after conservation. Inset – the earlier repair at the foot

conservator within a museum context. Among other tasks, the decision making process of prioritising objects relevant to their conservation needs was quite apparent for the Ashmolean conservation staff in times of new gallery preparation. It encouraged a number of intellectual issues and debates in my own mind. The work placement, however, was substantially dedicated to benchwork, which meant that I was able to conserve the glass vessel and the other objects to their full potential.

Perhaps this is a small example in a rather bigger picture, but it might demonstrate that while supervision of an intern will take up a certain amount of time, it can be productive for both the institution and the learner, even during times of intense activity. Dana was well prepared for my placement, which made me feel incredibly welcome but it also meant that a substantial amount of work was achieved, having established our goals from the start.

I don't think I'm alone in expressing how beneficial work placements can be. In the spirit of encouraging people to gain professional training in the industry they are a most valuable resource.

Internship at Scottish National Galleries (14 April – 22 May 2009)

by Caecilia Merveldt

I am a final-year student from the State Academy of Fine Arts with a specialization in conservation and restoration of Paintings and Sculptures in Stuttgart, Germany. Getting to know other conservation methods, widening my knowledge and enhancing skills through projects abroad forms part of our curriculum. Therefore I applied for an internship with the Conservation Department of the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) who invited me to come for a six week period (this was unfunded by NGS).

In the course of my assignment, I worked together with the paintings conservators Lesley Stevenson, Lorraine Maule and Alexandra Gent. They all gave me a very warm welcome and worked out a very busy working plan for my internship. In addition to getting a fantastic insight into the department's day to day work in the museum, I was very happy to get the opportunity to treat five small paintings which were a recent gift to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The Gallery is currently closed to the public and the collection has been decanted in preparation for the HLF part funded initiative *Portrait of the Nation* – a major refurbishment and rethink of how this collection is presented to the public.

In the course of my work, the stories and special features of the five paintings came to light, which was an exciting experience. One of the paintings shows an exceptionally picturesque view of John Knox's House on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh painted on metal and fitted in a detailed carved and gilded slip frame. There is also a portrait of the bookseller William Laing by A. Carse and an oil sketch of the antiquarian David Laing by Sir W. Fettes Douglas which has a study of the figure of Luther on the reverse. The sketch of Laing relates to the full size portrait which was already in the collection of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The portrait of Queen Elizabeth I on panel is framed in an ornate carved and gilded frame. The last of the five paintings gives a beautiful view of Abbotsford by K. Clarendon from 1873 in a panoramic landscape format which is fitted in a gilded frame decorated with composition.

The media of all five paintings is oil but they differ in their supports; panel, canvas, metal and board. This gave me the opportunity to work on paintings of a wide range of materials using different methods and techniques. I had to ascertain the adequate conservation treatment for each one of them and to form treatment proposals, which were discussed in detail with my supervisor, Lesley Stevenson.

The paintings have suffered from poor storage during the last centuries, therefore treatment of all paintings included consolidation and cleaning. The varnish of the picturesque painting on metal of John Knox's House was deeply discoloured and therefore had to be removed and revarnished, bringing back to light the beautiful colours. The portrait on canvas of the bookseller W. Laing had particularly



Surface cleaning 'The Queens with a dead bouquet' by Edward Gage.

suffered and required the most treatment. The commercially prepared canvas had poor tension, structural damage and general deformation across the surface. Paint layers on the edges were insecure and a deep craquelure disfigured Laing's face. Moreover the varnish was deeply discoloured. To repair the damages and to conserve the painting I had to reduce the deformation, consolidate loose paint layers and fill and retouch the defects. All treatments were recorded in a written report and documented with photographs. This included examination using handheld ultraviolet light and visible light analysis, and solvent tests. Everybody was very happy with the results and glad to have them conserved for the future.

In addition to the conservation work, I also had the chance to experience the busy and varied day to day life of the museum's workshop, which involves monitoring the condition of paintings stored or on display, writing condition reports and documentation of any changes. Information on the condition of paintings and treatment is stored in MimsyXG, the NGS collections management database. After receiving training by the team, I was able to add information about paintings I worked on or condition checked during my internship.

As museums often lend paintings or other pieces of art to museums across the globe for specialized exhibitions, I enjoyed assisting my colleagues with the condition checking of a number of contemporary works, presently stored at a



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commercial art storage facility, prior to them being returned to their owners after an exhibition. I also had the chance to unpack and condition check works by Joseph Beuys in store at Granton, as they will soon be on loan to an exhibition. We also spent one day checking the condition of an exceptional collection of eighty NGS paintings, which are on long term loan to the Picture Gallery at Paxton House near the Scottish Borders. It was interesting to see paintings from the SNG collection presented in the context of a historic house.

In preparation for a new acquisition for the Gallery of Modern Art 'The Queens with a dead bouquet' by Edward Gage (oil on canvas), I had to write a pre-acquisition report after closely examining and documenting the canvas, ground and paint layers. I also estimated the time needed for treatment and additional costs such as glazing. The examination also revealed a composition change: under impasto paint layers a head of a person could be made visible with transmitted light. The subsequent surface clean gave back the painting its original bright colours.

In my short time in Edinburgh I have learned a lot about current conservation practice and expertise which will certainly guide me through my following work as a conservator. I felt very integrated into the team from the beginning and encouraged to participate in weekly Departmental meetings and seminars, and had the chance to participate in the events by the NGS. I also met and worked closely together with other specialized teams, who look after paper or frame conservation.



Painting on metal of John Knox's House on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh

Sadly the six weeks have passed much too quickly. I made new friends and gained a fantastic insight of how a museum works behind the scenes and how much time and effort many employees of all Departments put into their daily work until a project or exhibition is completed.

I want to thank the whole Conservation Department for the wonderful and rewarding time during my internship.

reviews

VISITS

WILTSHIRE COUNTY LABORATORIES & GROUP AGM

Icon Archaeology Group
30 April 2009

Eighteen members of the Icon Archaeology Group met at the new Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council-funded Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham as the guests of the Wiltshire Conservation Service, for the Group's AGM and a tour of the building's impressive facilities.

