



Seeing a project through in Birmingham

Also in this issue

Conference report from Birmingham

Trying out a ceramics poultice

Replicating a great seal



Conservation by Design Limited are no stranger to the readers of the Icon magazine, providing a comprehensive range of high quality conservation products to museums, galleries, libraries and archives worldwide.

Armour Systems and Museum Workshop, brands of Conservation By Design Limited, would like to introduce ourselves to those responsible for the conservation and preservation of cultural collections.

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“Command of the Oceans, Chatham Dockyard, reveals the full dockyard story, thrilling archaeology and long-hidden objects for the first time. It tells powerful, compelling stories of innovation and craftsmanship. It shows how the Dockyard and its people helped lead Britain to worldwide influence. It features two internationally significant maritime archaeological discoveries – the timbers of the Namur (1756), intriguingly laid to rest beneath the floor of the old Wheelwrights’ workshop, and an incredible treasure trove of archaeological objects recovered from the sea bed, from the Invincible (1758).”

Photography: Nick Wood



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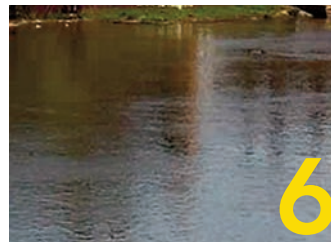
From the Editor

Well, it is hard to believe that the Icon Conference has been and gone for another three years. Congratulations are due to everyone involved in making it such a great success. You can get a flavour of it from our report in this issue and from the Icon

website where Kia Abdullah, our Digital Content Officer, has woven together a selection of the many tweets which emanated from the event. (Put 'storify' in the search box.)

As the Conference took place in Birmingham, our cover fittingly features an object treated by a Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery intern, Laura Niklas. She hails from Germany and has undertaken one of the many international postings – in both directions – which are common in our profession. As our Chief Executive, Alison Richmond, points out in her column, we do not know how last month's referendum might affect these valuable cultural interchanges in due course. Perhaps all will be clear by the time the next Icon Conference comes along.

Lynette Gill



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Back on display after conservation, a
sculpture of St John the Baptist,
probably 17thC Spanish. See page
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Photo: David Rowan

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professional update

From the Chief Executive



Photo: Matt Wreford

WHAT NEXT FOR OUR SECTOR?

Alison Richmond ACR FIIC reflects on the outcome of last month's referendum

This morning*, the results came in for the UK's referendum on membership of the European Union: 52% voted to leave the Union and 48% voted to remain. In spite of recent indicators that this might indeed be the outcome, it has come as a shock to many.

Untying such a complex relationship of over forty years is a major undertaking. It may be years before the full impact of this decision unfolds. Until we know more, it is 'business as usual'. Nevertheless, we can try to anticipate how this decision might affect the cultural heritage sector in the longer term.

European funding for research in higher education institutes will presumably no longer be available to UK institutions. In 2013/14 UK HEIs received £687m of research funding from EU sources. But the loss will be so much greater than monetarily. Research done through international collaboration has been shown to have 1.4 times the impact of research on a national level and over 60% of the UK's internationally authored papers are with partners inside the EU.**

We may assume that there will be a direct impact on conservation research as well as an indirect impact due to the cross-disciplinary nature of our field, with related disciplines, such as heritage science, art history and archaeology, experiencing similar reductions. This will not only affect universities but also museums and other heritage organisations that receive research funding from Europe. European initiatives already underway, such as Horizon 2020 (worth 80bn Euro 2014-2020), may be unaffected, but other subsequent calls for collaborative consortia may exclude UK institutions. It is essential that a strong case is made for continued support within conservation and cultural heritage research. Icon will work with partners within the cultural sector to ensure that we have a strong voice as the decisions that affect future funding are made.

There may no longer be subsidized fees for university students from European countries and while EU students make up only 5% of the whole student population, a reduction in number could have a greater impact on conservation courses, which are small to start with. We will continue to work with and advocate for the world class training that is offered in the UK.

If free movement of labour comes to an end it will affect the ability of UK citizens to work in Europe and vice versa. Many

conservation students who train at UK universities stay on to work in the UK and many of our finest cultural heritage organisations employ conservators and heritage scientists from Europe. I have worked long enough in our field to know that much of its vibrancy is due to its international character and to the sharing of knowledge and expertise across borders. We will continue to promote conservation as an outward and forward looking profession within a European and international context.

As we all continue to assess and come to terms with the impact on the UK's economy as a whole, on jobs, housing, transport, and internal funding streams, there will be many new challenges for us as individuals as well as for the cultural sector. At the heart of the Brexit vote lies a country divided. Now more than ever we need to promote the social value of cultural heritage in bringing people together, in nurturing healthy communities and individual well-being, as well as economic sustainability. Cultural heritage can help us to answer the question, 'What does it mean to be British?', in a way that can support social cohesion rather than division. And it must be actively cared for so that the meaning and values as well as the material are preserved and made accessible to all. For that to happen we need a vibrant community of engaged people with professional conservators leading the way.

* Written on 24 June

** <http://www.universitiesforeurope.com/register/Documents/The-European-Unions-contribution-to-UK-higher-education.pdf>

CONSERVATION MATTERS!

ECCO's 25th Anniversary

Given that Brexit is now a reality, it is with a certain amount of irony that I report that I was invited by President Susan Corr to attend the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer Organisation's (E.C.C.O.) 25th Anniversary and President's Meeting held in Berlin earlier in June. E.C.C.O. is a non-governmental organisation established in 1991 by fourteen conservator-restorer organisations. Currently, it represents approximately 6,050 professionals in twenty four organisations from twenty one countries, plus one international body (IADA). E.C.C.O. seeks to develop and promote the profession of conservator-restorer of cultural property. Its main objectives are to promote a high level of training and to work towards the legal recognition of the profession. (<http://www.ecco-eu.org>)

Delegates at the meeting were concerned that the UK might be leaving Europe, and in some minds parallels were drawn with Icon leaving E.C.C.O. back in 2007. What were the issues that brought about this divorce? Our differences at that time were deemed by the Icon Trustees to be irreconcilable.

Firstly, E.C.C.O. bases its definition of the professional conservator-restorer on a Masters degree (Level 7 European Qualification Framework). This was and remains the established entry point to the profession. On the other hand, the route to our professional accreditation is set up in such a

way as to be accessible via a number of pathways – academic, work-based, apprenticeship or a combination of these – with the Accredited Conservator needing to have met the Professional Standards at the proficient level. This output-based model underpins the widening of access and diversity in our profession.

Furthermore, Icon was purposefully set up with the aspiration to embrace the whole conservation community, whether professional or non-professional, university trained or not. Our mission was not considered compatible with the purpose of E.C.C.O. which 'during the twenty four years of its existence... [has] fought for regulation to control access to the profession of the Conservator Restorer'. (E.C.C.O. Strategic Plan 2015)

Since Icon left, E.C.C.O. has developed the 2010 'Competencies for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession' at EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 (see <http://tinyurl.com/hkumkoe>), in which the profiled actions and levels are very similar to our Professional Standards. E.C.C.O. has also agreed Memoranda of Understanding with other international organisations, namely ICCROM and ICOMOS. There are a lot of work programmes underway (2015–2017) including applying the Competence Framework, creating a

European Conservation-Restoration Portfolio, legislating for the Conservator-Restorer in Europe, and establishing mutual recognition of qualifications between member organisations. Icon will watch these developments with interest.

Many delegates in Berlin asked whether Icon would be re-joining E.C.C.O. This has not yet been the subject of discussion with E.C.C.O. In any case, the Icon Trustees would need to consider this in the new contexts of post-Brexit Europe, current criteria for membership of E.C.C.O. and Icon's forthcoming strategic plan.

It was good to hear Erminia Sciacchitano, Policy Officer, Culture, Heritage, Economy of Culture in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture in the European Commission, highlight the current focus on heritage in EU policy culminating in the European Cultural Heritage Year 2018 which is likely to be adopted by the European Parliament towards the end of 2016. However, it is not yet clear whether the UK will be participating in this. We will be writing to the Secretary of State for Culture recommending that we do!

Alison Richmond
Icon's Chief Executive

WHY NOT BECOME A TRUSTEE?



Photo: Matt Wireford

I retired from the Icon Board in December 2015 and would encourage anyone who can bring opinions and committee experience to a broader audience to apply to be a Trustee.

A good Board needs new insights and it is an ideal stepping stone from one of the Group Committees to give something more back to the profession.

I applied to the Board as a self-employed paper conservator with a moderate range of committee experience. I felt

Icon seemed remote and out of touch with the membership at the time. I hopefully contributed pragmatic viewpoints and took a detailed interest in the financial running of the organisation.

Being a Trustee did demystify Icon but also revealed the complexity and ambition of the organisation. And how well it is managed by dedicated staff, an inspiring Chief Executive and hard working volunteer sub groups.

It's a rewarding experience and privilege to be a Charitable Trustee and I highly recommend the role to a busy person who enjoys more work and is passionate about Conservation. It is worth it!

Penny Jenkins ACR

NEW HLF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Skills for the Future is open again!

Don't miss out – this is another great opportunity to fund Icon internships.

There are terrific examples of how this can be achieved: through *Skills for the Future* the Bowes Museum secured five years of funding for fifteen interns who are managed by Icon.

If you are interested in putting together an application, please contact Susan Bradshaw, Icon's Head of Professional Development on sbradshaw@icon.org.uk. She will be pleased to help and guide you with a potential bid. **The deadline for submitting an application is 29 September.**

A bid has to come from your organisation, Icon cannot bid on your behalf, so it is up to you to put forward your case to help sustain the conservation profession and serve the community you are in.

There are workshops being held regionally by the Heritage Lottery Fund. More information can be found at:

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/skills-futureUK-higher-education.pdf>
Guidance and application forms can also be found there.

For more information about hosting an internship go to <http://icon.org.uk/what-is-conservation/internships> and see for yourself how you can make it happen for your organisation.

CHURCH BUILDINGS COUNCIL

Our Chief Executive, Alison Richmond, has recently been appointed to the Church Buildings Council (CBC).

The Church Buildings Council is a statutory body accountable to the General Synod of the Church of England. It is supported by a group of expert officers within the Cathedral and Church Buildings division, including our former Journal Editor Janet Berry, who is now Head of Conservation. Among other duties it provides advice to dioceses and parishes on funding applications, it distributes grants for the conservation of church fabric and fittings of historical and artistic importance, and it organises training events and produces guidance on the care and use of church buildings, their contents and churchyards. (See <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/church-buildings-council>)

The Council is chaired by Sir Tony Baldry and there are twenty three additional members appointed for their relevant knowledge (see http://www.churchcare.co.uk/images/Churches/Membership_2016). It also puts Icon in an excellent position to advocate for professional standards of conservation of the 16,000 church buildings and their contents in the care of the Council and for partnership working with the CBC. The need for more advocacy and partnership working was highlighted by members in the recent membership survey.

Alison tells Icon News:

'I am honoured to have been appointed to the Church Buildings Council and I look forward to working with its members and with the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division team to support the highest quality conservation of this important part of England's heritage'.

NATIONAL HERITAGE SCIENCE FORUM

NHSF has just launched its prospectus for 2016-17 which we were able to share with conference delegates at Icon16 and which is available at: www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/news.php.

The prospectus sets out what NHSF will do over the next year to strengthen the infrastructure to support future research, widen the scope of partnerships with other fields of research and open up heritage science research so that more people engage with and contribute to the research agenda.

Activity includes encouraging people to list heritage science equipment on the NHSF Kit-Catalogue (<http://nhsf.kit-catalogue.com/>) to support sharing and collaboration, seeking input into 'Filling the Gaps', and holding events in September and November themed on open access to heritage science research outputs and research partnerships respectively.

'Filling the Gaps' is a project NHSF is leading to review the gaps in knowledge and practice that were identified as part of the development of the National Heritage Science Strategy. In the Forum's first foray into 'crowd-sourcing' it is asking for help to map research that has been carried out since 2009 to these gaps so that it can highlight those gaps that remain to

fundors and researchers, and publicise the research that has been carried out.

I hope you will be able to help us with this endeavour. To find out more, please visit www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk or email administrator@heritagescienceforum.org.uk.

Caroline Peach, NHSF

JOURNAL NEWS

We'd love to continue receiving your original proposals and articles for all forthcoming issues of the Journal, which are open to all specialisms. From next year the Journal will be published three times a year in February, June and October, and your article could be published in the next available issue if it is in process some three months before.

We will mark the occasion for the de facto 40th anniversary of the Journal with a special edition for June 2017 on the theme *The Future of Conservation*. The call for all your submissions is below so if you would like to discuss any ideas you have please contact the Editor at any time:

Call for Papers

The Journal of the Institute of Conservation is seeking Full Articles and Shorter Notices for a special issue of the Journal to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Icon, the UK's professional body for the conservation of cultural heritage.

As the notion of the preservation of cultural heritage appears beset by renewed onslaught from economic, technical and ideological challenges, the Journal wishes to mark its 40th year of publication with speculative insights into the future of conservation.

Themes for articles could include but are not limited to:

- in the face of contemporary economic, cultural and environmental concerns, is it time for conservation to become more ideological?
- should access to cultural heritage be a legally enshrined human right, with preservation at its core?
- has conservation practice lost sight of its core skills and function?
- what are the skills and practices that conservation should embrace to be relevant for the future?
- is advocacy based on the mandate of saving cultural heritage for future generations bankrupt if sections of the current generation hold heritage in disdain?
- given the opportunities for preservation using digital technologies is it now possible to recuperate any loss of cultural heritage?
- should conservation be more partisan, declaring why at this moment preserving this part of cultural heritage is of value to this particular culture?
- if manifestos are needed, what would a manifesto for the aims of conservation be for the next forty years?
- are codes of ethics redundant because they are always

contingent upon greater factors, including politics and economics?

- as computation underwrites contemporary culture and the artefact becomes evanescent, should the future of conservation be the preservation of 0s and 1s?

All those directly and indirectly involved in the preservation of cultural heritage and at any stage of their career, including emerging professionals, are encouraged to contribute to this special issue of the Journal.

The Journal seeks to represent the diversity of views of those involved in the practice, theory, and politics of conservation and welcomes scholarly treatments, research and case studies that encompass the theme.

Authors are invited to submit article outlines for consideration by the Editor at journal@icon.org.uk with all final article submissions completed by 31 December 2016.

You can sample the Journal at: <http://tinyurl.com/gvhh9yo>

If you join Icon you will get free access to and downloads of this issue, printed copies, and all the back catalogues of the Journal, The Conservator and The Paper Conservator, and much more!

Dr Jonathan Kemp

Editor, Journal of the Institute of Conservation

THE JUNE BAKER TRUST

Awards for Conservators in Scotland

The June Baker Trust is pleased to announce the awards that it has been able to give out this year as part of its 'Awards for Conservators in Scotland' grants:

- Anna Trist and Caroline Scharfenberg
£252 each to attend the '*Water and Paper: Conservation Principles*' course in Edinburgh in September.
- Flora McDowall
£350 to purchase lights and a chemical storage cupboard for a new independent frames conservation studio in Kirkcudbright
- Michelle Hunter
£150 towards attendance at the *Icon16* triennial conference
- Susan Heys
£110 towards attendance at the *Auricular Style: Frames at the Wallace Collection* in October.
- Sylvia Krauss
£300 towards the attendance at the conference in Kassel in June '*Layer by layer – the meaning and aesthetic of the surface*'.

