

Icon NEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION • JANUARY 2009 • ISSUE 20

Country parsons and fiery angels

Also in this issue

The launch of It's a material world

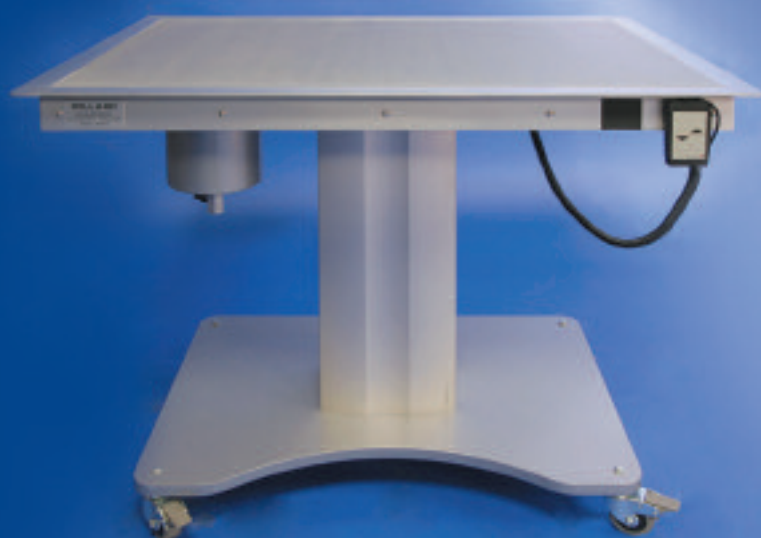
The 4th Icon AGM and the Plenderleith Lecture

Roman tombstone goes on display in Lancashire



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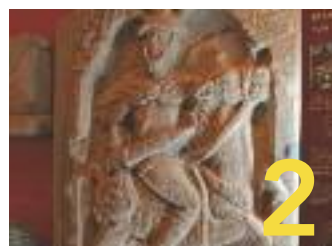
JANUARY 2009

Issue 20

Happy New Year to you all!

As we go into 2009, it is disheartening to learn that the Heritage Protection Bill has been dropped from the forthcoming legislative programme. The message which this sends out about the Government's commitment to the culture and heritage sector is clear and confirms the conclusion reached in the recent Demos pamphlet *It's a material world* that cultural heritage, let alone conservation, gets very little policy attention or political support. At a time of tightening budgets things are not set to improve unless conservators find new ways to demonstrate the connection between their work and wider social and cultural values. That is one of the central messages of the Demos report, which sets out a cogent analysis of the state of conservation now and a blueprint for action by conservators, as well as by policy makers, other cultural professionals and the public too. The establishment, under the aegis of Icon, of an Advocacy Task Force to take the issues forward is welcome news. Do take the time to read the report.

Lynette Gill, Editor



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Cover photo: Shown after conservation: a rare turtle-shell mask from the Torres Strait Islands in the collections of National Museums Scotland. See page 32.

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around & about

Lancaster's Roman tombstone

On a wet evening in late November 2005 the Lancashire County Museum Service was informed of a major archaeological find on a development site in the Roman city of Lancaster. A piece of stone used as part of the foundations of a row of Victorian terraced houses had been overturned by a mechanical digger to reveal the remains of a monumental tombstone with a bas-relief of a roman cavalry officer riding over a barbarian figure.

By the time we arrived on site (45 minutes to an hour later) other pieces of tombstone had been excavated. In all, three large and approximately forty small pieces of stone were transferred to secure storage in Preston. An initial condition report was undertaken and surface samples were taken to ascertain if any of the original paint particles survived. No further conservation could be performed until the tombstone was purchased from the developer with the support of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The sandstone was friable but was also very wet; the stone appeared to be Pentland sandstone (from a belt which crosses northern Britain & Ireland) which is known to have a very high moisture absorption rate that can be between 5–8% of its total weight. As the stone had been buried for almost 1800 years it was felt appropriate to allow it to dry out very slowly over a period of ten months, which would acclimatise it for display within a museum.

The initial find generated much media interest, as, when the pieces were placed together, the sculpture was revealed to be a German cavalry soldier called Insus Vodinii holding the head of a decapitated barbarian. It was in excellent condition with numerous carved details of the horse and rider. If all the three major pieces were joined it would stand over 2.5metres (8') and weigh some 760 kilos (1500lbs).