After an introduction to the History Centre from Head of Conservation **Louisa Burden**, the morning was spent looking around the departments with which the Conservation Service shares this state-of-the-art building. The ground floor houses a busy and bustling public access area for social and local history research, including a library of local studies resources, banks of microfilm and microfiche readers, and a large area in which to consult the county Sites and Monuments Record, with attendant archivist on hand to offer advice. It was nice to see these areas so well used, with studious members of the public filling every available workstation.

We then moved on to the archaeology service office, where plans of the Wiltshire region displayed amply the wealth of archaeological sites the county has in its care. A chance to cool off was then afforded by the archive storage strong room, a tightly climate controlled area with the temperature limited to 14°C where the county's seven miles of archival material are stored. Finally we visited the IT room where the building's management system computer is situated. I think it is fair to say that the environmental readings for the strong room displayed on



Kelly Abbott explains the iron-age finds from North Bersted



the monitor were greeted with awe and admiration, as the RH was just a shade below its set point and practically flat, whilst the temperature was indistinguishable from the set point line.

After a splendid lunch and a swift, good natured and productive AGM, we moved on to the 'treat' that had been saved for the afternoon: a tour of the conservation

department. The reorganisation of Wiltshire's heritage services has meant that the archive conservators are now housed in the same building as the object conservators, with the laboratories sharing some facilities. Our first stop was the archive lab, where we saw a fascinating display of the types of materials and conservation challenges encountered by the conservators. Highlights included the use of the leaf-casting process to repair damaged paper documents using paper pulp, the process of soaking brittle linseed-impregnated paper to relax and de-acidify it, and the use of sausage skin in parchment repair – kindly donated by the sausage manufacturers!

We then moved on to the spacious and well-equipped objects labs, to examine a real archaeological highlight: the metal objects from a Late Iron Age warrior burial found recently at North Bersted, near Bognor Regis, West Sussex. This highly unusual group included a bent iron sword, a copper alloy shield boss and a copper alloy helmet with associated pierced-work decorative panel, possibly part of another shield. With the objects recently excavated only tantalising glimpses of the helmet and decorative metalwork were visible through their protective covering of soil. The accompanying x-rays, however, which came courtesy of Salisbury District Hospital as the newly lifted soil blocks were too heavy to be x-rayed in the lab, revealed a remarkable level of detail due to the manoeuvrability of the medical x-ray device. This really was a fantastic find and it was wonderful to have it so enthusiastically and knowledgeably interpreted by contract conservator **Kelly Abbott**.

Overall the day was a great success, and I am grateful to the Archaeology Group for welcoming me as a new student member. It was good to meet so many conservators in practice and to learn about their own diverse roles and workplaces, as well as to gain a more detailed insight into the work of the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, who we would like to thank for their hospitality.

Catherine Wittamore

Postgraduate Student, University of Lincoln

Group members being shown techniques used in archival conservation by Paul Smith



AM TO PM: HIGHLIGHTING COLLECTION CARE AT TNA & GROUP AGM

Icon Book & Paper Group
11 March 2009

This year the Group held its Annual Meeting at The National Archives (TNA) Kew. The Annual Meeting was combined with a whole afternoon of events including speakers from TNA, a tour of the Studio and there was an opportunity to visit TNA's museum.

As a new member to Icon I was keen to attend the day since I had neither been to a B&PG meeting, nor had I visited TNA before; being one of the few large



The Book and Paper Group at the National Archives



conservation studios in the UK it was a good opportunity to look at how the TNA conservation department operates. More importantly though, I wanted to get a taste of who the B&PG are and put some faces to some well-known names. I also wanted to get a feel of what the mood is in conservation at the moment and how professional conservators see the future.

The day was opened by Head of Collection Care, **Nancy Bell**, who welcomed everyone and then explained a little about TNA and the six hundred staff who work there. As the UK government archive it holds 900 years of history with a collection of millions of items from paper and textiles to photographs and modern materials. There are also some items which are only stored digitally. Nancy spoke about some specific challenges faced at present conserving TNA's collection in the face of technological developments such as digitisation, but she also spoke more broadly about enhancing the potential for conservators to add value to the understanding of collection and the need to connect with a range of audiences.

The second speaker, **Juergen Vervoort**, Head of Conservation, gave an overview of the conservation section and spoke about how conservation treatments are prioritised. He described an interesting project underway which will use the results of a recently completed environmental mapping exercise in conjunction with a materials map of the collection to gain an overview of what materials are stored and in what conditions. These 'maps' of the collection will be the basis of future planning and setting conservation priorities.

Preservation Officer, **Jess Ahmon** described TNA's extensive digitisation programme and the role that Collection Care plays in ensuring that sound preservation practices are followed. She explained TNA's method of collection surveying, and described the damage coding system used to estimate the resources needed for digitisation projects.

The last talk of the session was presented by Conservation Science Assistant,

Emma Richardson, who emphasised the importance of connecting with conservators and explained her role of dissemination and 'translating' science literature for conservators.

Following the introductory talks the audience was invited to attend a 'free range' tour of the studio. We had the opportunity to see amazing objects from: 16th century limp bindings, tracing papers, WW2 propaganda material, and original Festival of Britain art work, confirming the diversity of material in the collection. A variety of the work undertaken was presented as well as other activities such as surveying, digitisation, and a sophisticated documentation database. One of the projects that really caught my eye was the conservation of some 18th century bound dye recipes and wool sample books.

The B&PG Annual Meeting appeared to raise many similar issues to the previous year. Contributions to the publications were requested and more generally members were encouraged to get involved as there are currently numerous vacant positions for volunteers. During the meeting the first Clare Hampson Scholarship was awarded to Dafni Kyropoulou, a recent MSc graduate of Cardiff University. The Award will enable Dafni to complete a research project that she initiated for her thesis on the effect of dust ingress into library books and to prepare an article for publication.