The June Baker Trust was set up in 1990 to help individuals working in the conservation of historic and artistic artefacts in Scotland, or training with the intention to do so.

The Trust currently offers two different annual awards. The 'Awards for Conservators in Scotland' are available to assist with funding travel, attendance at conferences and on short courses, purchase of equipment, or other suitable projects for conservators with a strong Scottish connection. These awards

are made once a year, with the deadline for applications being 31 May.

The Trust also offers 'Grants for emerging conservators in Scotland', which are available for conservators who have graduated from a conservation training course within the past three years. The next deadline for this grant is 31 January 2017.

The Trust can be contacted by email at: junebakertrust@gmail.com

ZIBBY GARNET TRAVEL AWARDS

The Trustees of the Zibby Garnett Travel Fellowship are proud to announce the 2016 travel awards. There are nine recipients this year and a total of £7,050 has been awarded.

- Kiri Douglas: currently studying at Lincoln University BA(Hons) in Conservation & Restoration. The award will help fund her practical conservation of social historic objects placement with the Conservation Department at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland.
- Ruby Antonicz-Behnan: currently studying at University of Glasgow MPhil in Textile Conservation. The award will help fund her textile conservation placement with the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam
- Rosie Nuttall: currently studying at University of Glasgow MPhil in Textile Conservation. The award will help fund her textile conservation placement with ARTLAB in Adelaide, Australia.
- Scott Macaskill: currently working at the Scottish Lime Centre Trust, Fife as a Stonemason. The award will help fund his placement focussing on stone carving, soapstone, fixing & production of hot mixed lime mortars with the cathedral stonemasons in Trondheim, Norway.
- Chloe Pearce: currently studying at Cardiff University MSc in Conservation Practice. The award will help fund her conservation of archaeological objects placement with the Catalhoyuk Project in Turkey.
- Keira Miller: currently studying at Glasgow University MPhil in Textile Conservation. This is a career break from the V&A. The award will help fund her textile conservation internship with the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington
- Gabrielle Crowther: currently studying at UCL London MA in Principles of Conservation. The award will help fund her conservation of archaeological artefacts internship with the Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology in Turkey
- Katharine Waldron: currently studying at Courtauld Institute of Art for a Post Graduate Diploma in the Conservation of Easel Paintings. The award will help fund her study of conservation techniques cleaning modern oil paints, research on water sensitivity, and Talens tube paint with the Cultural Heritage Agency, (RCE) in Amsterdam
- Solange Masher: currently studying at Camberwell College of Arts MA in Conservation (books & archival materials). The award will help fund her book conservation internship with the Smithsonian Institution Libraries in Washington DC

The Zibby Garnett Travel Fellowship (ZGTF) provides travel grants for conservation students and trainee craftsmen working in the UK to visit other countries where they learn traditional techniques and broaden their hands on skills.

To be eligible for awards candidates must be in their formative years. Their study subject should be conservation based and should fall into one of the following categories: Historic buildings; Historic gardens and man-made landscapes; Artefacts; Allied trades, techniques, skills and crafts. Candidates should be studying or working in the UK but need not be British. There is no upper age limit. Selection is by interview.

For fuller descriptions of ZGTF and how to apply for its grants visit www.zibbygarnett.org

TRAVELS WITH THE MEMBERSHIP MANAGER: Summer 2016



Michael Nelles
Membership Manager

Icon members are based in a broad variety of locations across the country, from grand Royal palaces, private studios, to large-scale public institutions. This can not only provide a source of ideas for events, as studio tours are always popular whatever their context, it can also make for some very interesting venues for meetings.

Supporting Groups

I am always keen to meet with Groups and help with whatever I can, and so I was very honoured to be invited to attend a recent Group

committee meeting at Hampton Court, where several of our members are based. A key networking advantage of Icon is that activities like serving on a Group Committee puts our members directly in touch with their counterparts at major national public institutions and well-established private studios, while forging connections between freelancers. In the case of the meeting at Hampton Court, this also meant that one of our knowledgeable members who had worked there was on hand when we went for a wander around afterwards!

I was at Hampton Court to talk through the resources available at the office to support Group activities. This includes the Iconnect system, designed to reach the widest possible spread of members using up-to-the-minute information, while ensuring we can track the open and click-through rates. Increasingly, the office also provides support for social media activities – both in setting up an online presence, using it to the best advantage, and indeed feeding Group content into Icon's central social media feeds where we have amassed a substantial following. We've seen how our



Hampton Court

social media can make a big difference to events bookings, and sometimes a concentrated push on social media is all that is required to get slow bookings across the finish line and generate a buzz.

There are many other ways the office strives to support Groups as well. If you're on a Committee and have a question, it's always worth getting in touch with me to see if I can help.

In Brighton with CGG

This May, I headed to Brighton for the Ceramics and Glass Group AGM – featuring a tour of accredited member Sarah Peek's private studio. During the tour, business practice for freelance conservators became an interesting focus of group discussion, as members compared their various different approaches to business administration. Business practice is often a complex area in which approaches between studios can vary quite significantly. Given the competitive landscape in the freelance world, it can be said that well-developed business skills aren't just handy to have – they are essential.

Of course, Icon membership should certainly bolster the standing of any conservator navigating through the complex conservation marketplace, but how can Icon best ensure this? How can Icon support conservators, and particularly emerging freelancers, to ensure that our members are able develop advanced business skills to a high standard, and obtain access to software and advice where required? These questions have just been examined by a Task and Finish Group set up by Icon's Board of Trustees to examine how Icon can best support professional conservators, and I look forward with interest to their forthcoming report.

After visiting Sarah's studio, the group headed to the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, where Stella Beddoe, Keeper Emeritus of Decorative Art at the Royal Pavilion & Museum, gave us a tour of the Willett Collection of popular pottery. Her depth of knowledge into the vast quantity of unique ceramic pieces on display was astounding. Although she has retired, she is still very much involved with the Museum and we were able to benefit from the substantial expertise she had developed during her years in the role.

This reinforced for me a recurring question that Icon faces – how can we ensure that retiring conservators stay in touch with our networks, with their wealth of skills and years of experience? This will be something I will be examining in greater detail over the next year, with a view to proposing ways that the Board might enact methods to better recognise and retain our most experienced members.



The Ceramics & Glass Group in Brighton

London with the Ethnography Group

Next up, in June, was the Ethnography Group AGM and lecture, which was staged at the Institute of Archaeology at UCL in the heart of London. This time more than ever, the Ethnography session underscored the value of Icon's cross-specialist approach: there is always something for everyone. Sophie Downes delivered a presentation on her research into fungi encountered within historic collections and the damage that can potentially be caused to organic materials. The broad cross-specialist audience this attracted emphasised the diversity of our networks, and I was able to catch up with some of our members from Textiles, from Historic Interiors, from Care of Collections, and from Furniture and Wood. All had encountered similar problems in different collections – and by working across the specialisms and sharing research into the latest approaches to common problems, we stand the best chance of resolving them across the board.

Icon16

Of course, the big news last month was Icon's third triennial conference in Birmingham. I'd been working on the conference for two years, and the event itself had always seemed like a glistening emerald city in the distance – it was quite something to finally be there. A key benefit of the event was the time we had to network and discuss issues in the

At the Ethnography Group AGM and lecture



sector. The event itself reinforced the diversity of specialisms around our networks, ranging from the well-established disciplines to newer fields rapidly gaining prevalence, and this was just what some members spoke to me about during lunchtimes and tea breaks.

As many of you will recall, the Board is soon to evaluate the success of our new 'Network' model, currently used by Conservation Documentation, that was set up to provide a flexible means for members to come together to stage events across the specialisms. It will be very useful to see if this model can be deployed to bring attention to some of the other cross-specialist issues gaining prominence across our organisation, such as the conservation of dynamic objects, modern materials, and social history artefacts.

As ever, there are more Icon events in the pipeline and over the summer I'll be heading to events in Liverpool, York, and Canterbury among others. If I can be of use to anyone in the meantime you know where to reach me!

Michael Nelles

mnelles@icon.org.uk

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Book and Paper Group

Chair's Update

A big hello to everybody! My name is Michelle Stoddart and I am the new Chair of the Book and Paper Group.

The Committee would like to give a big shout out of thanks to Isabelle Egan, who has volunteered her time on the committee since 2006 and was a fantastic Chair for the Group and a strong advocate for all conservators. Isabelle gave her final speech as Chair at the AGM.

The Group's full annual report can be viewed on the Icon website at <http://tinyurl.com/zfmsmll>. I would really recommend reading this as it demonstrates the huge amount of work that different Group members contribute. It also shows the direction in which the Group is going, with a strong focus on knowledge sharing, transparency and inclusion.

At the AGM we also heard from Michael Nelles regarding the Icon membership survey. Due to the results of the survey, there has been much discussion within the Group about the London-centric nature of events and representation, and on how to be more inclusive and available. It is not only geography that can be a deterrent to events, meetings and gatherings, but also finances and other responsibilities. We are looking to use technology to get rid of some of these barriers, but please remember that if this is your Group then you have an input – please contact us at iconbpg@gmail.com if you have any ideas or would like to volunteer in a certain region.

The Group has met since the AGM with an extraordinary meeting in May to welcome all the new members and discuss finances. We are looking to put money back into the Group, focussing on professional development and accreditation, so keep an eye, and potentially an ear, out for future updates.

News from the CTR

This is my last report as Chair of the Book and Paper Group CTR. The role is being advertised through Icon and I hope the new Chair will enjoy this thrilling opportunity to raise the standards of the profession.

Organizing training for professionals is a challenging task as each conservator develops specific strengths over the course of their career, primarily defined by their professional trajectories and personal areas of interest. The conservation training wish list is long, and it is bound to keep expanding as the conservator's role evolves and emerging conservators join the profession each year. In that context, attempting to keep everybody happy by trying to tick all the boxes of an ever-growing list would be a pointless exercise. So how to define the best approach possible for the CTR? I don't have a 'recipe' for success, but here are a few thoughts on what I think works best:

- Keeping the balance between hands-on skills and theory based knowledge to offer a rich and complete learning experience.
- Cultivating links with experts from other fields, and enlarging conservators' horizons by organizing transversal training events that touch on public policy, philosophy, science, art history and so on.
- Creating momentum within the conservation network. Collaborative efforts between volunteers, host institutions and course tutors are the indispensable components of successful CTR events.
- And finally, be gentle on yourself! Time and energy spent organizing training events are a gift from the CTR volunteers to the membership, and to the profession. There are always going to be some critics in return, so not letting the unsatisfied voices cover the positive feedback is essential.

To conclude, new training opportunities are on the agenda for the next few months. The academic year will start with a course to preserve and improve conservators' health:

Alexander technique – 27 Oct 2016 (British Library). Victoria Walsh teaches how to improve posture and move in a more

balanced, less tense manner to reduce stress and pain. The technique can be applied to conservators' bench work, computer work, and life in general.

Tomorrow's Past – 4–5 November 2016 (Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford). Tracey Rowledge will present the principles that guide the work of *Tomorrow's Past*, a group of international bookbinders who make modern conservation bindings for antiquarian books. The practical workshop will offer a chance to look at various conservation paper bindings and learn how to make one of these mainly non-adhesive structures.

Constructing a Drop-Spine Pressure Box for Books and Manuscripts with Parchment Textblocks or Coverings – 10–12 Nov 2016 (Norfolk). The three-day course will be taught by Bridget Mitchell ACR at her studio in Norfolk. Course attendees should have some previous experience constructing drop-spine boxes.

Full details of each course will be advertised in due course through Iconnect.

Françoise Richard ACR
fr.conservation@gmail.com

Ceramics and Glass Group

The Ceramics and Glass Group recently held its AGM, which it combined with a trip to Brighton. It was a beautifully sunny day, and everyone had a fabulous time. Please see the review from one of the students who attended the day (on page 26).

I am delighted to announce that the Nigel Williams Prize was awarded this year to the team behind the Conservation and Reconstruction of the V&A Meissen Porcelain Fountain displayed in the Europe 1600–1800 galleries: Reino Liefkes, Hanneke Ramakers, Fi Jordan and Victoria Oakley (V&A) and Steve Brown (RCA). The judging panel reflected that the project was innovative and ground breaking, utilising new technologies and showing good collaborative team work, with conservation standards and ethics at the forefront of decision making.

The committee has also now started planning next year's conference, which I am very pleased to say will be held in Oxford in September. Look out for the Call for Papers, which will be sent out soon.

Rachel Sharples
Icon Ceramics and Glass Group Chair

Care of Collections Conference & AGM

With disasters such as the fire at Clandon Park and the Glasgow School of Art, floods affecting many heritage buildings and collections in York, and an arson attack at Manchester's Wythenshawe Hall, emergency procedures are at the forefront of the minds of many of us with collections care responsibilities. So it seemed like an appropriate time to have disaster planning and emergency response as the theme for our annual conference. In the last issue of Icon News we heard from the British Library about how they are using smart phone technology to make their salvage plans more accessible. We would love to hear about other innovations in

emergency planning, also what experiences of disaster recovery you have gone through and your lessons learned. Do you have any tips about how to deliver emergency procedures training to your colleagues?

The conference and our AGM is on Monday 3 October at the British Library in London. Please send abstracts of no more than 250 words, with speaker biographies of fifty words maximum, to Julianne Phippard at jphippard@britishmuseum.org. Deadline for abstracts is 19 August, 5.00pm. Speakers will be confirmed by 2 September, with the conference programme announced soon after. Tickets will be on sale by 15 August, look out for details via [Iconnect](#) and our Twitter feed (@CCG_ICON).

We would also welcome interest from any suppliers or service providers in emergency procedures and disaster recovery who would like to be present on the day for delegates to speak with. Please e-mail Emily Watts (emilywatts2@hotmail.com) by 31 August if you would like to participate.

Paintings Group

Visit to Watts Gallery Artists' Village

The Group has arranged a day visit to Watts Gallery – Artists' Village in Compton, Surrey on Friday 9 September 2016. The visit will include a tour of the recently opened Watts Studios led by Kerri Offord, Heritage Collections Officer, which contains a recreation of Watts' working studio, as well as a visit to the Conservation Studio with Sally Marriott, De Laszlo Conservation Fellow, who will talk to us about her recent work and research on Watts' paintings. Following the tours, there will be additional time for attendees to view the Watts Gallery and the nearby Watts Chapel at leisure. This visit has been arranged as a consequence of Kerri Offord's very well-received evening talk given to the Paintings Group in April.

Limited places are offered at the subsidised rate of £10 for Icon members and £5 for student members (valid student ID will be required on the day). Please book your place through the Eventbrite website (www.eventbrite.co.uk). Morning coffee and a lunch are included in this price, as well as minibus transport from Guildford train station and back. Attendees would need to arrive at Guildford train station by 10:45am on the day; the cost of individual travel to Guildford is not covered. Alternatively those wishing to travel direct to Watt's Gallery – Artists' Village independently by car will need to arrive by 11:00am. The minibus will return attendees to Guildford station at 4:30pm.

Talks for 2016

The next Paintings Group evening talk will be held on 26 September. John Finaly will present 'Ripolin, flags, wicker and wood: Picasso's "Notre Avenir est dans l'Air" (1912) and the Invention of Cubist Sculpture, 1912–14'.