Above: On arrival at the studios

Left: Found on site Nov 05

Lancashire Museums' conservators undertook discussions with a number of other institutions about methods of conservation and possible display options prior to starting the work. The stone was dry cleaned only. As the joint between the two major carved sculptural pieces was at a diagonal forward slant it was necessary to undertake the joining process with the tombstone in a vertical orientation. This was achieved through the use of hoists, engine lifting cranes and bespoke base support stands. To ensure that no subsequent movement of the stone occurred the two pieces were drilled and dowelled with stainless steel threaded bar. Polyester resin was used to adhere the major joints and other smaller fragments. Gaps between the fragments were filled with layers of plaster. To give texture, a final layer of crushed sandstone adhered with PVA was applied to the surface of the fills. Water-based acrylic paint was used to retouch the areas of fill.

The tombstone was to go on display within Lancaster City Museum, a listed late Georgian building set at the centre of Lancaster's market square. Unfortunately, the most suitable location for it was within the permanent display galleries on the first floor. This produced a number of logistical issues, the major of which was the lack of an access route which would support the weight of the sculpture. After careful consideration the only acceptable solution was the removal of an upper floor 3.2m Georgian arched window and frame to hoist the created sculpture on a jib frame through the window with a 50mm tolerance. The installation of the tombstone was undertaken early on a Sunday morning. It was strapped into a purpose built crate and transported vertically. Detailed planning and a good working relationship between the technical support team and the external contractors ensured that the operation went smoothly. The final placing of the tombstone was aided by the crate's design which allowed it to be dismantled in sections on its display stand.

This was one of those projects where all the many skills found within a museum: conservators, designers, technicians and curators all proved important to create a successful display

Emily Sommerville texturing fills





Completed with Graham Dowling and the technical team

and its formal unveiling took place took place in mid October 2008.

Heather Davis,
Conservation Manager
Lancashire Conservation Studios

Yalta Chekhov Campaign

Visiting the house which Chekhov built for himself in Yalta was a highlight of the research for the biography which Rosamund Bartlett wrote to commemorate the centenary of the great writer's death in 2004 (*Chekhov: Scenes from a Life*, Free Press). She was aware of the museum's current financial difficulties but she was shocked to find half of the house closed due to the physical deterioration of the building when she returned in 2007. She resolved to do something about it, and in November 2008 launched a campaign at London's Pushkin House to draw attention to the museum's plight, and

Chekhov's house



Damaged wallpaper. This has since been repaired but only as a stopgap measure, since there is no proper heating in the house and the mould is likely to return.

raise the funds to pay for urgently-needed repairs. The aim is to raise 200 000 EUR so that necessary restoration work can be completed by the 150th anniversary of Chekhov's birth, in January 2010.

Thanks to Chekhov's sister Maria, 'The White Dacha' survived the Russian Revolution, Civil War and Nazi occupation, but the advent of Ukrainian independence has posed the toughest challenge. The Ukrainian government refuses support on the grounds of Chekhov's Russian nationality, while the Russian government argues the Museum is no longer its responsibility, because it is situated in Ukraine. And yet this is a unique and precious heritage site, comprising the house Chekhov lived in for the last six years of his life, preserved exactly as it was in his lifetime, and the garden he himself planted just over a hundred years ago. It is where *Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard* and the stories such as *The Bishop* were written.

The withdrawal of state support has had catastrophic effects. In the winter of 2005–2006, for example, the Chekhov House suffered a breakdown in its heating system, which led to wallpaper and plaster flaking and falling off the walls and ceiling. Stop-gap measures enabled the Museum to re-open in 2008, but there is still no adequate heating and temperature control system. Demolition of adjacent buildings on higher ground has presented a new and serious threat of



Water ingress has damaged the plaster



A 19thc wooden cello case, sourced from Bridgewood and Neizert, and an early wire-strung guitar from Greenwich Guitars. Both were used in the staging of Chekhov's 'Ivanov' starring Kenneth Branagh

flooding, and because there is no such thing as a 'listed building' in this part of the world, the Museum has also been powerless to prevent careless construction work carried out on the neighbouring property, which has caused cracks to appear in the walls of the house. Many of the trees in the garden are diseased and are in urgent need of surgery.