Following the meeting B&PG members had the first opportunity to hear from the new Operations Director **AnnMarie Newbiggin**. AnnMarie spoke frankly, talking about some of the problems that Icon were facing at present including the loss of some valuable members and how the economic situation was affecting the profession. AnnMarie thanked the members for their continued effort and expressed passion for the strength of Icon saying how she believed Icon was 'more than the sum of its parts'.

This was the first time the B&PG have held such an event in conjunction with the Annual meeting and although I had not been to any

previous meetings, I think it is safe to say that the change of format was a success. The day offered an invaluable opportunity for conservators to meet, network and discuss the current state of conservation. It offered this with the formality of the annual meeting but just as importantly with the informality of the studio tour and the drinks afterwards. The mood of the day was relaxed and friendly, though speaking broadly I sense that there is some anxiety about the future. There are some big unknowns on the horizon, and while there is a greater confidence due to the raised profile of the profession and improved standards, no one really knows how the next few years will affect conservators.

It was clear that the TNA put in an enormous effort and this made for a well organised and interesting day. I was encouraged by the number in attendance and the diversity of the members. It was also good to see so many students and graduates - for me this confirmed that Icon is a well balanced representation of the conservation profession.

Arthur Green British Library conservation intern

TALKS

MOULD

Independent Paper Conservators Group
21 May 2009.

The IPCG have been meeting regularly for six years to discuss in an informal, friendly environment current practices and advancement in paper conservation. At the end of May members of the group met at Laila Hackforth-Jones' house in North London to discuss mould and take a look at her studio.

The meeting started with members discussing the types, definitions, location, and possible causes of mould. Several recurring trends were noted; for example it was argued that the presence of certain types of mould and foxing spots treated by members are seemingly more prevalent on books dating from 1650 to 1950. Several proposals for this were noted, such as the introduction of central heating, changes in production methods, and the later addition of elements such as brighteners.

This example led neatly into the debates surrounding foxing, and the introduction of Professor **Ray Bonnett** by Vincent Daniels. Professor Bonnett is an Emeritus Professor of Organic Chemistry at Queen Mary College, School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, University of London. His current research is to investigate the chemical structure of foxing pigments. Professor Bonnett was delighted to hear (via Vincent Daniels) that

his research would be of great interest to paper conservators, having primarily taken on this research to inform his curiosity.

Professor Bonnett began by discussing how difficult it is to access all brown pigments and he then covered the debates surrounding whether the brown of foxing is a metabolite or a degradation product. The conversation steered towards the discussion of the relatively high proportions of acids and irons in foxed areas, as opposed to those areas that are unaffected. Proposals for the causation of acids being produced chemically or as a bi-product of fungoid function were considered. Using a UV light Professor Bonnett demonstrated the fluorescence of foxing spots. He affirmed that the ability to fluoresce is dependent on a low molecular weight; he also stated that Iron II, Iron III, and high pigment levels quench fluorescence, as such he believes that most foxing spots are not related to metallic impurities within paper. Vincent Daniels interjected that what are commonly termed 'foxing spots' are likely to be caused by a variety of elements and more specific categorisation is needed.

Professor Bonnett then showed the group Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) pictures taken through a variety of foxing spots; he then explained how he intends to continue his research. One element of his proposed research is to extract the pigments found within foxing spots, and then separate these using chromatography. For this he will need considerable amounts of foxed paper from which he will separate foxing spots from un-foxed areas. This will be a long and tedious task and one which will require the assistance of willing volunteers and the donation of large quantities of foxed material for destructive testing purposes. We all look forward to his results and hope that readers might be able to assist him with his efforts.

The meeting concluded with a brief look at photographs of both foxed and mould infested objects that members are currently working on. It was agreed that the implications of climate change will make mould an even more prevalent issue for all paper conservators, and that a future meeting on practical treatments for mould would be of interest.

Members then dispersed to view Laila's newly refurbished studio, and enjoyed a buffet which spilled out into a flourishing garden.

For further details of Professor Bonnett's research please contact him :
r.bonnett@qmul.ac.uk For details about joining the IPCG, please contact Laila:
laila.hj@blueyonder.co.uk

Anthea Henton

Independent and Museum of London paper conservator



Reconstruction of a 13thC Italian Crucifix and a New Translation of the Libro dell'Arte **Icon Paintings Group** London 19 May 2009

Continuing the Institute of Conservation's occasional series of talks, **Lara Broecke**, a visiting fellow at Cambridge's Hamilton Kerr Institute, spoke on some of the work carried out at the Hamilton Kerr. Her project originated as a commission to create a half-size copy of the Cimabue crucifix in Arezzo for the Catholic Chaplaincy in Cambridge and it was taken on as research to see what insights might be thrown up by following the techniques and materials used in the original, as well as those described in Cennino's well-known *Libro dell'Arte* dating from c.1400. This hands-on project, has, in addition to shedding new light on early Italian painting technique, also lead to a new, more accurate, translation of the Cennino manuscript. The manuscript, which is known through four later copies has, in the English speaking world up to now, generally been known through Daniel V. Thompson Jr.'s 1933 translation. This new translation will contain both practical observations deriving from further hands-on research covering all the aspects covered by the manuscript with the help of the wall paintings' conservation department at the Fachhochschule in Cologne and the British Museum's paper conservation department, as well as comments on the text aided by Dr. Nicola Jones, a Cambridge linguist specialising in 14th and 15th century Italian. Unfortunately, while it is hoped that this new translation will be published by Archetype books in 2012–2013, this very interesting project, begun in July 2008, has still to secure funding to assure its continuation.

Clare Finn

Paintings Group Chair

The completed crucifix in use during a service at the Catholic Chaplaincy



Lara Broecke painting the crucifix in whole egg tempera

CONFERENCES

MIND THE GAP!: STRUCTURAL AND AESTHETIC OPTIONS FOR THE TREATMENT OF LOSS IN TEXTILES

Icon Textile Group

Victoria & Albert Museum 27 April 2009

The Icon Textile Group Annual Forum took place in the Sackler Center, a beautifully remodelled museum education facility.