Cubism was the artistic counterpart of the upheaval that was happening in technology, manufacturing, and engineering – a transformation that required new working methods and materials of production. John's talk particularises these ideas by showing that Picasso's earliest Cubist sculpture relied

heavily on the artist's empathy with aviation pioneers. Picasso's earliest constructions and wall assemblages have acquired great scholarly recognition, but they justify a fresh investigation in the light of the new inventions and the labours of aviators and concomitant operators.

This talk not only elaborates on the scholarship of those who have proposed comparable ideas for the worker in the context of Cubism, but also makes effective use of (and responds to) some of the important technical findings in relation to Picasso's use of Ripolin paint and other materials used in his Cubist work. John received his PhD on 'Picasso's Constructions and Assemblages: 1912–35' from the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. He is a historian of French history, specialising in twentieth-century modern art.

The talk will be at our usual venue, Freemason's Hall, 60 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AZ (close to both Covent Garden and Holborn Underground stations). Doors open at 6:00pm, with the talk held 6:30-8:00pm. Ticket prices are as follows: Icon members £10, non-members £15, students £5 (student card required to be shown on the door); wine and cheese will be available. Tickets must be booked through the Eventbrite website (www.eventbrite.co.uk); note that refunds for those unable to attend can only be issued if you notify us at least two days before the event.

Further ahead, Professor Aviva Burnstock (Head of the Department of Conservation & Technology at the Courtauld Institute of Art) will present her talk 'New technical imaging of paintings at the Courtauld' at Freemasons' Hall on 22 November.

The talk will introduce some of the data from recent studies of paintings at the Courtauld using scanning x ray fluorescence (MA-XRF) and near infrared (NIR) imaging. The images have provided novel information about the materials and techniques used for some of the Courtauld Gallery's most important pictures. New insights and issues related to interpretation of the results of these novel imaging techniques will be discussed.

Textile Group

At the time of writing, there are no new events to report. Details of Icon Textile Group events are to be added shortly to the web page. Further Group news is available on [Iconnect](#) and the Facebook page.

A successful visit to the London Cloth Company Mill, Epping took place on the 24 June. Visitors enjoyed a tour of the mill, demonstrations of the looms and had a chance to see the fabrics produced. A review of this visit will be in the next issue of Icon News. Thank you to Sarah Glenn for organizing this event.

Elsewhere in this issue of Icon News are three reviews of recent events. 'Fashion in Museums: Past, present & future', held at the Rijksmuseum from April 21–22 2016, has a double review, giving the perspectives of an established textile conservator and of an intern. Also reviewed is the Group's 25th anniversary celebration and AGM, held in the impressive surroundings of the Foundling Museum on 11 April.

Awards



Congratulations to **Ksynia Marko**, who was presented with the Plowden Medal by the Royal Warrant Holders' Association on 31 May. This is an annual award to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to conservation and Ksynia is honoured for her work in conserving and restoring many of the country's important tapestries, carpets and other textiles.

Since 1995 Ksynia has been the National Trust's Textile Conservation Adviser. She has lectured and published widely on aspects of conservation and, with the team of conservators at the Trust's Textile Conservation Studio based in Norfolk, is involved with the treatment, care and maintenance of a wide range of historic furnishings.

Secretary of the RWHA Richard Peck said: 'Through her work over four decades, Ksynia Marko, has not only ensured that many of this country's most important textiles can be enjoyed for generations to come but she has also helped to train dozens of people, many of whom are now acknowledged experts in the art of textile conservation themselves'.

Welcome to these new members

We'd like to extend a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in April and May 2016. We hope to see you at an event soon!

Clara Alonso
Supporter

Petri Anderson
Mongoose Stained Glass Ltd
Associate

Vanessa Applebaum
Student

Xylona Blythe Appleton
Student

Arnold Wiggins & Sons
Organisation

Jennifer Amsby
Durham University
Student

Joanna Brogan-Higgins
Student

Antonella Buonaiuto
Associate

Keara Burr
Student

Judith Callaghan
Associate

Jack Clare
Holy Well Glass Ltd.
Associate

Jan Dariusz Cutajar
UCL
Student

Stefania D'Alba
Associate

Camille Dekeyser Thuet
Student

Emilie Demers
Queen's University
Student

Tim Demirer
Arts Heritage Ltd
Associate

Kiri Douglas
Student

Abigail Duckor
Student

Sevinc Duvarci
Supporter

Alan Edwards
Associate

Mariko Fujita
Student

Anna Golebiowska
Associate

Karen Griffiths
Historic Royal Palaces
Associate

Julia Hamilton
Associate

Jessamy Harvey
Student

Heather Hobbs
Complimentary Publications

Melanie Howard
Aberystwyth University
Student

Dimosthenis Kechagias
Student

Kevan Shaw
KSLD
Associate

Sophia Kircos
Student

Ilse Korthagen
University of Amsterdam
Associate

Roland Locke
Associate

Josefina Lopez
Associate

Jasmin Mackenzie
Student

Berta Manas Alcaide
Hirst Conservation Ltd
Associate

Ana Marques
Student

Aurelie Martin
Ligatus Research Centre
Student

Cerina Nichamin
Associate

James Nye
The Clockworks
Associate

Kathryn Oliver
Associate

Arianne Panton
Student

Lea Parvio
Associate

Heather Perry
Conservation and Museum
Advisory Service
Associate

Rebecca Rees
Historic Royal Palaces
Associate

Tanya Richards
Student

Daniel Sanchez Villavicencio
CNCPC-INAH
Associate

Dana Senge
National Park Service
Associate

Lauren Sewell
Student

Carla Lucie Soto Quintana
University of Evora
Student

Alison Stacey
Supporter

Paula Steere
Student

Rebeca Suarez Ferreira
Student

Jenna Marie Taylor
Student

Cedric Tigier
Student

Judyta Zamrzycka
Associate

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 12th Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Conservation will be held on Wednesday 7 December 2016 at 5.00 p.m. at the St. Bride Foundation, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 8EQ, to consider the following business:

Ordinary Resolution 1: To receive the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016.

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

A member of the Institute of Conservation who is entitled to attend and vote at the meeting (being a paid up Accredited, Associate, Graduate or Student Member) is entitled to appoint a proxy, who need not be a member of the Institute of Conservation, to attend and vote instead of them. Proxies may be appointed via the web portal or to the registered office so long as they are received before 5.00 p.m. on Monday 5 December 2016. Those received later will not be counted.

If you are eligible to vote you will be sent an email by our election support provider mi-voice inviting you to access the Proxy Notice enabling you to register your instructions on-line. If you do not have an email address, please phone the mi-voice office at 0845 241 4148.

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

Following the AGM, there will be a presentation by the Chair on Icon's next Strategic Plan.

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

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

Simon Green, Company Secretary
1 July 2016

CONSERVATION SHORT COURSES

Preventive Conservation 10% discount to Icon members
26 - 29 September 2016
Course leader: Linda Bullock

Conservation of Transport and Industrial Collections 10% discount to Icon members
20-23 February 2017

Conservation of Plastics 10% discount to Icon members
27 February – 2 March 2017

Filling and Retouching of Three-dimensional Objects 10% discount to Icon members
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another great conference!

Last month, Birmingham saw nearly four hundred of us gather for Icon16 to consider the theme *Turn and Face the Change: Conservation in the 21st Century*. Here is a snapshot of the event for those who could not attend and a reminder for those who did

Cardiff....Glasgow....Birmingham....Icon's triennial conferences go from strength to strength. And with each one it feels as if our sense of community grows stronger and our professional body grows ever more mature. The combined team of Icon staff and volunteer committee and Birmingham Museums Trust staff and volunteers is to be congratulated on preparing and running an excellent event – well-organised, varied and interesting.

Were there drawbacks? Yes of course, it would be unnatural if not. For a start, there was a lot of rain! But it did not perturb our Birmingham hosts as they coped both with flooding and our visit to their Museum Collections Centre at the same time.

Then again, cost is always going to be an issue inhibiting attendance for some. But one of the notable aspects of the event was the number of bursaries available from The Clothworkers' Foundation, some of the Groups and other bodies such as the June Baker Trust. And perhaps this generosity accounted for the strong contingent of lively and enthusiastic emerging conservators. Not that the more mature Icon members were noticeably short on volume, as they greeted old friends and colleagues during the conference breaks.

Pre-conference events

As a pre-cursor to the opening evening reception, three tours were available for early arrivals in Birmingham. The Collections Centre held a rich variety of material safely but on open display with some good information for visitors about aspects of collections storage. The tour of the Conservation Studios to learn about the Staffordshire Hoard – winner of last year's Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation – was a great treat, whilst a rather more recent hoard of coffin fixtures and fittings could be seen at the quirky Coffin Works - another 2015 winner, this time of Icon's Award for Conservation in the Community.

For the evening launch, the ThinkTank Science Museum provided a dramatic backdrop with its science and technology exhibits illustrating the city's grand industrial past. Alison Richmond, our CEO, welcomed the delegates, thanked the Conference sponsors and funders and introduced three speakers. First, Boris Pevzner briefly introduced us to his brainchild Collectrium, a digital art collection management system, which we would learn more about the following day.

Next, Toby Watley, the Director of Collections at the



Photo: Bianca Harvey

A glimpse behind the scenes on the Saxon Hoard visit

Birmingham Museums Trust, gave us a warm welcome and described the work of the Trust, formed in 2009 and going from strength to strength despite the adverse (economic) climate. He praised the leadership of Collections Care

Keynote speaker James Noyes: '*conservators have a vital role to play in understanding today's global challenges*'



Photo: Bianca Harvey



Photo: Bianca Harvey

At the Plenary Sessions

Manager Deborah Cane ACR for her role in this. (She also managed to fit in being Chair of the Icon16 conference committee.) More praise was heaped on conservators by Isabel Wilson of Arts Council England who told us about the vital role our expertise plays in various aspects of the Council's work.

Getting off to a good start

Day One got the conference off with a bang with some seriously good talks in the morning's plenary sessions. First up was Tristram Hunt, an academic historian and MP for Stoke on Trent Central, who spoke passionately about the history of the Birmingham and Stoke area, drawing on a wide range of sources from J.B.Priestley to Friedrich Engels. Stoke on Trent's role in the industrial revolution with all its pollution, disease and ugliness was contrasted with its vibrant, urban energy but then came decline and job losses and finally, now, a new consciousness dawning that the industrial heritage has its own beauty and should be treated with respect for providing a valuable sense of identity and belonging.

In quite different and very 21st century mode, Boris Pevzner told us more about his collection management system Collectrium and how it is adding to its services to collectors by introducing collection care services: shipping partners, insurance and now conservation. A surprise gift to all the audience members took the form of free access to Collectrium, soon to be extended to all ACRs.

The next speaker brought a change of tone again as academic and author Dr James Noyes gave the keynote talk on the topic of iconoclasm. Heritage destruction might seem a world away from our mission of heritage preservation but this fascinating and thought-provoking lecture showed that the relationship is much more nuanced than we might want to acknowledge. Destruction and preservation are opponents

engaged in a struggle over value systems and a world view. Ranging from Norfolk to Iran and Syria, the medieval to the present day, via the French Revolution and William Morris, Noyes showed us that conservation is not an isolated activity at the workbench but is deeply connected to the structures of power which make decisions about the 'documents' of the past, be they buildings or other heritage. We shape the world view of others by our involvement in choices about what to keep, what to allow to disappear, what to exhibit, what to keep hidden, what value to ascribe to things.

Archaeologist Dr Henry Chapman followed with a rallying call to abandon our comfort zones and work across disciplines and sectors for richer outcomes, reaching multiple audiences.

The younger Icon membership was well represented at the conference



Photo: Bianca Harvey



Which session to go to next?

And to round off what was only the first half of an intensive morning, Jonathan Ashley-Smith showed once again that he missed out on a sparkling career as a stand-up comedian in a talk which had many heads nodding in agreement over his plea for the importance of craft skills, if the conservation profession is to retain its unique ability to make a difference through high level practical intervention.

After the break, the second half of the morning brought more standard conservation fare, though no less interesting for that, with talks showing science harnessed to conservation and access. We learned about daylight management for historic properties (and saw proof of the existence of wallpaper ghosts), about ways of protecting stone sculpture in an outdoor museum and innovative protection measures for Tudor tapestries based on comprehensive environmental research.

The parallel Group sessions

The afternoon and then the morning of the following day were devoted to a series of sessions run by the Groups. In addition, there were cross-disciplinary sessions on Education & Training and a session organised by our new Documentation Network. The range was astonishing and with nearly ninety talks given in total across that period it was hard to know what to choose. There were those you knew you ought to go to and others that looked fascinating, albeit off your normal beaten track. Whether you hopped between papers or stayed put in any one session you could be sure of being informed, educated or entertained – sometimes all three at once. (Who would have guessed that negotiating with nearby building contractors over the impact of their dust and vibrations on your collections could be laugh out loud funny?)

Filling the breaks

And the breaks were not just for eating and talking, though there was plenty of that. There were table talk sessions, drop-in sessions, the student posters to study and the lively trade fair to attend. One drop-in session on *Conservators as Leaders* was standing room only, potentially suggesting no



The conference reception against a backdrop of planes and steam engines

lack of ambition amongst us. Perhaps attendees had heeded the final message delivered by James Noyes: 'the time for being invisible is over. We need to guide the heritage debate like our [19th century] predecessors did before us, combining visions of conservation with visions of social justice'.

MP Tristram Hunt: 'the chapels, town halls, bottle kilns and pot banks of The Potteries codify the specific local identity'





Photo: Bianca Harvey

An animated conference dinner

Rounding off in style

The final afternoon saw us all back together again for more plenary sessions. It was suggested that the more analytical tools we have the more we want to learn, though whether this helps or hinders treatment decisions may be debatable. We learned from Birmingham how the photography and conservation departments work closely together both on digital preservation and the generation of digital media content. And from Tate we gained an insight into the conservation challenges raised by cutting edge art works, literally so in the case of the machetes and tonnes of soil involved in one of the case studies.

Unusual materials, amongst them firearms and drugs, also featured in the next fascinating talk. When the Museum of London put on an exhibition drawn from Scotland Yard's collection of crime related artefacts (its so called 'Black Museum'), the ethical considerations went well beyond those normally confronting conservators: sensitivity towards victims of crime; the need not to contaminate 'live' criminal evidence; the avoidance of instructional objects for would-be criminals, such as how to rob an ATM.

Then it was back to iconoclasm – benevolent or malevolent? – with the suggestion that conservators were not necessarily always seen as the former. More transparency on our part could lead to a more nuanced approach. Our sense of ourselves and our worth was then given another jolt in Alastair McCapra's talk '326' – the position of conservator in a list of 702 jobs ranked in order of suitability for take-over by artificial intelligence systems (robots). Our craft skills and hand/eye co-ordination may yet save us from the scrapheap.

The last speaker, a truly *grande dame* of our field and currently President of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, Sarah Staniforth CBE, took us back to the issue of leadership amongst the topics she covered in her personal reflections on the state of our profession. Her analysis of the barriers to, and support

needed for, attaining leadership levels beyond those of head of a conservation department was incisive and challenging. She certainly is a vital role model for our profession.

And finally, if you had seen Jane Thompson-Webb flitting around the conference like one of her beloved pests on drugs, then it wasn't just that she was the go-to person to sort out your PowerPoint, she was also getting to as many presentations as she feasibly could for the unenviable task of summarising the whole two days before dispatching us all to the four winds. She managed it with great aplomb and humour.