For further details of the Yalta Chekhov Campaign, to offer preservation/conservation expertise or if you can offer any other help, please see: www.yaltachekhov.org

Dr Rosamund Bartlett

Jane Eagan ACR

Chekhov again

Chris Egerton, an independent stringed-instrument conservator currently studying with the RCA/V&A Conservation program, was recently involved in the sourcing and conservation of period musical props for Tom Stoppard's new version of the Anton Chekhov play *Ivanov* starring Kenneth Branagh. The production ran throughout the autumn at Wyndham's Theatre in London's West End.

The items in the play include a late 19th century guitar, which Branagh actually plays on stage and an early wooden 'cello case, as mentioned in Chekhov's first stage script. The original state and unretouched surfaces of the objects were integral to the distressed 'decadence chic' appearance of the stunning set designs by Christopher Oram.

Chris Egerton regularly handles early stringed-instruments that are still working objects, developing methods of restorative conservation that enable them to be played safely in musical performance without compromising their important historical features and information. He has also produced accurate copies of rare museum instruments for professional musicians and occasionally makes cosmetic facsimiles for theatrical or display use.

Chris attended the glittering West End premiere of *Ivanov*



Mark Rothko, *Untitled, Mural for End Wall 1959*
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of The Mark Rothko Foundation, Inc. 1985.38.5 © 1998 by Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko. 265.4 x 288.3

with a friend from the V&A. Afterwards they enjoyed the opening night champagne reception with the cast, creative team and such luminaries as Dame Judy Dench, Jonathan Pryce and the writer Tom Stoppard.

Rothko's techniques

The exhibition *Rothko* currently at Tate Modern examines the later paintings of the artist. Room 4 of the exhibition: Material History presents ultra violet fluorescence images from recent technical analysis carried out at Tate alongside archive images of the artist's studio and allows the public a view more common to the conservator: the back of a Rothko painting.

The Tate paintings conservator Mary Bustin carried out technical examination of Tate's Seagram Murals between 1998 and 2008 to reveal more about the technique of an artist who was secretive about his practice. In the exhibition catalogue *The Substance of Things*, written by Leslie Carlyle, Jaap Boon, Mary Bustin and Patricia Smithen, Rothko's technique is examined using the information from the technical analysis of the Murals. This chapter draws on earlier technical analysis as well as recent analytical examination including Direct Temperature Mass Spectroscopy (DTMS), Imaging FTIR and SEM-EDX mapping and non contact 3-D high resolution light microscopy.

Rothko continues at Tate Modern until 1 February 2009. The Catalogue is published by Tate Publishing.

West Dean's Open Day

Catch West Dean's annual MA and Diploma Open Day on Wednesday 4 February, when prospective students can visit the purpose-built workshops, tour the accommodation and meet current students, tutors and admissions staff on an informal basis. West Dean, near Chichester on the south coast of England, offers a variety of courses including an MA in Conservation Studies, and Diplomas in conservation subjects –

Books and Library Materials, Ceramics and Related Materials, Furniture and Related Objects and Metalwork – all awarded by the University of Sussex. Other diplomas and professional development conservation courses are also available.

Help for Welsh Archives

The survival of priceless manuscripts in Wales was given a helping hand thanks to a new initiative that brings £50,000 a year to Welsh archives. The Welsh Assembly Government and the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) have joined forces to fund preservation projects, securing the future of irreplaceable Welsh archives. This year, the new initiative has benefited six Welsh archives:

- Aberystwyth University (conservation of Library Planning Archive)
- Cardiff University (conservation of Edward Thomas First World War letters)
- Conwy Archive (conservation of Penmaenmawr Quarry records)
- Swansea University (conservation of St David's Priory parish registers)
- Ceredigion Archives (conservation of Florrie Hamer's collection)
- Powys County Archives (Llangyllo parochial records)

Wales has not received much funding from the NMCT before and the new initiative means the Welsh Assembly Government will match the NMCT's £25,000 grants to Welsh archives for preservation projects. The NMCT grants scheme has been administered by The National Archives on behalf of the NMCT since 2004, and plays an important part in securing the future of irreplaceable archival collections. Grants are awarded bi-annually, each April and October. For more information about the NMCT or to apply for a grant visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/preservation/trust/default.htm