Poppy Singer, a private practice conservator in the UK, was the chair for the Forum and introduced a variety of lectures that would take place throughout the day on the theme of infill treatments that have developed using modern and digital technology.

During the morning, ethical and religious concerns were discussed when Jane Wilde, National Gallery of Australia, gave the first lecture 'Understanding the cultural context of an Indian painting tradition to establish conservation methodologies in loss compensation'. Jane examined the history, technique, and tradition of pichhavi painting in Rajasthan. While symmetry, harmony, and enlightenment are key themes, loss compensation is dealt with in a variety of ways. There are more direct painting approaches from trained artisans, and infill painted support patches developed from western conservators. Jane was able to cross-reference between artist and conservator by displaying various methods in the context of the history of the pichhavi. The second speaker was Dr. **Tatiana Kousoulou**, Greek Ministry of Culture, with her lecture 'To fill or not to fill: ethical considerations and practical solutions on the conservation of the historical banner of Arkadi Monastery in Crete'. The linen banner had enormous significance for the Cretan people due to its use during the holocaust of the monastery by the Turks.

Digital image manipulation was used to explore various colored support infills, as well as pressure mount options, before conservation treatment. Conservator **Anastasia Ozoline**, Benaki Museum, gave the third talk: 'Ethical considerations and structural and aesthetic options for the treatment of loss in relics: the example of the Saint Caesarius' pallium of Arles (6thC)'. Wrapped in an envelope inside a reliquary box, the seriously degraded pallium has great historical importance in western Christianity. Orders by the Department of Historic Monuments in Provence allowed the conservation treatment, which was designed to be in keeping with the customs and continuity of Church tradition. The last speaker of the morning was **Ann French**, Whitworth Art Gallery, with 'A re-evaluation of the conservation of the Othry Cope'. Ann had no computer or digital devices to explore treatment options when she originally conserved the cope in 1986/7. The cope had

been used as an altar frontal but was reconfigured as a cope, given a dyed support closer to its original (rather than its faded) color and embroidered in blank areas with hints of the overall design. After analyzing this treatment, Ann left us with the final thought of the morning: 'just because we can do it, doesn't mean we should'.

The afternoon lectures focused on the new technologies that have become available to conservators for using digital printing to produce support infills and replicas.

P.J. Keeling from Zardi & Zardi briefly discussed the tapestry replicas they have been able to produce to hang in historic houses while the original is being treated.

Alice Cole, Abegg-Stiftung, in 'Producing digitally printed treatment fabrics', discussed how to digitally print onto cotton and linen with reactive and pigment-based dyes. Alice collaborated with Zardi & Zardi to produce a printed infill and explained how important the relationship between the conservator and printer can be when a job is outsourced. In 'To Hellsport and back: use of photographic infill', **Hazel Arnott** and **Nadine Wilson** of the National Trust talked about a severely damaged tapestry depicting the story of Hero and Leander. Earlier treatment in the 1960s has failed and an infill patch using a photographic image is the chosen treatment now. Sourcing and color matching were evaluated in relation to the success of the treatment. **Megan Grunchy**, Canadian Museum of Civilization, continued with 'From silk to crepe: the use of digital media printed with UV cured inks on silk crepe for overlays in textile conservation' in which she described the advantages of printing on crepe and its use as an overlay for a deteriorated silk flag to support and allow aesthetic completion. In 'Mix and match: compensating for loss in a large Tudor tapestry' **Karen Ayers** and **Chloe Hesketh**, Historic Royal Palaces, discussed a missing area that was conserved by using a painted support patch technique. They tested the fabric inks, Jacquard Neopaque, by accelerated aging to determine stability for conservation. The inks were stable, so they were painted onto the linen support to hint at aspects of the overall design and color of the missing area. **Natalia Zagorska-Thomas**, a freelance conservator, gave the final lecture of the day on 'Bakst where it belongs: reproducing polychrome, silk painted panels of a costume designed by L. Bakst for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes'. The treatment focus was on the centre panel, which appeared to have been painted over, as is common for theatre costume. While referencing a similar costume, which may have been painted by Matisse, closer inspection was undertaken and evidence of the original design was discovered. Infill replicas of the original design were produced with painted Lanacet dyes thickened with SCMC onto silk fabric. Natalia converted a

Burco water heater into a steamer to set the inks, using relatively inexpensive and easily available conservation materials.

There were posters from The National Trust, Victoria and Albert Museum, Museum of the American Indian, and the Textile Conservation Centre.

Lynn Bathke student, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton

FILLING THE VOID

Icon Stone & Wallpaintings Group
London 3 April 2009

'Filling the Void – Grouting Issues from Flakes to Fractures, from Spalls to Walls' was the eye-catching title for this event, aimed to be of professional interest to both stone and wall paintings conservators. The morning was largely devoted to larger scale grouting issues – walls; whilst the afternoon session focussed on wall paintings and plaster. **John Mann** (Structural Engineer) opened proceedings with a brief history of grouting and the forces operating on walls. Structural grouts were used in the Victorian era – for work on the London Underground.

Two of the morning papers showed two different ways of 'seeing' voids in walls.

Robert Demaus described how he uses Infrared Thermography to 'look behind' the surface of a wall – revealing features like doorways or windows (even wall paintings) – and indicating potential voids within the core of a wall. **Colin Burns** (English Heritage) employs a more direct and tactile approach. Voids are identified from visual study, by noting features (stone types, pointing types, plant life), then feeling for the voids mechanically, and marking them on scale drawings. The practical process of grouting follows, pre-wetting with water and pressure grouting from the base up. This method was successfully used at Stowford Church, near Okehampton (Devon) where the grout used was a proprietary product from 'Pozzament' (Tarmac). **Harry Gorton** from 'Pozzament' described how they aim to supply a quality and uniform product to their client on time. Uniformity of product is important in ensuring that each batch behaves in a similar way. The grout is supplied as a powder, to which water is added in a particular ratio.