Studying a student poster over the lunch break



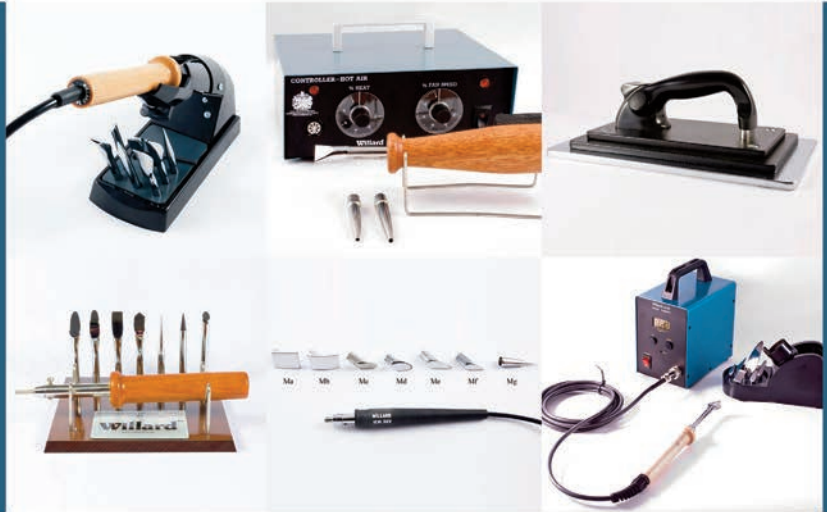
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Zoe Finlay, Archive Conservator with Durham County Record Office, encounters an early plastic

BACKGROUND

Conservators and archivists are often requested to work on materials which they have never encountered before. Although archive conservators primarily work with organic materials, they are increasingly called upon to apply their skills to items such as photographs, audio and visual items and occasionally, objects which may not immediately reveal their true identity.

So, there was certainly some head scratching when a 1953 Royal Great Seal entered the Durham County Record Office Conservation studio. Following a request from the owner to replicate the seal, this item soon revealed for us a path into the history of early plastics while presenting us with an opportunity to gain experience of 3D printing, an increasingly popular technology.

Great Seals have been used since the eleventh century to show the monarch's approval of important state documents. To reduce the chance of forgery, only one matrix was used at any one time; however, if a seal matrix was worn down then a new one was commissioned.

This particular Great Seal of HM Queen Elizabeth II was the first of her reign. Designed by Gilbert Ledward in 1953, it was

used until the matrix deteriorated and a replacement was made in 2001. Scarlet red great seals were normally used for patents or affairs of the state; this example was attached to a parchment document which awarded the district of Castle Morpeth in Northumberland, the status of a borough in 1974.

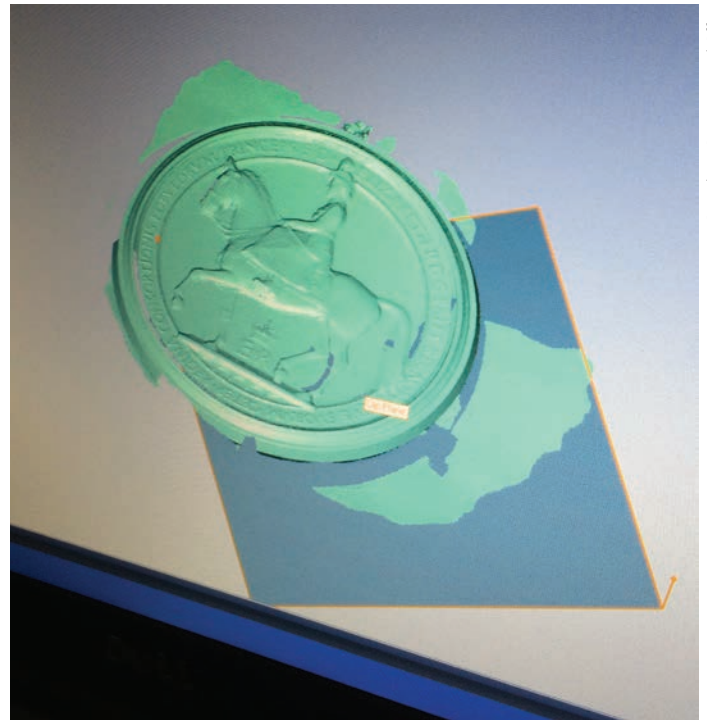
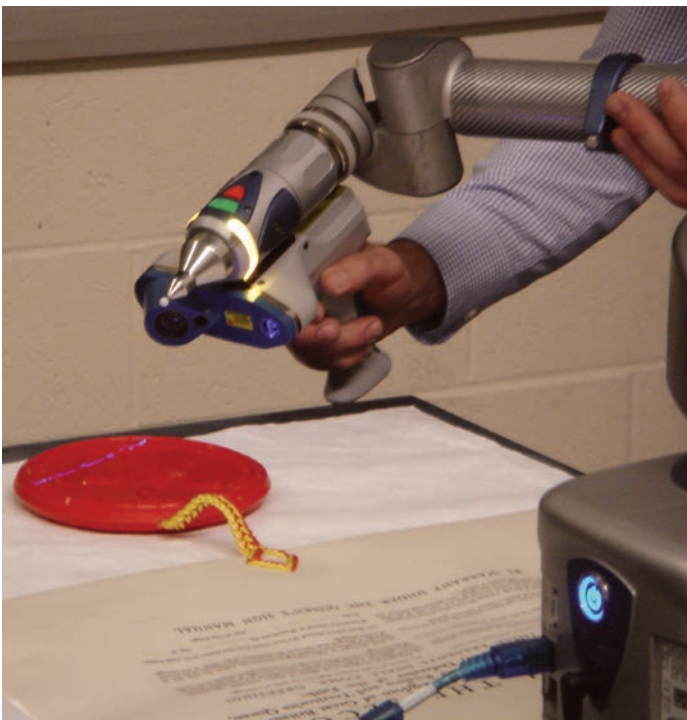
THE PROBLEM

The Great Seal belonged to Morpeth Town Council who wished to put a replica of the document on public display, safely housing the original within Northumberland Archives. Durham County Record Office were approached to replicate the Great Seal; however, after a discussion with Jeff Cargill, Archive Conservator at Hertfordshire County Council who has expertise in seal conservation, concerns were soon raised.

The age and patina of the Seal was suggestive of an early plastic called Cellomold, the tradename for a cellulose acetate material which was derived from a moulding powder. The powder was heated up and used to manufacture compression moulding products such as toothbrushes and spectacle frames as well as seals. The first official use of Cellomold was in 1943 and it was patented in 1940, however, despite further research, a definitive invention date could not be confirmed.

The Great Seal of Queen Elizabeth II





(Left) Scanning of the seal in process at Sunderland University using a laser beam and (right) the digital image on the screen, built up layer by layer by the laser beam

Evidence of the instability of cellulose acetate had been identified during the 1980s;¹ crystalline deposits were found on the surface of seals which, when crushed, deposited the seal's dyestuff.² This was accompanied by the distinctive, vinegary smell caused by the off-gassing of acetic acid, a symptom typical of deteriorating cellulose acetate. Once the acetic acid is in the localised atmosphere of the object, the unstoppable process of deterioration is accelerated and can trigger the deterioration of neighbouring objects.

The degradation of cellulose acetate has since been confirmed to result from incorrect storage, exposure to UV and visible light, heat, pollutants and direct contact with acids, alkalis and organic solvents.³

Acknowledging the problems with Cellomold, the manufacturer altered the composition of the plastic and renamed it Dixel. Although still a cellulose acetate, Dixel was more chemically stable. Unfortunately, it could not be verified whether these changes were prior to the manufacture of this Great Seal.

In the light of the uncertainty about its identity and composition, it was clear that any traditional casting process which involved the application of chemicals on or near the Seal would be unsafe for this item. The reproduction would have to be produced using an alternative method.

THE SOLUTION

The use of 3D scanning and printing is rapidly becoming a popular solution for many conservation problems. Whilst costs can still be prohibitive, the method ensures minimal intervention with the object. The availability of a reproduction can allow for safe storage of the original which is particularly beneficial for an object which is made from a complex material.

The Institute for Automotive and Manufacturing Advanced Practice (AMAP)⁴, a department of Sunderland University,

have previously applied their experience to reproducing a wide variety of objects, including obsolete parts for the vintage steam trains at the nearby Beamish Museum. However, the seal presented them with the challenge of reproducing something with much finer detail than they had previously delivered.

The Seal was scanned using a Faro v6 Scan Arm before being reverse engineered (digitally deconstructed) using Geomagic and Solidworks software to create a finely detailed model. The computer model was printed as a solid object using a high precision 3D printer and a rigid, opaque polymer which gave the finished product a smooth and detailed surface. As colour choices for this material were limited to blue or white, the seal was spray painted using Humbrol acrylic paint on its arrival into the conservation studio to match the colour of the original. Interestingly, the reproduced seal was remarkably similar in weight to the original; 12oz compared to 11.7oz for the original seal.

REVIEW

While it seemed strange at times to have such a hands-off role in the practical conservation of an object and to be working with such non-archival materials, this project was an exciting opportunity to witness what the latest technology can offer conservation.

It is not always possible or practical for institutions to obtain the chemical analysis of a material's composition, yet it is essential that we never treat an object unless it can be identified with at least some degree of accuracy.

Plastics in particular are especially challenging to identify due to their often complex chemical composition. Once the chemical alterations caused by aging are taken into account, it is extremely difficult to confirm the exact identification of an object, even with advanced chemical analytical machines.

The use of 3D printing offers minimal intervention for objects



The replica seal in its original appearance after printing as a solidblock.

The 3D printed seal after spray painting





The original seal and braid on the left sits alongside the replica

which require reproduction. It can enable the original to be housed in an environment best suited to its needs as well as allowing for public display, education and even handling. It is a significant step forward for the production of copies of original objects whilst minimising risk to the original.

The reproduced seal and parchment document (the latter, digitised by Northumberland Archives) is to be on display to the public in Morpeth Town Council Offices, Northumberland, where it can be appreciated by the town's residents. The original is now safely housed within Northumberland Archives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to Morpeth Town Council and Northumberland Archives. I would also like to thank Jenny Halling Barnard at Dorset Archives for setting the wheels in motion for this project during her position at Durham County Record Office and Jeff Cargill of Hertfordshire County Council for his advice.

Thanks also go to the AMAP department of Sunderland University for their hard work in reproducing the seal and Liz Bregazzi, County Archivist at Durham County Record Office for her support.

Thanks also extend to Ingrid Crickmore, whose help was invaluable in understanding the braid structure for reproduction.

Zoe Finlay was an Icon Intern from 2006–08

1. Email correspondence with Alan Alstin, (2015)
2. Alstin, Alan, 'Cellulose Acetate Seals: A Future Problem?' (Sheffield Conference, 1998)
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around and about

Kent Photo Archive and Hayle Mill

Icon's Business Manager, Simon Barcham Green, comes from a long line of hand made paper makers at Hayle Mill in Kent. Against the odds, production continued until 1987. Thirty years on, however, the memories remain.

The Hayle Mill photographic archive is the best collection illustrating papermaking in the UK and dates back to 1870. Apart from a large collection of prints on paper, Simon Barcham Green also owns a significant collection of 7x7 inch glass plate negatives. Some of these are wet collodion. The detail on them is very fine, despite their age but they are all a moment away from a disastrous accident.

To both protect the image content against accidents and enable the images to be viewed through the internet, Kent Photo Archive is in the process of digitising the entire collection. Roger Smoothy scans and cleans the images electronically and Roy Moore loads them on their website. All of the glass plate negatives of Hayle Mill are now on line and work will continue on the prints for many months ahead.

The website - www.kentphotoarchive.com - is a UK based non-commercial site dedicated to preserving old images of the County of Kent in the UK. It is run and maintained by a small group of enthusiastic volunteers interested in restoring, displaying and making digital copies of original material available for the public to view.

It originated in 2004 as part of a lottery funded joint project between the county town's local museum (Maidstone Museum) and Camera Club (Maidstone C.C). Their project objective was to restore a collection of glass plate images found in the storerooms of the Museum and establish a database record together with high resolution digital scans of each image.

The entrance to Hayle Mill in about 1960



©Simon Barcham Green



©Simon Barcham Green

Fred Martin couching a sheet of hand-made paper at Hayle Mill about 1921

At the completion of the project the 'Kent Photo Archive' website was produced to fulfil the lottery fund requirement to make the images available for public viewing.

The volunteers have continued working with Maidstone Museum, other smaller County Museums, private collectors and local historical societies and, as a result, the site currently contains over 20,000 images of Kent's past with some dating back to the late 1800s. Many of the old images on the site are accompanied by more recent pictures taken at the same locations giving the viewer a 'then and now' comparison.

All work is ongoing and new collections are added on a regular basis. The images are organised on the site in the collections from which they have come and in many cases you can find images of, for example, papermaking and papermills in unexpected places.

Not many counties are lucky enough to have such extensive photo collections on line and Kent is fortunate to benefit from the hard work by the volunteers mentioned. For more information about the archive you can contact:

Roy Moore – roy.moore@talktalk.net

Roger Smoothy – roger@hgv1.wanadoo.co.uk

Eric Hartland – erichart@waitrose.com

Also visit their Facebook pages at 'Kent Photo Archive' and 'Finding Lost Kent'.

To see Simon Barcham Green's images, scroll down the list of specific collections on the photo archive homepage. The images on the website are deliberately low resolution to discourage copying and to protect copyright. Anyone wishing to use images legitimately from Simon's collection can contact him at simongreen22@gmail.com.

CONFERENCES

ANALYSING ART: New Technologies – New Applications

London 19 & 20 May 2016

Billed as a conference featuring new non-destructive testing methods (NDTM) and their novel application in the analysis of art, this generously sponsored free-to-attend two day event at the Canadian Embassy in London certainly delivered on large parts of the proposition, if not quite all.

The meeting attracted some thirty or so presentations from an array of conservation scientists and allied experts on non destructive testing and analysis techniques, some already quite familiar in art conservation, and including:

- *hyperspectral imaging* using multiple modes of visible and infrared reflectance along with molecular fluorescence and X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy to produce hyperspectral image 'cubes' that reveal the distribution of particular material constituents across a spectral range of 970 - 1700nm by virtue of their absorption and/or reflection properties.

- passive and active *thermography* including infrared, near infrared and pulsed/flash thermography, all of which are aimed at the detection of subsurface anomalies from measurable temperature differences (DT) and used, for example, in the examination of frescos, textile fibre stress mapping and the revelation of painting underlays.

- *surface enhanced raman spectroscopy* (SERS) to detect naturally occurring and man-made organic molecules used as dyes and pigments in objects detected with high molecular sensitivity.

- *Optical Coherence Tomography* (OCT), a technique exploiting measurements made by fast scanning interferometers for the monitoring of glazes, paint and varnish layers and the imaging of deterioration crusts on glass.

- *Near-infrared* (NIR) and *Short-wave infrared* (SWIR) radiography are more familiar techniques to digitally measure how radiation is absorbed, transmitted or scattered by an object behind the visible part of spectrum and penetrate, for example, pigments which allows for seeing any extant under-layers of paint.

- *acoustic emission* (AE) monitoring which can be used, for example, to trace/predict climate-induced crack propagation in wooden artefacts correlated with fluctuations in humidity and temperature.