Witcombe Cabinet

Earlier this year, the Witcombe Cabinet, a rare and magnificent English ivory-ground japanned cabinet from c.1700, was treated in the Furniture Conservation Workshop of the Wallace Collection on behalf of one of its Regional-partner Museums, the Holburne Museum of Art in Bath. Following the completion of the work, the Cabinet became a principal focus piece for the 'Chinese Whisper' Exhibition at the Brighton Royal Pavilion; however, it has returned again to the Wallace Collection to feature in a special six-month Conservation Gallery display. This goes on until the end of May and throughout the period Jürgen Huber, the Senior Furniture Conservator, is giving talks on the conservation and analysis of the cabinet. His next talk is at 1pm on 23 January and again at 1pm on 13 February; it is given in front of the piece and lasts for about 30 minutes. Then on 15 May, Jürgen



©The Wallace Collection

The Witcombe Cabinet

and Curator Matthew Winterbottom will be giving a special lecture for about an hour and half at 3.30pm in the lecture theatre.

The Wallace Collection is unusual amongst museums in having a small gallery dedicated to conservation. It holds a permanent material and technique exhibition and changing exhibitions in which the work of the Conservation Department is shown. Most of the exhibitions are relevant to conservation students or indeed to the fully trained conservator.

Westminster Abbey Seminar

On 22 January an afternoon seminar is being held in Westminster Abbey to hear about the work being undertaken on the great Cosmati pavement and on Edmund Crouchback's tomb. The Cosmati pavement in front of the High Altar was laid down in 1268 and the current conservation project, led by Head Conservator Vanessa Simeoni, includes cleaning and repair. Vanessa will be presenting the work and a history of the pavement. The painted stone monument to Edmund, the second son of King Henry III, who died in 1296 lies to the North of the High Altar. Mary Louise Sauerburg will talk about the recent study of this fabulous object and other polychromed stone and wooden objects within the Abbey. The talks will be followed by guided tours. See listings on page 35 for contact details.

Mutilated Bacon

An unusual exhibition took place last autumn at the James Hyman Gallery in London when a mutilated painting by Francis Bacon went on display for the first time. Nearly thirty years ago, a porter called Ron Thomas worked at the Marlborough Gallery, London, and for Francis Bacon. He and



(Untitled) Study for a Pope, mutilated canvas, c.1959

Bacon became good friends and Ron often did odd jobs for him around his house. During this time Ron was given a mutilated canvas by Bacon which Ron later sold: (Untitled) Study for a Pope, (mutilated canvas, c.1959). In 2007 an anonymous collector bought it at auction. His aim in loaning it to the Gallery was 'to make people aware of Bacon's working methods, particularly his habit of cutting and re-laying his canvases'.

Martin Harrison, in his book *In Camera* (p. 214), refers to an interview with Bacon in which he talks about his habit of destroying works: 'Bacon said he destroyed "all the better paintings" in attempting "to take them further". When they "lose all their qualities, the canvas becomes completely clogged, and one just can't go on".'

If it ever came the way of a conservator, it would be interesting to see what he or she made of it. A case for minimal intervention, surely.

Computerising the Cutty Sark

Computer scientists at the University of Greenwich working with the Cutty Sark Trust have won the top prize at the London Knowledge Transfer Awards. Their pioneering partnership uses sophisticated computer models to determine how to dismantle and reassemble the fire-damaged ship, which will open again to the public in 2010.

The project was named as Knowledge Transfer Collaboration 2008 at an awards ceremony in December, where it also won the Knowledge Base Collaboration Award. These new awards – run by the London Development Agency – demonstrate the benefits to business of using the expertise in universities and colleges.