It is expensive to grout walls – the cost at present is around £900 to £1,400 per cubic metre. Clients have to think carefully about commissioning such works – a point taken on by **Brian Clark** (The Churches Conservation Trust – CCT). Brian described three churches (vested in their care) where such work has been undertaken: St Mary's (Eddlesborough), St Michael (Princetown, Devon) and St Petrock (Parracombe, Devon). St Michael, Princetown, was built between 1812 and 1815 by prisoners of war, and the quality of work may be poor, suffering over the years from penetrating water.

In the afternoon, the first two talks related to grouting and wall painting conservation, for me, hung together well. **Isobel Griffin** (National Trust for Scotland) explained the purpose of grouting (to secure detached plaster); how the grout is delivered; and in straightforward terms the desirable properties of a grout. She also covered the use of pozzolanas in grouting with lime, which act as a combined filler and binder – allowing setting without the presence of air. The nature of grouts was explored in much greater detail in the following paper jointly delivered by **Leslie Rainer** and **Beril Bicer-Simsir** both from the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI). Since 2004 the GCI has undertaken an interdisciplinary project with scientists and conservators on the evaluation of injection grouts for the conservation of architectural surfaces. The purpose being to inform conservators on the behaviour of injection grouts to improve conservation practice. Further information on the project can be found at www.getty.edu/conservation/field_projects/grouts/index.html

The final paper from Dr. **Leonardo Borgioli**, from CTS – Italy, described two products his company supply to the conservation sector: a grout – 'PLM-A' – formulated for use on wall paintings and, secondly, nanolime for the consolidation of paint flakes using nanotechnology. Both have been successfully used on a number of wall paintings in Europe – in the case of PLM-A on the frescoes by Piero della Francesca in the church of San Francesco, Arezzo.

From what I have heard the conference was well received, with the combination of the disciplines (stone and wall paintings conservation) sitting well together.

Peter Martindale

Peter Martindale Conservation Limited

COURSES

BOOK WRAPPING

Victoria & Albert Museum
24 April 2009

This full day course, held in the book conservation studio of the Victoria & Albert Museum, was designed to provide delegates with the skills necessary in handling and making conservation-approved Kraft paper wrappers in a variety of styles suitable for continued and frequent use of books.

The course was delivered by **Rachel Sim** from the Word and Image Department at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Over many years, the NAL (National Art Library), which is based within the Museum, has developed a variety of methods for wrapping books of different sizes, styles and materials as part of an ongoing care of collections programme. The appropriate wrapping of a book can



Rachel Sim demonstrates a particular method of wrapping



Examples of different styles of wrapping as made by delegates

help preserve and protect it when it is subjected to frequent handling, whilst causing minimal disruption to public access. This method is only suitable for books that are structurally sound and not in need of specialist conservation work but is effective in preventing further deterioration. Book wrapping is particularly useful in preventing the spread of the degradation products of red rot (both to other books and to the clothing of the reader) and helps preserve fragile dust jackets and bindings.

After an introduction to the purpose of book wrapping and terminology, delegates were invited to watch a demonstration of each book wrapping technique. They then had the opportunity to wrap books that they had brought from home. The different styles of wrappings made included glued dust jackets, Melinex dust jackets, modified dust jackets with ties and four flap folders.

This course was of particular interest to anyone working in preventative conservation, book conservation, libraries or archives. At the end of the day, delegates gained a good working knowledge of when and where book wrapping was appropriate, relevant terminology and experience of making the various wrapping styles.

Shona Connechen

Word & Image Department
Victoria and Albert Museum

FLUID PRESERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS

**The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences,
Conservation Laboratory**
27-30 April 2009

The fragile and diverse nature of spirit collections requires a rather careful approach to their maintenance, and so a four day 'hands on' training course, taught by Simon Moore, was one not to be missed. The



Simon Moore with Emily Dock of Stockholm Natural History Museum using a home-made device to analyse an unidentified preservative

course covered all the basics whilst introducing the more advanced theory and techniques of how biological material should be preserved in fluids to prevent further decay and deterioration. The structure of each day involved a series of lectures, practicals and demonstrations, with students working in groups as well as proceeding with their own projects throughout the four days.

It was clear that fluid preservation is a vast subject, and material skimmed over in the lectures was available in further detail in the full supplement of handouts. Even if chemistry is not one's forte, the history of fluid preservation is as fascinating as it is morbid, from pig's bladder sealed lids to specimens preserved in bottles of rum during voyages of discovery. The PowerPoint presentations were extremely interesting and Simon's anecdotal accounts of his previous cadaverous experiences at the Natural History Museum provided an entertaining insight into the do's and don'ts of fluid preservation.

The most useful skill to learn in assessing the condition of a fluid preserved collection is the 'preservation pathway' and at what stage in it a specimen may be. This is relevant both to those looking after 100 year old material and also to people who receive fresh specimens in need of immediate treatment. A common misconception is that a preservative will act as a fixative – with a brief introduction into protein biochemistry it was clear that each process requires different materials. The key consideration when changing preservatives is the risk of osmotic shock to delicate structures if transferred directly between different fluids. We learnt how to use an alcohol ladder to safely transfer specimens that had been preserved in formalin into preservation strength IMS, and to rehydrate those in which the alcohol had completely evaporated through a poorly sealed lid.

The course focussed on a scientific approach to tackling specimens in jars, rather than guess work, or worse resorting to one's sense of smell. For those unable to purchase a specific gravity meter, we learnt how to

construct some nifty apparatus with bits and pieces found in the lab to analyse the strength and type of unidentified preservatives – a useful skill when presented with a collection of miscellaneous specimens in unidentified fluid. Aspects of health and safety were discussed throughout the four days, as well as the litigious issues of how to acquire and dispose of large amounts of preservative and also a look at the future legalities of formalin use and its alternatives.