Mention too was made of *speckle interferometry* and *atomic force microscopy* (AFM), where in the wider world there are some open-source science projects attempting to provide the means to build your own. Otherwise nearly all of the



Dr Michal Lukomski, GCI, presenting on acoustic emission testing

techniques are co-opted from other sectors ranging from the medical (for example, OCT adapted from in vivo examination of the eye) to structural engineering, where AE detection is used for the monitoring of structural components and here re-calibrated on a micro-scale. Where some, such as Getty Conservation Institute's (GCI) AE systems, did begin as a lab-built DIY proof of concept it was quickly substituted by the acquisition of commercial systems already available. So, for example, in a very interesting presentation about the GCI/V&A Museum's collaboration on monitoring of micro-stresses of a lacquered commode, although prefaced as being affordable, the portable system used retails at over \$40,000.

Portability was a big theme, given that much of the cultural heritage in need of such examination remains firmly in situ. At least three presentations detailed versions of mobile diagnostic stations replete with hardware and software for a range of analytical services and various examples presented included Matera Cathedral in Italy and the Mogao Cave complex in China.

Many of the methods presented can be described as being 'active' techniques –

objects are stimulated with a short burst of energy to detect effects and anomalies in their temperature patterns. The creation of such perturbations were ironically referred to throughout the event as 'quasi non-invasive' and encompassed techniques such as NIR or thermographic excitement with a laser at the nanometre scale on the object itself, or simply wherever micron-sized sampling was effected.

Comparisons with more invasive sampling techniques were discussed in Ashok Roy's panel where he led by asking whether NDTM could ever provide as rich information as that from cross sections, detect the presence of organics or varnish thinning in cleaning, or could be effected at scale? Panel members variously affirmed that NDTM could provide such information.

Other frequencies modulating the event included how the various techniques used for detecting underlying sketches and underpainting were driven largely by the excitement of nailing down a provenance through identifying a stylistic signature and, indeed, spotting a forgery. Perhaps these themes reflected something of the sponsors involved as they didn't go so far in fulfilling

Prof. Maria Perla Colombini's presentation on 'the science of disclosing arts secrets in paintings'. Screen shows the Portable Atomic force Microscopy slide.



that part of the conference proposition: 'new applications'. Other diverse components during the two days included a detour into cold spray bronze coating (powdered bronze is shot at supersonic speed to melt on the eroded surface), crowdsourcing (which I sadly missed), discussion of state and private funding of research initiatives, and a panel discussion on what use could such exponential data production, data archiving and data distributed (raw or interpreted?) be put to, especially if its access is conceived as a public right.

I particularly liked one innovative use of pulsed infrared thermography where the solar cycle itself was registered as a stimulus on the Khufu pyramid at Giza in the hope of experimentally revealing a series of thermal anomalies that would correspond to the internal rampways hypothesised as a possible construction technique. Results are so far inconclusive.

Many thanks are due to the British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing (BINDT) and the various sponsors as well as the Canadian Embassy for convening this event on what is hoped to be the first in a biannual series of workshops further exploring advances in non destructive testing in art analysis.

Jonathan Kemp
Icon Journal Editor

FASHION IN MUSEUMS: Past, present & future

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
21 & 22 April 2016

'This symposium questions the influence of the "blockbuster" exhibition on collections based exhibitions': Bianca M. du Mortier, conference organiser and Curator of Costume at the Rijksmuseum.

What is a blockbuster? What makes an exhibition into a blockbuster? Can you plan for a blockbuster exhibition? What do blockbusters have in common; do they have any similar traits?

These questions and many others were posed throughout the conference and in short, yes you can plan for a blockbuster and fashion based exhibitions are practically guaranteed to be blockbusters. The definition of a blockbuster does not depend on size or cost, but rather on expectation; *Savage Beauty* at the V&A recently received almost half a million visitors in the three months it was open. But the Fries Museum was extremely pleased with a small fraction of that number who visited their recent Knitting exhibition.

This was an interesting spin on a costume in museums conference. Truly international in scope with speakers and delegates from UK, USA, Australia and all over Europe, there was a good mix of papers on the whole and some really excellent posters.

On Day 1 the moderator was **Twan Huys**. a



Reflecting on fashion: the *Catwalk* exhibition at the Rijksmuseum

Dutch TV anchor and presenter and an inspired choice: he was well researched and asked the questions we all wanted answered. There were no topics out of bounds; the discussion with **Erik van Ginkel**, Director of Finance, was both entertaining and informative.

Obviously the Rijksmuseum was heavily represented with numerous papers, some of them seemed designed to fill the time slots rather than contribute to the conference theme. Highlights for me included **Ronny de Vylder**, Independent Consultant and Creative visualiser. Ronny took us on a magical tour of his work; mostly shop windows, but the style and look of his work could be distilled into a very handy check list of key points to consider, which could just as easily be transferred to museum displays.

Lara Flecker, Senior Textile Conservation Display Specialist at the V&A gave us one of the only practical based papers. 'Silver Linings: the unforeseen benefits of mounting costumes for blockbuster exhibitions' looked at new and innovative display solutions pioneered by the V&A team in response to some challenging blockbuster exhibitions.

Paul Sohi, a collaborative doctoral student (V&A/ RCA) presented an interesting paper on his development of digital technology to bring us 3D printed bespoke mannequins. Currently, bearing in mind the project is unfinished, each bespoke body costs between £650-£800 and takes approximately five to six days to produce. This technique of digitally measuring and scanning an object from the inside is not designed to make the museum moulder obsolete but to streamline the process and produce a useful, considered starting point.

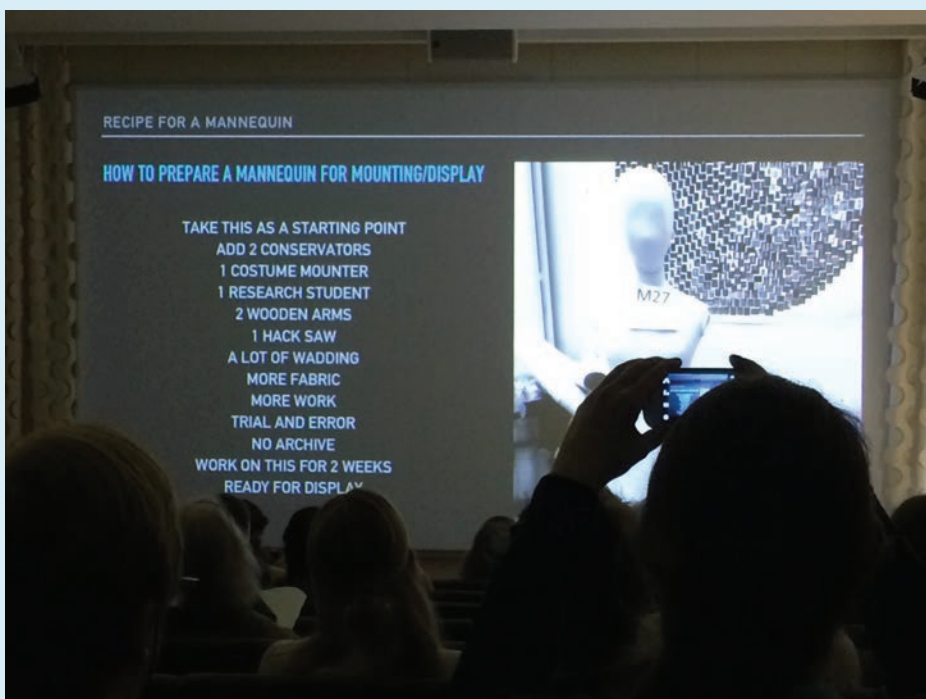
Although not exactly the focus I was expecting the conference to have, it was informative and topical. With the emphasis on income generation that so many museums necessarily have these days, it was reassuring to hear that collections based, researched exhibitions still have a place amongst the big money spinner touring shows.

Thanks to Bianca and the team at the Rijksmuseum for organising the conference, and to Clothworkers Foundation for their generous contribution towards my attendance.

Deborah Phipps
Freelance Textile Conservator
Textile Conservator, Norfolk Museums Service

There is no denying that the fashion 'blockbuster' draws the crowds like no other. The question is are these all-singing, all-dancing, global extravaganzas providing new and exciting possibilities for object interpretation, or are they the result of the prioritisation of spectacle over content, obstructing the museum's ultimate responsibility: to preserve, present, research and develop its own unique collection? Are these big-budget visual feasts setting unrealistic bench-marks for collection-based shows? Or, rather than damning them, should we be thinking of them more in terms of the museum's bread and butter, its means to an end, giving it the financial boost it needs to be able to continue. Are they, in essence, a good or a bad thing?

This seemed to be the overarching debate running through this symposium, a cross-disciplinary research platform bringing



A helpful recipe at the Fashions in Museums conference

professionals together from around the world to discuss where the fashion exhibition in the museum has come from and where it is going. In her introductory speech, **Bianca M. du Mortier**, Curator of Costume at the Rijksmuseum, quoted the fashion journalist Suzy Menkes, who in 2015 called for a return to museum curated exhibitions based on in-depth research of their own collections which hold so many amazing yet unexplored treasures. The Rijksmuseum responded with their current exhibition *Catwalk*, showcasing a cross-section of the museum's costume collection. The exhibition was designed by the photographer Erwin Olaf who worked with the museum's curators and conservators to develop the exhibition aesthetic.

This new collaborative approach to exhibition execution developed as one of the key themes throughout the symposium.

Sue-an van der Zijpp, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Groninger Museum, spoke convincingly on how a relatively small museum can work with fashion designers to simultaneously foster creativity and develop its own contemporary collection. **Ninke Bloemberg**, Curator of Fashion and Costumes at the Centraal Museum, took the theme of collaboration into the audience; showcasing a number of recent fashion exhibitions which have included a participatory element, transforming museum space into workshop where passive observer becomes active co-creator. While **Joanna Hashagen**, Curator of Fashion & Textiles at The Bowes Museum, traced the route taken to hosting the first UK retrospective of Yves Saint Laurent. Hashagen credited the combined skills and determination of staff and supporters, alongside an impressive marketing campaign, for the exhibition's success.

Blockbuster or not, exhibition aesthetic plays a vital role in visitor experience and many of the papers reflected the challenges of reconciling innovative display with the museum's duty of care. **Madelief Hohé**, Curator of Fashion and Costume at the

Gemeentemuseum, presented on the topic of displaying costume without glass cases. Hohé described the experimental approach the museum has taken to incorporating non-traditional barriers into exhibition installation. **Suzan Meijer**, Head of Textile Conservation at the Rijksmuseum, gave a frank assessment of the practical concerns of exhibiting a large number of historic pieces on open and, in the case of *Catwalk*, moving display in her paper aptly titled, 'Pragmatism and Solutions.' While **Lara Flecker**, Senior Textile Conservation Display Specialist at the V&A, offered a virtual behind-the-scenes tour of a few recent exhibitions to show how a complex design brief can result in inventive solutions with a wider conservation benefit.

The museum without walls became another dominant topic throughout the symposium with a number of presentations on digitisation projects and the use of online platforms to connect collections and inspire new audiences, without the financial cost of exhibiting and physical cost to the objects exhibited. For one speaker however, the museum without walls was a far more tangible obstacle to overcome. **Sjouk Hoitsma**, Curator of Costume and Fashion at the Museum Rotterdam, spoke about how closure of the museum in 2012 sparked a number of ambitious projects to take the museum into the community. These projects resulted in the acquisition of a number of garments from community members by the museum, exhibited when it re-opened in 2016.

Far from painting a dismal picture of the modern museum, what emerged from this symposium was something truly refreshing. There is no denying that museums have had to adapt to become more business-savvy. The rise of the blockbuster has caused a seismic shift in visitor expectation and this will continue to weigh heavy on the conservators whose ultimate responsibility is collection preservation. However, what became abundantly clear through listening to the range of speakers was that challenging circumstances breed creative

solutions; yes there may be compromises along the way but content and spectacle need not be mutually exclusive.

Jamie Robinson

Icon/HLF Textiles Conservation Intern

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF PAPER HISTORIANS: Spring Meeting London 2 March 2016

Each year the British Association of Paper Historians (BAPH) holds a Spring Meeting, which consists of a full day of seminars on a wide range of paper-related subjects. This year the event was held at the St. Bride Foundation in London.

The series of talks started with **Mark Kirwan**, who discussed papermaking at Croxley Mills, which was based near Watford, Hertfordshire. The delegates were provided with a detailed account of the production of the mill, which was built in 1830 by John Dickinson, a paper manufacturer, until its closure in 1980. Papers that were manufactured here were made for printing, writing, drawing, photography and used for book production, in banks, for typewriters and blueprints alongside many other uses. The mill was enlarged in 1838 to produce around fourteen tons of paper per week by machine, using rags from London and cotton waste from Lancashire. However, the use of rags was discontinued in the 1960s, as large amounts of nylon and other synthetic fibres were mixed in with the waste material. The mill has now been converted into residential accommodation.

Peter Bower presented a fascinating talk on the manufacture of paper balloon bombs produced in Japan during World War II. During the mid-1920s a Japanese meteorologist, Wasaburo Oishi discovered the jet stream. This knowledge allowed Japan to plan an attack on North America by launching paper balloon bombs, filled with hydrogen, using the jet stream. Over nine thousand combustible balloons each carrying a bomb were launched between 1944–1945, taking between thirty and sixty hours to reach the West Coast of America. Measuring approximately thirty metres wide, the majority of the balloon bombs were made by school children using multiple layers of handmade paper, which were pasted together using starch glue. The Japanese had no control over where the balloons would go due to atmospheric uncertainty, but they would explode after around three days after release. The only fatalities were from one balloon that killed one adult and five children during a picnic in Bly, Oregon.

Miquel Gutiérrez Poch's talk 'From Global Leader to Local Partner – British papermaking engineering, its growth and the origins of its decline (1800–1939)' discussed the important growth and demand for paper during the second half of the 18th

century in Britain, Spain, France, Germany and Switzerland, and how Britain developed and manufactured the machines to supply that demand. Then, artist and papermaker **Elaine Cooper** presented an exciting talk on 'Washi – The Papermakers' Art', which is Japanese paper renowned for its strength, beauty and versatility. Cooper studied traditional papermaking in Japan for ten years under the guidance of Goto San, a distinguished Master papermaker. She describes Washi as much more than just a paper surface; for her, it is an art form. Delegates were able to see a large selection of beautiful handmade papers produced in Japan by the artist.

Other talks included an insight into the busy studio of art-on-paper conservator, **Joanna Payne**, based in Chiswick, London, alongside a wonderful talk about Ivy Mills in Pennsylvania, USA, given by **Colin Harris**.

Having recently become a member of the BAPH myself, I would like to take this opportunity to express how beneficial membership is for those interested in papermaking. It is a fantastic time to join, with the 27th Annual Conference coming up in September 2016. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in paper, papermaking or related topics. More information on becoming a member can be found on the website at <http://baph.org.uk/membership.html>. Additionally, a Facebook page has been created as a platform for sharing information about the BAPH and all things paper-related. This can be found by searching the 'British Association of Paper Historians'.