Five years ago, experts predicted that the Victorian tea clipper would collapse within a decade if nothing was done. Yet the Cutty Sark Trust feared that the very act of restoration could endanger the ship. So the university was called in to predict how the decaying wooden hull and corroded iron frame would respond to restoration. The university's Professor



Chris Bailey inside hull

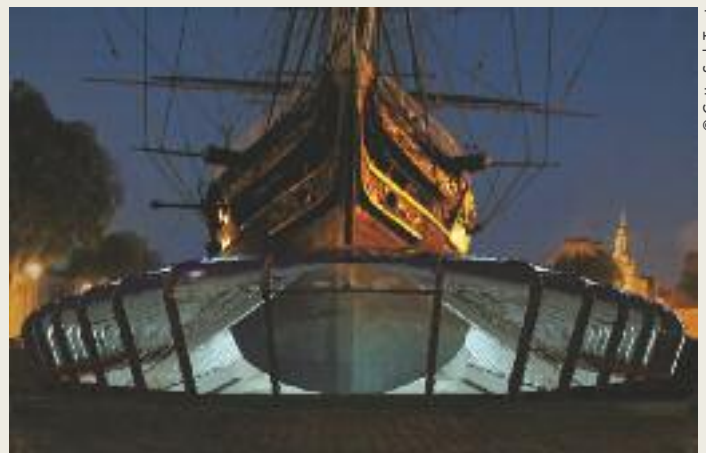
Chris Bailey said 'We are applying computer modelling technology to the problem of how to restore the Cutty Sark's rotting pieces, without bringing down the entire structure. With our software, we can take the ship apart – and put it back together again – and see if it collapses. So when engineers tackle the real thing, they know that they will be going about the job in the best possible way'.

Professor Bailey, and his colleague Dr Stoyan Stoyanov, are now working with the Trust to understand how the Cutty Sark's structure will age over the next 100 years, and when maintenance will be required. They are developing technology that will be used on other ships too, protecting maritime heritage across the globe.

Peter Mason, Cutty Sark's Chief Engineer commented 'This has been a very fruitful and enjoyable collaboration for us. First we worked on the strength of the hull. This has been followed by our current work on turning conservation into a quantifiable technology with predictable outcomes. Our next project will be very different. We want to explore why the ship was so fast. What did the designer Hercules Linton know that his peers of the time did not?'.



How Cutty Sark will look



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The New Britain, a life work by the artist, David Lauder, 1980. David Lauder, 1980. David Lauder, 1980.



A conservator working on a sculpture, 1980. A conservator working on a sculpture, 1980. A conservator working on a sculpture, 1980.



A conservator working on a sculpture, 1980. A conservator working on a sculpture, 1980. A conservator working on a sculpture, 1980.

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professional update

Recent events

THE ICON AGM

Each of Icon's four AGMs so far has had a different feel. As we marked the formal end of Icon's third year at the British Library Conference Centre on 8 December, the occasional murmur from a three-month old attendee formed a contrasting backdrop to the sense, this time around, of a maturing institution. It was a thoughtful but engaged and interesting occasion.

Having thanked the sponsors of the event – HMCA and a private supporter who funded the refreshments – outgoing Chair, Simon Cane, reflected on a roller coaster year, when much had been achieved with energy and optimism, not least the establishment of the Icon 'brand', a small increase in membership, a steady take-up of accreditation, a round of Conservation Awards and good progress in the area of conservation science. But it had been a difficult year financially for a number of reasons. Following convergence, solid figures had not been forthcoming until the third year of trading; the original budgets prepared at the time of convergence had relied on an estimated membership of three and a half thousand and were in fact some five hundred short of target and it had proved necessary to move to another financial services provider. However, the auditors had approved the accounts and the corrective measures put in place to restore the organisation to a healthy surplus. Simon thanked all the staff at Icon and particularly commended Caroline Saye for her sterling work in the post of Interim Chief Executive.

Caroline's own report on the 07/08 year, (covering the period when Alastair McCapra was Chief Executive), drew attention to the major review of the PACR scheme which had taken place, the progress on work-based training schemes; work with the Creative and Cultural Skills Sector Skills Council and the many activities of the Groups. Despite the tighter operating circumstances of 08/09, she noted that Icon was nevertheless moving on and there was a great deal to look forward to.

Following the announcement of the election results to the Board of Trustees, Diane Gwilt, the new Board Chair, spoke eloquently of the need to create a confident professional community, whose role in caring for, managing and conserving cultural heritage is understood, respected and valued. A lively Q&A session ranged widely in the topics debated, including current developments with the Conservation Register; the big increase in numbers now coming forward for accreditation; insurance cover for potential liability at Icon meetings; the need for Groups to operate resource-neutrally; how to get more happening at local level and less London-centred and the proposed EU ban on Nitromors.