Demonstrations interspersed throughout each day gave everyone the chance to have a go at the various techniques involved; cutting and drilling and grinding glass lids, preparing gelatine and sealing jars, making glass needles and polypropylene plugs. Each of these skills was put into practice on the specimens we chose to work on, and there was ample time for one to one help with specific issues. It was exciting to be able to restore a shrivelled up marine specimen by stitching limbs back on using glass needles, securing and mounting it back into a lifelike pose within the glass bottle using a specially formulated adhesive and nylon thread.

Some delegates brought their own specimens to work on, although a wide selection was provided by the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology (one of the bonuses of hosting the course is getting many problem jars sorted out in one go). By the end of the course we all had a chance to work on a variety of material, and an impressive display of well mounted, neatly labelled and freshly sealed Jars was a rewarding sight. For those delegates from smaller institutions it was a really good chance to discuss best practice and meet contemporaries in a similar situation. Although the range of biological material that can be preserved in fluid could not have been completely covered in just four days, everyone left with a feeling of motivation, and confident in knowing where to start, what materials to use and how to access the appropriate resources.

Mark Pajak,

Assistant Curator of Natural History
The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter

directory

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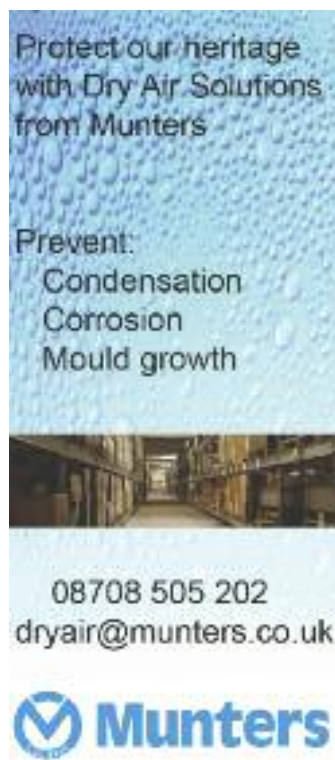
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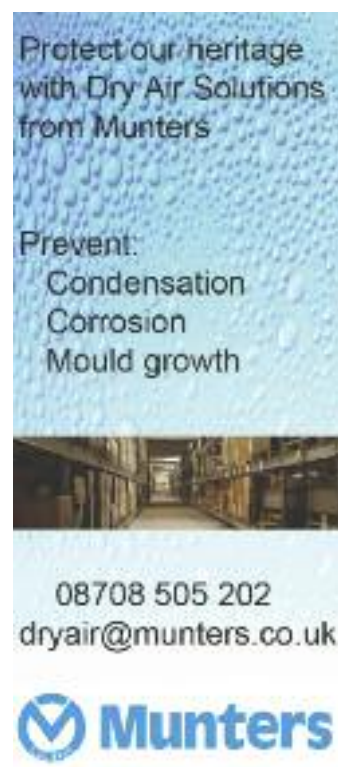
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in practice

A TRIAL USE OF A COMMERCIAL MATERIAL FOR SEALING THE FLOOR GAPS IN A DISPLAY CASE

by Artemi Chaviara MA Preventive Conservation student in the Victoria and Albert Museum – RCA/V&A; Val Blyth, Senior preventive conservator and Suzanne Smith, Display and Collections Management Curator

Wooden floorboards, original or reproduction, have traditionally been used in country houses, historical properties and museum galleries. The gaps between the boards are conducive to the accumulation of dust, dirt, clothing fibres, hair and skin particles generated by people and specific environmental conditions. This debris provides an ideal environment for insect activity. This problem occurred in wooden floor boarded areas of the British Galleries in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where high levels of insect activity were observed as a result of the Pest Management programme ongoing since 2001. Appropriate action was taken with successful results but there are still problems in certain areas.

A similar problem was observed in the case of the Melville Bed, which is a room-size, closed display in the British Galleries. The Bed is a very rare 17thC state bed made of oak, velvet and Chinese silk. The bed stock is covered with velvet, glued with organic adhesive. A high budget, long lasting conservation project was previously carried out on it – proof of its historical significance. However, the fragility and the construction materials of the bed require controlled environmental conditions to decrease deterioration. Carpet beetle – *Attagenus Smirnovi* (Vodka Beetle) – infestation was observed on the bed's lower valance. The larvae were eating the animal glue between the velvet and the wood. After discussions with the stakeholders, immediate action was taken to reduce the infestation. Insect activity monitoring was increased by placing more traps inside and outside the room in order to identify the area of insect access. After several months of monitoring, a high level of activity was observed in the area below the Melville Bed floor. The route followed by the insects starts from a void near the case and passes underneath the wooden floor through a dead space, next to the room display. The sealing of the floor was suggested as a solution for reducing this activity.

Most of the methods used for sealing floor gaps, such as silicon sealant, were considered unsuitable for this floor for both aesthetic and practical reasons. We wanted an alternative material suitable for both historic and reproduction floors which would be easily applied, reversible, chemically inactive, long lasting, aesthetically acceptable and low cost. After researching some commercial products available, a polypropylene product has been identified as a possible solution. 'STOPGAP' is an opaque flexible material. An Attenuated Total Reflection Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FT-IR/ATR) analysis was performed in the science department of the V&A to confirm its nature and the identity was confirmed as polypropylene. Similarly, an Oddy test was performed, in the British Museum, to verify its



chemical reaction to other materials; results suggested that the material had the potential for permanent use.