Puneeta Sharma Project Assistant (Conservation)

The Royal Collection Trust: Royal Library & Royal Archives

PAPER CONSERVATORS IN SCOTLAND: News and Ideas Exchange Edinburgh 4 May 2016

Scotland's Paper Conservators gathered in May for informal five-minute presentations and socialising, hosted by the Centre for Research Collections (CRC), University of Edinburgh. Organiser **Helen Creasy** (The Scottish Conservation Studio) began by enumerating the previous event's outcomes; this year's well attended event will also assuredly be impactful. Talks were enthusiastically received, prompting many questions and fruitful discussions.

Firstly, **Isobel Griffin** described National Library of Scotland's (NLS) new system for conservation requests, which prevents backlogs by consistently prioritising objects by age and previous treatment requests.

Mary Garner (NLS) presented 'Preparing Collections for Digitisation'. Listing risks and problematic projects she has handled, Mary addressed the treatment choices that Digitisation Conservators make. **Shona**



Paper conservators at the Scotland news and ideas exchange

Fleming (NLS) gave insights on 'Working with volunteers'. Promoting the ten-week NLS volunteering scheme, Shona concluded that institutions must retain a balanced approach to volunteering.

Vicki Hanley from National Museums of Scotland (NMS) discussed the conservation of twenty rolls of fabulous French Panoramic Wallpaper, treating damages and previous repairs. **Lisa Cumming** (NMS) explained their permanent mounting, allowing for flat storage, and introduced an innovative magnetic mounting, which incorporates metal rulers into layered Hexlite, paper, and museum board.

Charlotte Park from National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) recounted using new methods in-situ while installing Michael Fullerton's 'Prussian Blue', of which some works were adhered to gallery walls.

After questions and home-baked cake, the second part began with University of Glasgow (UoG) **Louise Robertson's** talk 'Moving studio – managing stress!' In line with the Library's redevelopment, Louise excitedly revealed the enhanced studio plans. **Arni Terhemaa** and **Laura Kulechova**, NGS 'Finterns', described 'Studying Paper Conservation in Finland'. Finland's biggest technical institution, Helsinki Metropolia offers the country's only conservation course, covering six specialisms, each with a quadrennial intake of ten students. Kerry Yates, from UoG Archives Services, presented its preservation principles, in a talk inspired by the phrase 'archives can be...' Memorably, archives can be surprising when they produce wedding dresses!

The talk by **Richard Aitken** of Highland Archive, 'Treatment of a Tیره plan', explained the story behind the conservation process of an 18th century map. He demonstrated step-by-step the techniques used to restore the artefact. A different outlook on paper conservation was provided by **Gloria Conti's** talk who outlined her project at the National Records of Scotland

(NRS). Gloria gave a highly personal reflection on her work and showed that conservation can be a socially benefiting field to be in.

After more questions, cake and chat **Emily Hick** from the CRC outlined her methods and experiments used to reveal the hidden text within the pages of a bound volume using Photoshop and infra-red light. **Becky May** presented her MA research based at the UoG. The ongoing project concerns the Arts and Crafts patterns and designs from the Cummersdale Textile Collection. Following this, **Ryan Gibson** from NLS talked about the merits of documenting conservation work on film, and making this accessible to the general public to create a wider understanding of paper conservation.

Next to speak was freelance conservator, **Anna Trist**, who concentrated on her treatment of the Moirlanich longhouse wallpaper, a project which focused on the conservation of a National Trust of Scotland property which provides unique evidence of rural Scottish life at the turn of the century. **Helen Creasy** also stayed within the theme of wallpaper, giving a short talk about the conservation of the Chinese wallpaper at Abbotsford. This account touched upon the various problems faced by the conservation team.

Last to speak was **Anita Quye** from UoG, who described the variety of dyeing manuals in her new research project 'Dye-Versity: researching 19th century dyeing manuals'.

There are many benefits from the open discussions and ideas exchange promoted by this event, which was noticeable in the continued discussions and overall enthusiasm shown during the meeting. Such co-operation is necessary for the paper conservation field to evolve in all its diversity and complexity.

Mathilde Renauld and **Paula Burbicka** Conservation Volunteers at the Centre for Research Collections, University of Edinburgh

VISITS

CERAMICS AND GLASS GROUP AGM

Icon Ceramics and Glass Group
Brighton, 14 May 2016

On a Saturday in May West Dean College ceramic students and staff alongside professional conservators grouped together in Brighton for the day for Icon's Ceramics and Glass Group AGM.

The day consisted of two inspiring and insightful events. First, the group visited **Sarah Peek's** conservation studio. Sarah is a specialist in the conservation of ceramic, glass and enamel. She runs an extremely efficient studio, fitted out with all the necessary equipment and materials for work on a variety of objects for the private sector. As a student, it was interesting to listen to Sarah's speech about how she set up her own studio from construction to establishing a business and to hear about her career progression and success. It was a very educational talk providing advice, especially as I personally intend to establish my own career in the private sector and to aim for The Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) status in the future.

After the visit to Sarah Peek's studio and lunch, the Group AGM was held. The Chair, **Rachel Sharples**, gave a summary of past successful events including mention of last year's meeting at Worcester and the recent colour filling workshop.

The second event of the day was an afternoon visit to Brighton's Museum & Art Gallery to meet with **Stella Beddoe**, Keeper Emeritus of Decorative Art, who gave us a tour of the Henry Willet Collection. Henry Willet was an avid collector of pottery and porcelain, which can be seen on display within the museum. The ceramics collected date from the 16th century, with the majority from the 18th and 19th centuries. These are assembled in the groups and categories in which Willet assembled them, including 'Royalty and Loyalty' and 'Naval Heroes'. After the tour, we were given a glimpse of the store, where the rest of the collection is held and the opportunity to purchase Stella Beddoe's book '*A Potted History: Henry Willett's Ceramic Chronicle of Britain*'.

The day ended with an Italian restaurant dinner, where **Ronald Pile**, the Nigel Williams Prize Coordinator, announced the winner: the Victoria and Albert Museum Ceramics Department for their work on a Meissen Table Fountain. I personally applied for the student prize for my work on a Chinese Export Porcelain Blue and White 'Soldier' Vase and Lid from the Kangxi Period, but I was unsuccessful, as a student prize was not awarded this year. However, I was acknowledged for my work (the treatment can be read on the West Dean College Conservation blog) and awarded



Ceramic students from West Dean College at the Ceramics and Glass Group AGM. From left: Adelheid Hansen (Graduate Diploma), Mary Vigliotti (MA), Harriet Sylvester (MA) and Sophie Croft (Graduate Diploma)

with a ceramic egg cup decorated with scenes of Brighton!

After rushing to catch a train back to college with my signed copy of '*A Potted History*' book in hand, there was plenty of time to reflect on the day's activities as we stopped at the many stations on the way back to Chichester. I look forward to the next Icon Ceramics and Glass Group meeting.

Harriet Sylvester, Student
West Dean College

TEXTILE GROUP ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Icon Textile Group
London 11 April 2016

The Textile Group recently celebrated twenty five years since it joined UKIC/Icon. To mark the occasion, the committee organised several pre-booked visits to venues and stores around London followed

Celebrating the Textile Group's twenty fifth anniversary in the splendid surroundings of the Foundling Museum



by an evening celebration at the Foundling Museum. On arrival at the museum, we were greeted by drinks in one of the stunning reception rooms and had time to mingle and meet friends old and new. The museum was open for all to visit and discover the history of the building and the stories behind the displays.

During the evening, the current Chair, **Alison Lister**, presided over the Group's AGM and offered reflections on the Group's present activities. Four past Chairs then provided their thoughts and comments on the Group over the past quarter of a century and the changes to, and the evolution of, the textile conservation profession, including the major events that have shaped it.

Mary Brooks spoke about how the Group came into being: the start of a textile section in UKIC (United Kingdom Institute of Conservation) and its development in its early years. She reflected on how the landscape of textile conservation has changed although some aspects have remained constant not least the issues regarding funding. **Claire Stoughton-Harris** considered the evolution of UKIC into Icon and her involvement as Chair at the time. Claire also reviewed the impact of accreditation on the profession noting the benefits it has had on the conservation profession and the support it has received from textile conservators.

Sarah Howard reviewed the development of the textile conservation profession over the past twenty five years not least the increasing number of those joining. Sarah also mentioned the benefits the profession has gained from sharing ideas and techniques at conferences, workshops and visits that the Group has organised and the advantages that the internet has provided with opportunities to be in contact with



The ceiling of Valencia Cathedral – a case study in the Clare Hampson Memorial Lecture

colleagues around the world. **Deborah Phipps** rounded off the discussions by considering what it's like to be a Chair of the Group, reflections on the life of a freelance textile conservator, and the benefits of taking part in committee life. After the talks, drinks and canapes helped to celebrate the occasion further and the chatter went on until we had to leave the building after 10pm.

As someone who has very much enjoyed a full and varied career in conservation and having had the privilege of being involved in Icon in various capacities, I found the whole experience of preparing a talk for the event and reflecting on the past twenty five years very nostalgic! It was a wonderful evening in the perfect setting and it provided a great opportunity for the Group to highlight the development of the profession, to celebrate its achievements, and to reflect on some of the challenges it faces.

Thanks are due to the Textile Group for organising the celebrations and also to those who hosted the day tours. The anniversary provided a time to recognise the passion and enthusiasm we have for what we do and what textile conservation represents. Some of the issues that have been prevalent during the past quarter century have formed a constant backdrop to our conversations. Funding has always been an issue and so have changes in approaches to how heritage is managed and perceived. I think one of the great factors about our profession is that we are adaptable and can weather storms. There is a lot we can be proud of and despite some challenging times both in the past, present and no doubt the future, we are a vibrant and supportive professional body.

Sarah Howard Conservation Consultant and Project Manager

TALKS

PAPER CONSERVATION: Selective blindness
Icon Book and Paper Group
 Art Workers Guild, London 4 April 2016

Overview

Dr **Salvador Muñoz Viñas** (Universitat Politecnica de Valencia) gave the **Clare Hampson Memorial Lecture** at the Book and Paper Group's Annual General Meeting. His lecture examined conservation's past and present, highlighting some big questions facing our profession.

Muñoz Viñas set the tone for his presentation by saying he was going to be 'a bit cheeky'. He reflected on contemporary conservation, the impact of physical alterations to an object, and the circular thought processes that can result in timid decision-making. He used the analogy of a 'Frankenstein Syndrome' to describe the composite nature of objects that have undergone alterations (including conservation treatment) over their lifetimes. He developed this analogy further using a number of case studies.

His key example was Valencia Cathedral in Spain. The cathedral's structure and interior have evolved through many phases over the centuries: Romanesque in the thirteenth century; Gothic in the fourteenth; the addition of Renaissance paintings and Baroque altars from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries; and neoclassical renovations in the late eighteenth century that were later removed to reveal the Gothic design again. Most recently, in the early 2000s, Baroque features from the ceiling above the main altar were removed by conservators to reveal Renaissance frescoes below. This intervention was considered

successful, but Muñoz Viñas asserted that the outcome was a pastiche of styles unintended by any of the makers.

What can book and paper conservators learn from this? Just as successive renovations of Valencia Cathedral created a composite structure over time, so too book and paper conservation treatments, whether minor (like surface cleaning) or intensive (like bleaching), always leave objects altered. This is not a criticism, he stressed, but a reflection of the realities of all conservation practice. Rather than being 'selectively blind' to the fact that conservation treatments alter an object, Muñoz Viñas suggested we think critically about the positive and negative changes resulting from those treatments. He concluded by calling on conservators to balance competing views, be prudent in their judgements, decisive in their actions, and communicate better to avoid false expectations.

Individual reflections

Lara Artemis: For a long time now the philosophical values of conservation have become a rather too delicate and complex subject to feel it can be openly discussed in a useful way. This is mostly due to the fear (and indeed confusion) that any open discussion may cause a conflict of opinion and further misunderstandings around what it is we aim to achieve in conservation. It was refreshing to hear the subject explored through the experience of Muñoz Viñas, using examples of past practices, including many that resulted in a 'Frankenstein' appearance of objects following various conservation interventions.

Some areas of his talk I did not quite agree with, but in essence the message was clear in the conclusion, which felt very positive: to do only what you feel comfortable doing, whilst being well informed of the situation



Professor Salvador Muñoz Viñas delivers the Clare Hampson Memorial Lecture

and being able to make decisions swiftly alongside a balance of theory and practice. This view is not dissimilar to the way many professions approach the decision making process and certainly not far from the accreditation framework that we aspire towards.

Some might say it was a brave talk, others might say it was a correct representation of general opinion, a number may say it was simply confusing, others will suggest it is just plain irresponsible and some may well have no opinion at all. Whatever the opinion, Muñoz Viñas's talk definitely provoked thought and certainly made me pick up and read through his book again (as well as Caple's *'Conservation Skills'*, 2000; and Getty's *Readings in Conservation, 'Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage'*, 1996)!

Tiffany Eng: Muñoz Viñas was a great and entertaining speaker, using pop-culture (Robocop and other sci-fi references), humour, and openness to discuss a subject that can sometimes bring up strong views in conservation.

In my experience as a recent graduate, contemporary conservation education in the UK has been very open to discussion surrounding ethics and alteration of cultural heritage. I have heard the role of the conservator described as change-negotiators, risk managers and decision-makers. When we are labelled with some of the descriptors above, perhaps the stigma of 'change' to cultural heritage is not as strong as it might have once been. It is no longer the Frankenstein of vintage horror novels, but rather a Frankenweenie (1984, 2012) of the Tim Burton films: well meaning, a bit troublesome, requiring careful attention.

I think Muñoz Viñas's last point of advocating better communication to those outside the profession was the strongest. Allowing change to be a part of conservation takes it away from a single decision-making framework, but makes it more difficult to justify and explain decisions to clients or the general public. There is no clear answer on how we should address the discourse, or how to manage this in practice, but opening up the discussion is a great place to start.

Thomas Bower: To me, the talk was an attempt to refine the vital and evolving concept of minimal intervention. In many ways what Muñoz Viñas said was not new – one audience member pointed out that the issue has been around since at least the 1970s – but as an emerging professional I found his ideas approached the topic from a fresh perspective. Acknowledging that all treatments – however minimal – irreversibly alter an object to some degree strongly encourages prudence, but also reminds us not to fear conservation-induced alterations when they are essential to preserve an object's fundamental integrity. Managing the associated risks of intervention or non-intervention is the key to doing this successfully.

We are very grateful to the Clare Hampson Memorial Fund and the Book and Paper Group for organising an excellent evening that gave us much to reflect on.

Tiffany Eng, Thomas Bower (Collection Care Assistants) & **Lara Artemis ACR** (Collection Care Manager), Parliamentary Archives

POTATOES AND GRIT: the painting techniques and experiments of G F Watts
Icon Paintings Group
 London 12 April 2016

The work of the Victorian artists George Frederic Watts and his wife Mary is celebrated at the Watts Gallery – Artist's Village in Surrey. Within the Village are the Watts Gallery itself, which first opened in 1904 as the first purpose-built gallery dedicated to the work of a single artist (and reopened after a major restoration project in 2011), and the Watts Studios, which have recently been reinstated in the Wattses' Arts & Crafts home 'Limnerslease' where they lived from 1891. The Studios were reopened in January this year following extensive research into Watts's practice.

Kerri Offord, Heritage Collections Officer at the Watts Gallery, project managed and curated the Studios project and presented this talk on her research into GF Watts's idiosyncratic painting technique. Her talk drew on archive material preserved by Mary

Watts, including letters, glass-plate negatives and diaries, to outline the design of the studio, Watts's painting practices and philosophy, and his experiments with different materials.