With the formal business of the day concluded, the floor was opened to the two speakers. Sam Jones of the think tank

Demos spoke about his research and its conclusions on the value of conservation, which have been crystallised into the pamphlet *It's a material world* (this topic is covered below). Questions afterwards covered the lack of diversity in the profession, the need for heritage champions, likely Government reaction to the report and how the fragmentation of the UK plays into the picture. No less serious in intent but delivered with light-hearted style, Suzanne Keene, Reader in Museum Studies at University College London, then presented her latest research: 'Collections for People. Museums' stored collections as a public resource'. An investigation into why we keep things and the cost of so doing, the report can be downloaded from www.ucl.ac.uk/storedcollections. Suzanne's talk concentrated on a survey of museums and users and was packed with fascinating facts about patterns of use of stored collections, possible reasons for big disparities between institutions and the factors facilitating heavier use. Particularly entertaining were the discrepancies between what museums say about permitting access and what they actually do, as tested by 'mystery shoppers' (aka MA students).

In the final session, Lizzie Neville gave an update on the PACR Review, the new documentation and the two key changes: presenting accreditation as the professional practice assessment and the revised standards for all the different routes to accreditation. She appealed for more people to act as mentors and for all to support and encourage friends and colleagues to become candidates. Audience members contributed their experiences and thoughts on the new arrangements.

Diane Gwilt closed the proceedings with thanks to the speakers and some suggested resolutions for Christmas: mentor an ACR candidate, open up your collections to the public and stop being apologetic about conservation!

THE DEMOS REPORT LAUNCH

The 17thC Banqueting Hall on London's Whitehall, with its stunning Inigo Jones' painted ceiling and its historic role in Charles 1's final hours, provided a fitting backdrop for the launch of *It's a material world: caring for the public realm*. This publication, as noted in previous issues of Icon News, is the result of a ten month study by Demos, an independent think tank. It was commissioned by the Textile Conservation Centre Foundation on the news of the proposed closure of the TCC to provide an analysis of the value of conservation to society.

Opening the proceedings, Lord Douro, Chairman of the TCC Foundation Council, expressed the hope that the report will influence policy makers for years to come. A summary of the research was delivered by Sam Jones, joint author of the report with John Holden who chaired the morning. In a coda to the presentation, Michael Day, CEO of Historic Royal Palaces, observed that conservation is at a crossroads and in changing times the traditional invisibility of the profession no longer serves it well; conservation must embrace public engagement. Yinnon Ezra, Director of Recreation and



© Historic Royal Palaces 2008

Heritage Services at Hampshire County Council, reinforced this message, noting the importance of engaging young people and harnessing the powerful emotional response which artefacts can elicit. The event concluded with a Q&A session in which a wide range of hopes and fears for the future and for the reception and outcome of the report were expressed.

The report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/materialworld>. There is a limited number of hard copies (£10) available from Demos or the Textile Conservation Centre. There is also a Youtube video inspired by the project and this can be viewed at: http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=-c_0eMSBXIk

It's a Material World demonstrates the social value of caring for the material world, and highlights the importance of conservation not only to the cultural and heritage sector but also to social well-being. The choice of what things to care for and how to conserve them both sustains the values of the past – giving us an understanding of where we have come from – and reflects values for the present and the future. So conservation feeds into our sense of identity and also has a direct connection to wider social and cultural values concerned with care for the physical world, such as – to take one small example – not dropping litter. Therefore we need to sustain the conservation profession so that it can play a central role in a new agenda: caring for the material world as an essential part of the public realm.

But the low priority given by government to cultural heritage has led directly to funding cuts threatening heritage and conservation courses, even though more than half (57%) of Europe's conservation training takes place in the UK and 85% of overseas visitors say they come here for the heritage, museums and galleries. In order to make the connection between conservation and the challenges facing society and thereby protect the profession, the report makes a series of recommendations for conservators and also calls for action from policy-makers, cultural professionals and the public. They include:-

- Conservators regularly involved in public engagement activities and making much greater use of new technologies to platform their work
- Establishing conservation juries in which members of the public are given the full benefit of access to conservators' expertise and conservators can access public opinion

- A national conservation day – Save for the Nation
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport to take the lead on a new policy agenda focused on caring for the material world
- Policy makers to create a conservation steering group – the Material World Board – comprising cultural professionals, educators and conservators to devise a strategy for caring for the material world. It should also include representatives from five Government departments with related interests
- Conservation should be given a greater profile in exhibitions and displays, communicating the skills and values of the conservation sector to the museum and gallery-going public
- Space should be devoted in every publicly funded museum on at least an annual basis for an object, contributed and cared for by a member of the local public that represents something of his or her community
- The conservation sector should encourage one or more Conservation Champions to raise the political and public profile of conservation.