The product is being trialled as a way to minimise the activity level of insects in the Melville Bed display case, as well as to reduce the gathering of dust under the floor. The application of STOPGAP is simple. The flexible film is bent and pushed into the gap, with the help of a hard plastic slide. Before fitting the material, dust should be removed from the floor. Vacuuming the gaps is also required. In the joist areas, material protruded above the floor surface where the joist below prevented it from sitting as deeply in the gap between the planks. This excess was either trimmed off with a scalpel or scissors or STOPGAP was not applied at these points at all. However, as the joist areas have wood members attached below them, insect access is unlikely. Working time for 22m² of wooden floor was four hours. Fitting and removing STOPGAP is fast and simple. Its sealing ability covers small and also wider gaps up to 8mm, leaving no space for insects to enter. It is also long lasting and low cost. In addition, debris and micro-particles prevalent in the environment gather in the bent material. This can easily be cleaned with a vacuum cleaner. From the aesthetic point of view, it is almost invisible on wooden floors of light colour.

The first statistics available from monitoring, after the fitting of this material, showed a reduced insect activity level in the room. These results suggested that it is suitable as a method to treat floors elsewhere in the Museum.

The project is still in progress. When more insect activity results are gathered and information about any possible changes to the environmental conditions of the display case caused by the application are available, as well as conclusions about the product performance in public areas of the museum, it is proposed that a paper be published.

Acknowledgments

David Pinniger, Entomologist, Insect Pest consultant of the V&A

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THE SWEET SMELL OF ... SAXON TIMBERS!

by Jim Spriggs ACR and Grace Deeks

A team from Leicestershire Museums recently commenced the final stage of the conservation of one of Britain's largest archaeological finds relating to a bridge that crossed the River Trent at Hemington fields, near Castle Donington. The find includes structural wood, the trestle frames, pile posts and trestle structure dating to the late 11thC/early 12th C. Discovered during quarrying in 1993, the structures were excavated, recorded and lifted by Leicestershire Archaeological Unit and the hundred or so timbers, some up to seven metres in length, were taken to a Leicestershire Museums Facility for storage and conservation. Stabilisation by immersion in a sucrose solution was the technique selected and since 1996 the assemblage has been in tanks, initially in Leicester and later moved to Snibston Discovery Museum, Coalville – one of Leicestershire's Environment & Heritage Services sites. Three large tanks had been set up in an old colliery building to contain the timbers in about fifteen tonnes of concentrated sucrose solution, courtesy of British Sugar. Despite good care being taken of the process by Leicestershire's Conservation Manager Grace Deeks, the building was falling into disrepair, fungal infection of the solutions had taken a firm hold, and the area had become a favourite meeting place for the local wasp population.

By early 2008 it was clear that urgent action was needed. Grace Deeks brought in Jim Spriggs as project consultant as he had had previous experience with a large sucrose-based treatment at Poole Museum. Funding was put in place and plans were laid to acquire and fit out a second-hand, insulated forty foot long sea container as a drying chamber in which the still-wet wood could be gradually dried and acclimatised. A waste disposal firm was engaged to pump out the solutions and a mechanical handling company to undertake the lifting and moving. A week in February 2009 was fixed to do the job, but inevitably the British weather had other ideas, and the job was postponed twice. The last week in February was dry and fine, but the previous cold spell had caused the solutions to solidify into thick white slurry. Space heaters were brought in to blow hot air over the tanks, until some of the solution was liquid enough to pump. However much of the slurry, by now a thick paste, remained, which made the job of removing the timbers very messy and difficult. The timbers were taken to an outdoor holding area where they were hosed down with a hot water power hose to remove surplus sucrose, dead wasps and residual dirt. Once cleaned, labelling was checked by Leicestershire Museums' Curator of Archaeology, Richard Pollard, and the surface was painted with a fresh solution of sucrose solution to replenish the wood surfaces. A selection of the timbers were weighed, using electronic transducer weigh-beams, and pairs of brass pins set across the main axes to allow measurements to be made to assess shrinkage during drying.

After four days of hard work, the timbers were at last ready to



Contractors removing timbers from treatment tanks

be loaded into the drying chamber. Weighing up to 900kg, it was a slow and delicate job to manoeuvre some of the larger timbers into the chamber, requiring all the skills of the long-reach Tele-truck driver. Largest timbers were at the bottom of the stack, smallest at the top, each layer separated by padded wooden spacers. The air circulation, heating elements and dehumidifier had been tested previously, and by the end of day five, it was possible to switch on and start the drying process. This is estimated to take between twelve and eighteen months, the process being monitored by occasional weighing and measuring of selected pieces and also using Hanwell Environmental telemetry to measure temperature and relative humidity. Once drying is complete, and assuming the sucrose treatment was successful, the timbers should be fit for display or, safely stored in their container, can take their place in the local archaeological archive.

Grace Deeks and Jim Spriggs in the timber drying container



listings

Full details of all the events listed here can be found on the Icon website www.icon.org.uk

Icon Offices: Please note that many events are now being held at the Icon Offices at 1st Floor, Downstream Building, 1 London Bridge, London SE1 9BG. Security clearance for entry into the building must be arranged in advance so please follow any instructions included in the listings entry. The Icon website provides comprehensive directions on how to find the offices – from the home page, go to 'About Icon' and then to the 'Find us' page

2–3 September

University of Leeds

Ars Textrina International Textiles Conference:

Natural Fibres – A World Heritage

11 September

Icon Archaeology Group

Archaeological Iron: Reflection and Outlook

Venue: Icon Offices, London

Seminar on archaeological iron treatment, covering topics such as active treatment versus passive treatment and storage and display for archaeological iron work.

Contact: Jim Spriggs on e-mail:

spriggs.conserve@hotmail.co.uk or

Angela Karsten on e-mail:

Angela.Karsten@english-heritage.org.uk

14 September, pm

Icon Textiles Group

Visit to the 'Trimmings by Design' factory

Venue: Derby

See passementerie being made, view their archive (and they can also supply dyed wool yarns). Places limited – see Icon website.

Cost: £5.00

Contact: Rachel Langley on email

rachel.langley@nationaltrust.org.uk or

tel: 01263 735878

16 September

Icon Metals Group

Metals Conference: Jewellery and Small Decorative Metalwork; cleaning and coatings.

Venue: Victoria & Albert Museum, London

What is the current thinking on cleaning decorative metalwork? What protective coatings are being used or not? Are new display methods and cases rendering coatings unnecessary? Do you coat jewellery? How to clean a stone set piece of jewellery? What do you need to know about gem stones?