To get the texture he wanted, Watts used absorbent grounds and lean paints with high impasto, favouring coarse canvases for textural contrast; he disapproved of modern finely-ground pigments as they lacked the necessary 'grit'. Paintings could be reworked over years, sometimes having their canvases enlarged; the gargantuan *Court of Death*, which had been begun in the 1880s, entered the new studio in 1891 and was not finished for another ten years. It hung on custom rigging, with a picture slot allowing the painting to be dropped through the floor so that the top of the work could easily be accessed. This creative engineering approach to solving practical problems is reflected in other details, too: the Wattses used a glasshouse specially for drying paintings and carrying out light-fading experiments.

Offord showed that the experiments are evidence of Watts's concern with the longevity of his materials. His extensive correspondence with Henry Newton, and later J Scott Taylor, both of Winsor & Newton, reveal frequent questions about which pigments and media were safest to use – and even whether his habit of rubbing his paintings with raw potato or onion, which apparently created a pleasant surface to paint on, would cause problems (Newton's answer was that this should be fine but might trouble the varnish).

G F Watts Studio, 2016



© David Grandorge

The great exception to this concern for longevity was a purple lake pigment that Watts consistently ordered in vast quantities from W&N, despite being well aware the pigment was known not to be lightfast. Watts's mentions of purple lake were frequently apologetic, and he seemed to be embarrassed by his weakness for this fugitive colour which was at odds with his otherwise 'scientific' attitude to materials. (Purple lake was not included on the list of twenty-four pigments, dictated to his wife, that he claimed made up his palette.)

The resonances of certain colours were clearly of great importance: his studio was painted red (eventually including the entire ceiling), and he also instructed the Tate Gallery to display his paintings on walls of this colour, an effect he declared would be like hearing 'great strains of music'. Offord's discussion of Watts's colours, both during the talk and in the question-and-answer session that followed, suggested that in places his work may have suffered tonal shifts caused by the fading of his beloved purple lake. The possibility of future technical analysis was raised, with the aim of answering such questions about Watts's work; the recent appointment of a paintings conservator at the Watts Gallery, Sally Marriott, certainly suggests further scope for continued collaborative investigation of the artist's technique.

Offord's wonderfully enjoyable and informative talk made great use of archive material in considering why Watts's paintings look as they do. The subsequent lively discussion encompassed curatorial, conservation, and conservation science perspectives regarding Watts's work.

Claire Shepherd Caroline Villers Research Fellow 2015–16, Courtauld Institute of Art

WORKSHOPS

KEEPING COMPOSED

Icon Gilding & Decorative Surfaces Group
London 6 May 2016

As all wholesome conservators know, sharing skills is one of the most important aspects of the profession, never more so than when those traditional skills are at risk of becoming forgotten.

Composition (Compo) was the material used throughout the nineteenth-century to ornament frames as an alternative to carved wood. In May the G&DSG was pleased to assist Conservation Technician **Adrian Moore** as he presented a one-day workshop on Composition making to a group of fellow professionals and conservation students, in the Education Studio at the Wallace Collection.

The group were introduced to the material, and watched Adrian make a fresh batch of



Compare Compo!

Composition to the recipe he has been using for over ten years in professional practice. The course then proceeded to give the attendees the opportunity to gain experience of pressing compo ornament using traditional boxwood moulds.

Adrian had prepared batches of Composition in advance, using six different recipes. All of the recipes are well known, if perhaps nowadays lesser used, by the trade. This allowed the attendees to compare the characteristics of each batch, while they refined the techniques for pressing different size and styles of compo ornament.

By the end of the day each participant had a sample board of ornaments for future reference. And just as importantly they had each helped to preserve something intangible, keeping alive the skills from a previous generation of craftsmen for a little longer.

Jon Slight, G&DSG Committee

PARCHMENT CONSERVATION: Knowledge-Based Workshop

Icon Book and Paper Group CTR
Cambridge 22-24 March 2016

I was lucky enough to find myself in the beautiful Parker Library in Corpus Christi College Cambridge, which was the setting for a two-day knowledge-based workshop on parchment organised by the Book and Paper Group's Co-operative Training Register. The day began with **Dr Theresa Zammit Lupi** who discussed her research on the collections of three institutions in Valetta, Malta. She illustrated how detailed examination of parchment membranes and an understanding of codicology can unlock a wealth of information about the history of different parchment objects. Theresa used her research to illustrate her presentation and then the group was invited to team up

and look at some parchment fragments to see what we could infer about their history and use.

Dr David Mills followed with a very engaging talk about the use of CT scanning technology as a means to digitally 'open' very tightly rolled or damaged parchments. The results were very impressive as the digital reconstruction of the scanned roll was unravelling and we saw the text reveal itself.

The first day of talks was rounded off with a talk from **Angelica Bartoletti**, who presented her research on analysis of parchment at the nano scale, which may enable us to identify very early signs of damage and degradation before they are visible to the eye or even under a microscope. Angelica also spoke about the potential for using calcium-based nanoparticles to safeguard parchment against further degradation.

After a short break and a change of location, we were treated to an evening lecture by **Jiří Vnouček**, which looked in detail at the history of parchment making and how production changed over time. This was followed by a drinks reception and a good chance to catch up with everyone and digest all the things we had heard and seen on the first day.

Jiří was also the first speaker on the second day and he went into more detail about the processes of parchment making, including an account of his own investigations into the craft. This included some incredible illustrations and photos of parchment makers from all over the world. He went on to demonstrate how to interpret different features of the membranes and guided us through what different marks or stitches could mean. Jiří also led us on a small tour of some books that had been specially displayed in the Parker Library, pointing out special features for each beautiful manuscript.



Parchment sewing strips and waxed linen thread used for repairs as in the 5th–9th century



Lara Artemis showing a bamboo steamer that can be used as an inexpensive alternative method for parchment humidification



Parchment samples in the cedar wood chamber

After lunch **Dr Fiona Brock** gave a very engaging talk about radiocarbon dating and how conservators could use this technique on parchment and other historic materials. Fiona recently took part in the project that dated the Birmingham Qur'an. She explained how radiocarbon dating works, what it can do and also its limitations.

The final speaker of the workshop was **Edward Cheese**, whose talk on repair and rebinding techniques for parchment manuscripts gave a very welcome insight into the practical elements of parchment conservation as well as asking some important questions about why we repair and the ethical delicacy of undertaking an interventive treatment. His talk was a personal highlight!

Overall it was an extremely interesting workshop that looked at parchment from

many angles. It was great to spend a couple of days digging deeper into what this material is and what it means for us as conservators.

Holly Smith, The National Archive

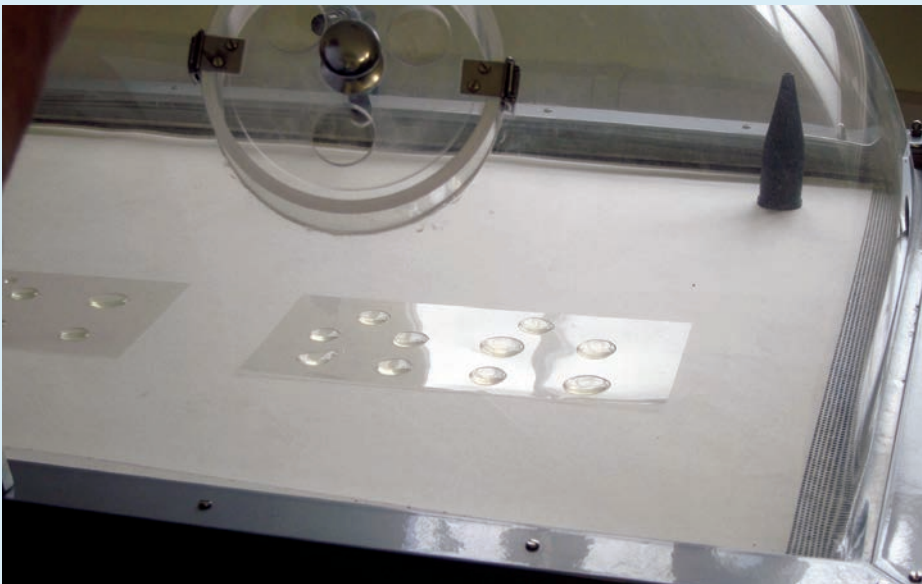
Following the two-day knowledge based workshop and an evening lecture about parchment, accredited conservators **Lara Artemis** and **Mariluz Beltran de Guevara** generously shared their expertise in the conservation of parchment with six conservators attending a practical workshop.

Lara began with a fascinating session on 'Making an illuminated manuscript'. Quill pens and split nibs were used to write an old poem in iron gall ink on sheep and goat parchment samples. This exercise allowed us to understand in a hands-on way the tight

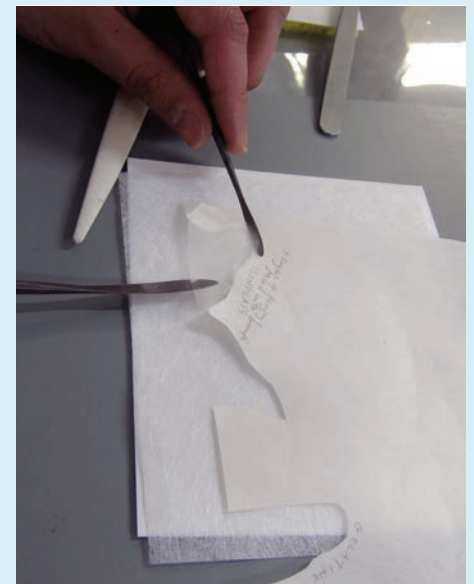
interconnection between writing supports, media and writing tools. Compared to quill pens, split nibs enabled us to obtain more modulated ink strokes. The ink ran very fluidly and the nib picked up a large amount of ink, allowing us (the copyists!) to write without dipping into the ink so frequently and with thicker strokes.

We continued by examining materials and techniques used in parchment conservation through the centuries. This included repair techniques commonly used from the fifth to the ninth centuries, using parchment strips to sew tears and parchment patches sewn in place with waxed linen thread to infill losses. Another technique (popular during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) involved closing tears with sausage casing (a low-grade collagen), adhered by brushing a thin

Isinglass disks prepared in a concentrated solution



During the application of remoistenable tissue





Drying a parchment sample under tension with magnets



Expandable paper hinges used for mounting parchment items

layer of wheat starch paste on both sides. We used the same application technique to close a tear with goldbeaterskin (caecum lining) and Isinglass cool gel – a common twentieth century practice.

In the afternoon, Mariluz delivered the workshop on contemporary parchment conservation and preservation. The highly informative practical demonstrations started with the humidification of parchment samples in a cedar wood chamber and their subsequent drying under tension with magnets. In the humidification chamber – at RH 75% and 19°C – the parchment samples rested on Simpatex® non-woven support fabric on top of damp blotting papers. The benefits of this method include: visual control of the parchment during treatment; no condensation; and stable humidity in the chamber for up to twenty four hours.

We briefly looked at other humidification techniques, such as Goretex membrane, capillary matting and local humidification with gel poultices. Characteristics, benefits and disadvantages related to each technique were clearly explained. Mariluz recommended preparing Gellan gum, Agarose, Laponite and sieved gelatine (less sieved than gelatine mousse) poultices at 5% concentration. These can be used for local humidification, but also for the removal of linings and many other uses. Gellan gum is wet and careful considerations need to be taken when treating moisture-sensitive objects. Laponite can leave residues on the item supports, although Bondina could be used in between to incorporate the residues. Agarose was considered without downsides. In the past isopropanol was used for the same purpose, but not anymore because it was proved that alcohol turns collagen into gelatine.

Next we all had a go at drying parchment under tension with different magnets. The advantages of using magnets are numerous. Magnets of different strengths are available on the market and the most suitable one can

be used according to the characteristics and requirements of the item being treated. Some iron-based magnets can be cut to the desired dimension using scissors. A disadvantage is that magnets – especially the strongest ones – could leave marks on the parchment. To avoid this, magnets can be covered with Tyvek or a felt base added. Within the group we discussed other interesting practical uses of magnets, such as for in situ repairs of unbound materials.

Further aspects of the course included other drying methods; repair materials (such as remoistenable tissues) and methods; adhesives; mounting and display techniques; and parchment storage.

In summary, the workshop provided a comprehensive overview of materials and techniques used in parchment conservation over the centuries and I found it immensely

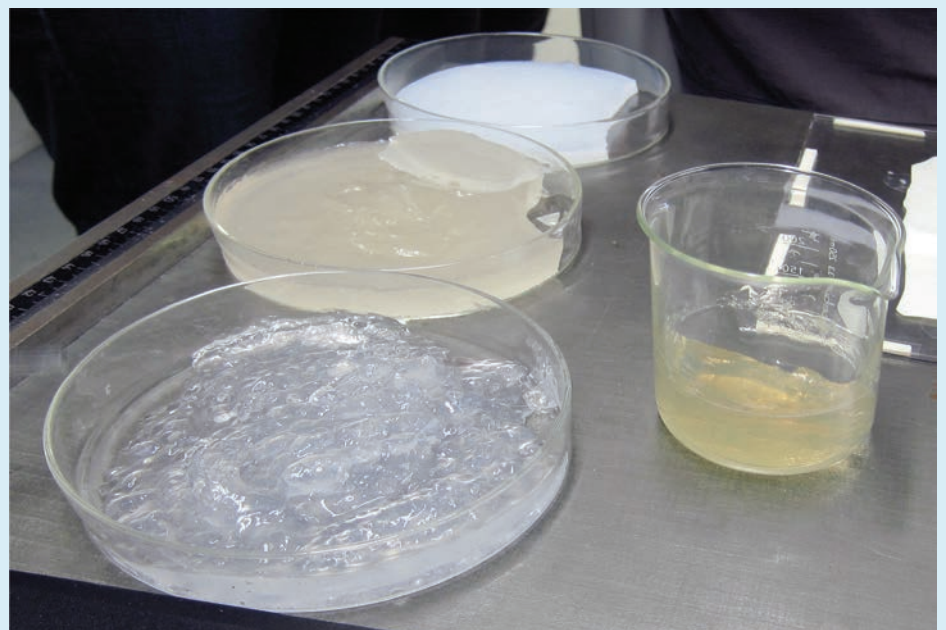
useful. The day flew by and was much enjoyed by all. We are still playing with magnets and gels in the conservation studio, and my only regret is that the workshop could have lasted for two more days as it was so packed with valuable information!

I would like to thank the Icon Book and Paper Group CTR for organizing the workshop, especially Françoise Richard, and the Claire Hampson Trust for their generous financial support. Many thanks to Lara and Mariluz, generous leaders of the workshop; to Bridget Warrington, Studio Manager at Corpus Christi College; and to Claude Grewal-Sulze who supported Lara and Mariluz with practical aspects.

Veronica Zoppi

Book and Manuscript Conservator
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Laponite, Gellan gum, Agarose and sieved gelatine



A STICKY SOLUTION

Lori Covington, Conservator of ceramics and related materials, discusses sodium carboxymethylcellulose (CMC) as a potential poultice for cleaning ceramics

During my graduate year in a ceramics conservation program, I was surprised to see that materials commonly used in one specialisation of conservation were often unheard-of in others. In particular, I became curious about why materials used to conserve permeable and fragile papers were not being used in work with more robust ceramic bodies.