THE PLENDERLEITH LECTURE

Icon Scotland Group's 11th Harold Plenderleith Memorial Lecture, entitled *Useful or beautiful: places and things*, was given by Adam Wilkinson, newly appointed Director of Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH). It was held at the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the evening of 27 November 2008.

Linda Ramsay, Chair of Icon Scotland Group, invited and introduced the speaker, who began by re-defining his lecture title – his thoughts on beauty, utility (or futility), and the meaning and purpose of conservation. Then followed a series





of aerial photographs of the Royal Farnborough Research Airport site. Where is the classical beauty of historic buildings amongst these decommissioned buildings, one might ask? Although this was a campaign from the speaker's tenure at SAVE Britain's Heritage, it illustrated the EWH philosophy regarding 'conservation diversity'. That is, to find an active purpose for historic centres. The importance of the site is as one of only four aeroplane testing sites in the world and where powered flight technology was developed – a fact to appreciate as a technological breakthrough in our current objective to lessen our carbon footprint. Today this protected site, 20 of a former 120 acres, has the architect Julian Harrap tussling with a 24 foot wind tunnel, cooling towers and external driving signage; amongst other activities, such as the creation of a sound archive by the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust, another building is being considered for conversion to a library about this flying research centre.

The next example of an ongoing conservation project was Dumfries House, Cumnock, Ayrshire, whose contents include many Scottish furniture makers (Alexander Peter, William Mathie and Frances Brodie, along with Chippendale himself). This rescue operation was begun before the speaker took up his current position, but it supports his argument to strive to make saving historic sites an actuality. The house and park are situated near a defunct coal mining community, thus requiring a working scheme that includes saving them for the public and reviving the community's interest in their local heritage. The park is now being used by local dog walkers instead of commercial mini golf courses changing historic landscapes.

(Being a dog owner myself, I was appreciative of those who recognise the rewards of having parks available to walk our dogs off the lead.)

Moving on to various conservation projects undertaken within Edinburgh, the city and using aerial photographs, Adam raised the question of whether or not one can describe the whole of Edinburgh's Old and New Town as 'an object'? EWH's role is as a catalyst in the supplying of grants to provide long-term maintenance, as well as to encourage those living within 'the object' to work as a community and apply for a grant. Of the many examples shown were: a housing community, a children's play centre, a terrace of shops with flats above – all enhancing public benefit and supporting local quarries, stonemasons, other conservators and professionals.

Apart from supplying grants, EWH also ensures the quality of works and brings items that are low priorities within Edinburgh's Council to the public domain to be protected, such as many of the Calton Hill Monuments.

An active Q&A session followed with a diverse range of questions, including what makes property developers tick. See EWH's extensive website (www.ewht.org.uk) but briefly their grants are decided according to historical importance, the regeneration benefits to the local community and whether the building is at risk. I found the talk inspiring and was reassured that there is no 'tartan tat' in his vision for such a beautiful city, even more sparkling this season with the Christmas lights. Often EWH work is not visible, as is often the case for the rest of us.

Around eighty people attended this annual lecture. I met easel, paper, book and stone conservators as well as others representing cultural heritage centres. A wine reception afterwards gave another chance to speak to Adam as well as to catch up with others. The Icon Scotland Group team had a full range of Icon pamphlets including a CD to be taken by any non-members; thus we are all working hard in distributing the message of Icon, in finding the appropriate conservator to suit the project, and with such a speaker this was a mighty 'union'!