Cost: £45 (£55 non members, £30

Students)

Contact:

Deborah_Cane@birmingham.gov.uk or

srobinson@museumoflondon.org.uk to

book a place.

16–18 September

The National Gallery

Technical Bulletin 30th Anniversary Conference

Studying Old Master Paintings –

Technology and Practice

Venue: The National Gallery, London

Further details and link via the Icon

website

23 September

British Horological Institute

Turret Clock Forum

Venue: Upton Hall, Newark

A platform for turret clock conservators, diocesan advisers and historians.

Cost: £20 (includes coffee and sandwich lunch)

Contact: Zanna Perry tel: 01636-813795/6

or email zanna@bhi.co.uk

24–25 September

Royal Academy of Arts

Conservation: principles, dilemmas and uncomfortable truths

Two-day symposium following the summer publication of the book *Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths*.

Contact: Alison Richmond,

a.richmond@vam.ac.uk or Dr. Alison

Bracker,

alison.bracker@royalacademy.org.uk

25–26 September

IADA Seminar

Water and Paper: Conservation Principles

Venue: Vienna, Austria

Contact: Hildegard Homburger, Tel: +49

30 3912503 or email: hombu@freenet.de

12 October

Joint TPF/SPAB Technical Day

Traditional Lead Paint: Issues and Alternatives

Venue: St.Sepulchre-without-Newgate, 10 Giltspur, Holburn Viaduct, London.

This Technical Day will look at the history of lead paints and why they continued to be the paint of choice for historic and listed buildings even when other 'safer' alternatives were available. Then using a panel of distinguished experts, we will discuss the various alternatives presently available and try to assess their suitability from both the practical and the aesthetic point of view.

Further details via the Icon website.

15–16 October

Conservation in Canterbury Cathedral New Techniques for Old Problems

A series of talks by five conservation specialists will present recent conservation projects including stained glass windows, books and manuscripts, textiles, and painted surfaces.

Further details via the Icon website. See also leaflet accompanying this issue.

15–16 October

IADA Seminar

Conservation of Transparent Paper

Venue: Berlin, Germany

Contact: Hildegard Homburger,

Tel: +49 30 3912503 or

email: hombu@freenet.de

20 October, pm

PACR Clinic, Oxford

Further details via the Icon website

20 October, 6pm

Icon Book and Paper Group

Chinese Paintings on Pith: A Closer Look

Venue: Icon Offices, London.

Speakers: Private Conservator Ruth

Prosser ACR and Historian Ifan Williams.

The conservation of 'rice paper' can be challenging for paper conservators as it is in fact not true paper but sheets of plant pith. Ruth Prosser will discuss the results of her research into the nature and properties of pith and her practical experience of treating a collection of pith paintings.

Cost: £10 (£15 non-members, £6 students)

Contact: Register by 16 October with

Maria Vilaincour on email:

mariavilaincour@hotmail.com.

21 October, pm

PACR Clinic, Manchester

Includes a tour of John Rylands Library
Further details via the Icon website

3 November

**Icon Book and Paper Group
Seal Conservation and Storage
Workshop**

Venue: The British Library Conservation
Centre, London

Seminar and workshop on the issues
surrounding the preservation of seals.
Historical significance, present storage
projects, past treatments, and replica
production will be covered in a series of
talks and practical sessions.

Cost: £50 (£70 for non-members).

Contact: Please reserve a place with
Sophie Sarkodie, Conservation, The British
Library, 96 Euston Rd, London NW1 2DB
Tel: 020 74127025
email: sophie.sarkodie@bl.uk

3 November, pm

PACR Clinic, London

Further details via the Icon website

6 November

**Icon Textiles Group
'Back to Basics' Workshop on Enzymes**

Venue: The Burrell, Glasgow
Practical workshop to focus on the use of
enzymes in textile conservation
treatments. Alison Lister will lead the day
and details of the Albertina Komprese
system will be given.

Further details to follow.

Cost: £95

11 November, 10am

**Icon Book and Paper Group
Visit to the Marianne North Gallery
and Conservation Studio.**

Venue: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
The Marianne North Gallery is due to
reopen in mid October after an extensive
renovation to the building and the 832
paintings inside – most of these are oil on
paper. Painted in situ from all corners of
the world in the 1870s and 1880s by
Marianne North, the paintings feature 900
plant species in a huge variety of habitats,
as well as indigenous people and animals.
Contact: For information and to book
please email Joanna Payne on
jw@joannapayne.com

13 November

**Traditional Paint forum Conference
'Gilding the Lily' to 'Any Old Iron':
Protecting and Decorating Metal with
Traditional Paints.**

Venue: The Geffrye Museum, Kingsland
Road, London E2 8EA

Paints have always been used to protect
and also decorate metal, but the many
different types of metals such as steel, cast
iron, lead, bronze, aluminium, galvanised
iron and more all require that the specifier
has knowledge of all the paint types
available to him. Speakers will cover a
range of materials and their use on objects
as diverse as delicate statuary and clocks
to massive iconic structures like the Forth
Bridge.

Further details via the Icon website.

24 March 2010, pm

PACR Clinic, Cardiff

Further details via the Icon website

25–26 March 2010

**Icon Conference 2010
Conservation in Focus**

Venue: Cardiff

Two day conference to include plenary
sessions for all members and half-day
Group events.

Further details via the Icon website. See
also page 6 for more news.

20–24 September 2010

**IIC Istanbul Congress
Conservation and the Eastern
Mediterranean**

Further details via the Icon website.

11–15 October 2010

**ICOM-CC Metal WG
International Conference on Historic
Metals Conservation**

Venue: Charleston, South Carolina, USA

Winter 2010

**Conservation Matters in Wales
Scary Objects**

Venue: Cynon Valley Museum, Aberdare

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- More PACR information and booking forms are in the Accreditation/CPD section.



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