In our college workshop, we used poulticing to clean or remove stains from porcelain, but avoided the use of liquid media (and therefore, poultices) with lower-fired, more permeable, ceramics. The explanation was straightforward: in permeable ceramics, the stain or soil could be driven further into the body by the movement of liquid in poultices.

LAPONITE

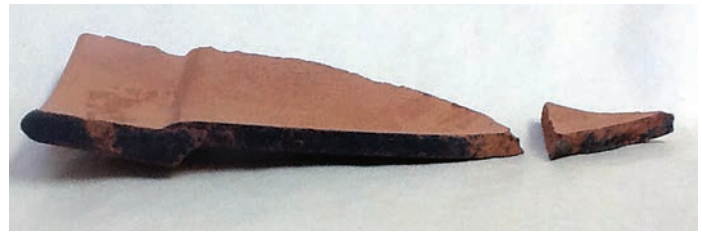
Laponite, available as a powder, is used in applications as diverse as commercial ceramics production and oil drilling. Ceramics conservators use it to poultice stained ceramics: however, they do so cautiously; its action can be unreliable, sometimes spreading stains farther into the ceramic body rather than pulling them out.

Previous studies, both anecdotal and SEM analyses, have shown that Laponite also leaves residues when used as a poultice in conservation. (Totten, 2003, *The Paper Conservator*.) Although Laponite currently enjoys some popularity in ceramics conservation, its cost, unpredictable effects and non-reversible nature should raise serious questions about its continued use.

The usual procedure in making a Laponite poultice is to spread it on top of Japanese paper, with the belief that the paper prevents Laponite from 'sticking' to the body and facilitates later removal. But as Laponite is known to have a particle size 1 nm thick and 25 nm wide, Japanese paper, with its open weave, must allow tiny silicate particles to pass through. I propose that the reason Japanese paper assists in the removal of the poultice is more likely the fact that, in order to cover the paper, more Laponite is applied, making a thicker layer. If you've ever had to peel a thin-skinned Seville orange as opposed to a Naval one, you've experienced how much easier it is to remove a thick layer.

Conservators have reported tactile differences between Laponite-treated surfaces and untreated ones, with Laponite leaving a slippery feeling behind: a strong suggestion that residues remain regardless of the care taken in applying and removing the poultice. Studies using Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) have found that Laponite molecules remain in the body of the ceramic after removal of the poultice.

SEM analysis showing Laponite residues after poulticing made me wonder if the molecular size of the material causes it to migrate in with the water, possibly bonding with similarly constituted minerals in the body. Laponite is, after all, a silicate and is commonly used in enhancing the elasticity of



Shards rubbed with soil along the edge

commercial ceramics.

With its small particle size, we have no way to control whether or not Laponite completely migrates out again with the evaporation of the water from the poultice. As the SEM analysis in previous studies has shown, in fact, it does not completely outmigrate; the knowledge of which makes using Laponite something of an ethical compromise: it is not reversible.

If Laponite's failure as a reversible poulticing treatment is due, as I believe, to its molecular size, perhaps materials with larger molecules might perform the same function without leaving residues behind.

CARBOXYMETHYLCELLULOSE (CMC)

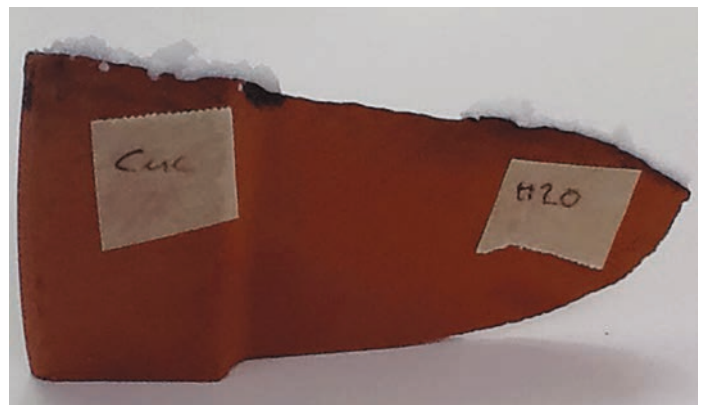
CMC, derived from wood pulp and other plant products, comes in powder form and is widely used in cosmetics, eyedrops, toothpastes and gel cleaners, preparations such as aloe vera gel and even foods, where it creates viscosity and a silky texture. In lower concentrations, it imparts smoothness and in higher ones, stickiness. It is well-known in the food and drug industry as a thickener.

CMC is also frequently used in paper conservation. Its long-chain polymers hold water both against and away from the material, providing a more controlled movement of water in and out of the object. CMC is known for its ability to work without leaving 'tide lines' - a quality also of deep concern in the cleaning of stained ceramics.

BIOTEX

Our workshop's usual material for poulticing stained ceramics was a mixture of Biotex enzymatic (laundry) cleaner and lukewarm water. The mixture was spread on the ceramic and allowed to partially dry; then it is removed by gentle scraping and steam cleaning. The process is rather tedious and inexact, as the mixture does not easily cling to the ceramic edge; too wet, and it slides off before working; too dry and it crumbles away before the enzymes are activated. As Biotex

I applied the CMC + Biotex gel (left), left a space, and applied the water + Biotex paste on the right





The clingfilm wrapped shard left overnight

dries, it becomes quite hard and loses its efficacy, as the enzymes cannot work once the water evaporates.

Controlling the speed at which the enzymatic poultice dries determines its effective cleaning time: poultices may have to be applied several times (followed by a thorough steam cleaning each time) before a stain can be removed (assuming it can be).

APPLYING CMC GEL TO CERAMICS CONSERVATION

After reading about the common use in paper conservation of CMC gel as an adhesive, I wondered if this sticky, widely-used and terrifically cheap material could be put to use in poulticing ceramics. Finding no written evidence of previous applications in the conservation of ceramics, I decided to try it.

Reasoning that CMC's large-size polymer chain may prevent its inward migration to a ceramic body, and that its increased wetting power would maximise the effectiveness of enzymatic cleaner, I decided to test a CMC + Biotex gel against Biotex paste made with water alone.

METHOD

Taking a freshly broken terra-cotta flower pot (the epitome of a permeable ceramic body), I rubbed the edges in damp potting soil, around the border of a tree planted in the courtyard. The soil, black and rich, left a noticeable stain.

On one side of the shard, I placed a mixture of enzymatic cleaner (Biotex) and water, rubbed into a paste. On the other, I used CMC gel mixed with Biotex. I made the gel up the night before, in a 2.5% solution, with deionised water, and blended the resulting gel with Biotex paste (Biotex mixed with water) until the gel-paste blend was soft enough to

On unwrapping the shard: note the tide line of the Biotex-only paste, and the lack of a tide line under the CMC mix



The darker marks extending below the CMC gel (left) are glue from the sale sticker on the pot. However, there is no tide line. Note the tide line remaining on the Biotex+water paste side

spread thickly (about 1/2 cm) on the break edge.

I wrapped the shard in cling film and left it overnight. I unwrapped it the next day. The Biotex paste had dried and crumbled; it fell off, removing some surface soil, also leaving a second stain: a considerable tide line. (At the time, both preparations still showed moisture below the break edge; however, as you see, the Biotex contained in the CMC gel did not permeate the terra-cotta shard.)

I allowed the shard to dry out for another 24 hours.

As the biotex+ CMC gel dried, it also lifted rather than crumbling, as the Biotex + water paste did. As you see below, the Biotex/CMC gel lifted away a considerable amount of dirt and left no visible tide line, while the paste on the right left a considerable mark. (I wonder how much of the soil removal is enzymatic and how much merely the physical action of the powder cleaner mixed with the CMC gel.)

CONCLUSION

With Laponite shown to be a non-reversible intervention due to its residues, perhaps a 'low-tech' poulticing solution - CMC gel used in combination with enzymatic cleaner - will prove a useful replacement in cleaning stained ceramics.

If other CMC-gel studies have similar results, we may have found a practical, effective and inexpensive cleaning and poulticing gel that does not leave residues.

FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As this is an initial trial of a material previously unused in this particular application, repeating the experiment would give us more information. It would also be helpful to make comparisons between CMC + Biotex gel with CMC gel only on soiled vs soiled and stained ceramics, and on materials differing in porosity; terra-cotta, bone china and soft and hard paste porcelain.

The dried shard showing the difference between the poultices' action on the soil and stain



FROM START TO FINISH

During her Erasmus-funded internship at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Laura Elsa Niklas was able to see a project through from beginning to end

INTRODUCTION

I finished my undergraduate degree in conservation and restoration of modern materials and technical objects from the University of Applied Sciences in Berlin in March last year. Upon the completion of my degree I had made preparations to move to the United Kingdom to begin a six month internship at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery to gain more practical experience, enhance my knowledge and get an insight into conservation practices abroad.

The statue is ready for photography and mounting



My arrival at the Museum coincided with the redisplay of their Baroque Galleries and thereby I got a brilliant opportunity to be fully immersed in all the aspects of conservation work which accompany the implementation of a new exhibition. Along with the condition checking and preparation of the gallery and the artworks, my role in the project also included the conservation of a sculpture of John the Baptist as an infant for display. My involvement in the treatment of the statue started at the beginning with its delivery from the Museum Collection Centre and continued to the end with its installation in the display case in the galleries.

THE OBJECT AND ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The sculpture is a cast lead alloy; the exterior surface has a silky matt painted finish and a hollow interior. It is posed in the classical contrapposto and placed on a decorated wooden base. The wooden base has a gesso ground layer covered with a pigmented finish; the surface is predominantly gold in colour.

Helen Hillyard, the curator of the gallery redisplay – in discussion with Holly Trusted, Senior Curator of Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum – attributed the work to an imitator of Spanish sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés, dating it to the late 17th or early 18th century. Although in Spain polychrome sculptures are traditionally fabricated in wood, pewter and other base metals were also used in the baroque period. The use of metals allowed the production from moulds in considerable numbers to satisfy the high demand for devotional figures at that time.

In the 17th century, Spanish polychrome sculptures were intended to appear as lifelike and realistic as possible and they were often dressed to provoke a powerful emotional response, stirring the viewer to greater religious devotion.

Although the statue is displayed naked, it is likely that originally it would have been dressed in costume and adorned with jewellery. Evidence of abrasion damage at the neck supports this argument. For example, this damage may indicate the use of a robe or cloak, which has rubbed against the surface.

Further, it is likely that the sculpture had held something in its left hand and that there had been something placed on the raised section of the base. These lost fragments may have been a crucifix and possibly a small lamb, the attributes of John the Baptist.

INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of the metal with a portable X-Ray Fluorescence (PXRF) device showed that the alloy is lead based. The lead alloy contains traces of copper, iron, tin and arsenic. This composition explained the heavy weight of the object.

Although the sculpture seems to be in a good and stable condition, there is a relatively wide crack visible on the back of the neck at the hairline which is partially filled with a greyish



The underside of the base before and after treatment showing one of the nails holding the base together. The surrounding wood was cleaned, the corrosion on the nail was reduced and the nail then waxed

waxy substance. Even though this crack probably originated from the casting process it was decided to use X-Radiography to reveal any further instability and to investigate how far the crack reaches.

Along with this crack the resulting image showed that there are further cracks around the circumference of both thighs. These cracks had been already visible in the paint layer above but the x-raying revealed that they are not limited to the paint but rather reach into the underlying metal itself. However the image likewise showed that the cracks do not extend the entire circumference of the thighs and still appear to be in a stable condition. The x-ray further suggested that the body of the statue was created in a single cast mould and there are

splashes, dot like traces and dents from the casting process visible on the inside of the sculpture.

The X-Radiography analysis of the wooden stand revealed that the base is hollow. The image shows clearly how the different wooden elements are joined together through the use of large iron nails extending into the interior from the top and bottom and a number of smaller nails around the edges. Using the image it was also possible to measure the longer of the two large iron rods extending from the top of the base, upon which the statue is attached through holes in the feet. This iron rod is approximately 16cm in length; the smaller of the two is significantly shorter. The fact that the base is hollow and therefore relatively light as well as that the metal rods do not reach far into the interior suggested that the weight of the heavy sculpture lies on the top of the hollow centre of the base.

Installing the statue in its case. The neck support can be seen



MOUNTING AND INSTALLATION

As a result of the investigations, coupled with initial condition assessments of the stability of the statue on the stand, it was decided that since it only loosely sat on top of the stand, upon which it was noted to be prone to wobbling, mounting improvements were needed to guarantee a secure stand for the duration of the exhibition.

To achieve this, plastazote jackets were created to cover the metal rods which stick into the holes at the base of the feet of the sculpture. The holes have been worn away at the edges over time, so with the jackets in place, the statue does not have as much room to move. Wedge shaped pieces of plastazote were put under the heels so that the sculpture could not tilt as far backwards and sideways as before.

An additional mount, constructed of a brass rod with a half ring made of acrylic plastic (Perspex) at one end was created. The rod was attached to the back wall of the case behind the sculpture and the half ring holds the neck at the back of the sculpture. Through the slight backward lean of the sculpture this additional attachment absorbs a part of the weight and holds it in place. A transparent fishing line was placed around the front neck and is fixed in two small holes at both sides of the acrylic ring as an extra safety measure.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

At some point the sculpture as well as the base seemed to have been completely repainted. While the uppermost paint layer of the sculpture itself is in a fairly good condition and

creates a coherent and balanced appearance, the top layers of the base are quite damaged in some areas. Where the uppermost layers of gold, red pigment and gesso are lost an earlier layered sequence of gold, pigment and gesso beneath is partially visible. It is likely that this older, partially visible sequence is the original surface finish. In some areas with extensive loss, the older layer sequence, mainly the white gesso, is exposed and interfering with the aesthetic appearance of the object.

Nevertheless it was decided that we would not gap-fill the damaged areas or even retouch these losses, so as not to cover the older version. By gap-filling and retouching these damaged sections it would have bordered on restoration and added another layer to the two existing sequences. Even though the brighter areas are a bit more eye-catching, they fit into the rest of the appearance of an obviously aged sculpture, which in the end is the focus of its display, not the damage it has incurred in its lifetime.

CONCLUSION

After the conservation and consolidation processes, which included wet and dry cleaning techniques as well as the use of different stabilisation media according to the particular consolidation requirement, the whole object has now a refreshed, balanced appearance and is in a stable condition. The gold now possesses an adequate aged sheen, which shows its former lustre and its aesthetic value for its former congregation.

Through my participation in the development of this exhibition and my own personal practical role in this project, I learned all the procedures and processes of preparing an exhibition. I also had an interesting opportunity to engage myself in greater depth with one object, using all the resources available to me, from the staff's knowledge to the examination methods the museum had to offer. For example I



David Rowan, BMAG's professional photographer captures the object after treatment

had the chance to undergo training in the use of PXRF and X-Radiography analysis.

My internship at Birmingham Museums Trust was a great learning curve and provided me with crucial experience in the conservation profession in a large regional museum. I have been involved with and gained an insight into the daily running of a collections department within the museum and been fully involved in all aspects in the planning and implementation of exhibitions. For this opportunity and education I am grateful to the Museum and my colleagues for their patience, advice and friendship.

I am also happy to recommend you to visit Gallery 21 at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery to visit St John the Baptist and the beautiful Baroque gallery and all it offers.

Laura Niklas is currently enrolled on a Masters conservation programme at the Berlin University of Applied Sciences (HTW Berlin)

Views of the plastazote jackets and padding made to go round the metal rods



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