Suzanne Press

Paper Conservator in private practice

From the London office

NEW FACES AT ICON

AnnMarie Newbiggin joined Icon as Operations Director on 5 January 2009. AnnMarie has a long association with Icon through her involvement as Human Resources advisor to the Interim Board and for the last three years as a co-opted member of the Board. She has extensive experience in general management, business analysis, report writing, presentations and human resources, having worked for a wide



range of companies in the financial, retail and energy sectors. Most recently, she has been employed as the European HR Director located in the London office of a global financial services firm.

The Board has identified the following priorities for the role:

- continue to closely monitor financial affairs;
- develop a funding strategy;
- structure and manage the small in-house staff in multiple locations;
- work closely with the Chair and Board to evaluate current offerings to members to establish better focus with limited resources;
- evaluate current resources and identify opportunities for improvement;
- build relationships and credibility with all stakeholders.

Gillian Drybrough has taken over the Membership & Groups aspects of Charlotte Cowin's post while Charlotte is on maternity leave. Gillian will be known to many of you already as Icon's Training Administrator. She will continue to work from the Edinburgh Office and will now divide her time between administering the HLF internships and looking after Icon members' needs. All finance and administration work will continue to be processed by the London office. Email membership@icon.org.uk



Dubravka Vukcevic joins Icon as part-time Finance and Administration Officer for the period of Charlotte's maternity cover. Dubravka is based at the London office and currently works morning only. She brings to Icon a wealth of experience in office management and financial administration, having most recently worked for a construction company in London. Dubravka is the point of contact for all financial queries and expense claims. Email finance@icon.org.uk

NEW CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

The next Chair of Icon's Board of Trustees was announced in November, following the earlier call for nominations. Diane Gwilt took up her post at the AGM on 8 December. Diane has been Icon's vice-chair since 2007. Graduating from the London Institute of Archaeology in 1985, Diane worked at the British Museum and the National Trust before joining the National Museum Wales in 1991. She has been Chair of UKIC (1994–1996), a judge for the Conservation Awards, a member of the judging panel for the Woodmansterne Art Conservation Awards, an external examiner for Durham University and Associate Lecturer at Cardiff University. She is a Fellow of IIC.



ELECTION RESULTS

The recent elections to Icon's Board of Trustees saw the following members elected to the Board: Alison Richmond, Cathy Proudlove, Clare Finn, Juergen Vervoort and Amber Xavier-Rowe, with Jane Henderson elected as the representative for Wales. Trustees who have stepped down are Simon Cane (Chair), Rose Briskman, Robert Gowing and Heather Perry.

JOURNAL NEWS

Now being published by Routledge, there are new deadline dates for articles to reach the Editor for both the spring 2010 and autumn 2010 issues of the *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*.

Please send full articles based on **paper and book conservation** for consideration for volume 33 issue 1 (spring 2010) by **28 February 2009**.

Completed articles based on **other conservation disciplines** for consideration for volume 33 issue 2 (autumn 2010) should be sent by **31 August 2009**. Proposals for articles are welcome before that date.

The Editor, Shulla Jaques, can be contacted on the new email address: journal@icon.org.uk

From the training office

UPDATE ON CURRENT INTERNS

Icon's current complement of thirteen Interns was brought together at Icon HQ in November to make contact with each other and start the networking process. They are all past the first quarter of their year now and are working well alongside their supervisors.

Lirica Lynch is already half way through her six-month internship at National Museums Northern Ireland, working on a variety of projects mainly geared to the opening of the newly-refurbished Ulster Museum later in 2009. Lirica

Lirica Lynch



completed the RCA/V&A MA in conservation in 2008 and is using her internship time to continue improving her technical skills in depth. Most of her time to date has been spent on cleaning trophy heads and mounted birds for display, boxing a mineral collection and pulling together data about insect pests in the museum stores. Interesting added extras: working out a costing for replacing formalin for a large coelacanth for display, and cleaning a unique collection of miners' 'spar boxes': portable wooden cases lined with coloured minerals built by miners to show off fluorspar crystals and other minerals unearthed during lead mining.

Philip Henderson says he took on his stone conservation internship with a very open mind. He was committed enough to make a move to Norwich, giving him a good base with Swann Associates who mainly work in the Norfolk and Suffolk regions. 'My background is in archaeology so this is quite a change in direction for me. I don't think to begin with I realised how much there would be to learn. I understand I have a long way to go but hopefully with the guidance that Simon (Swann) provides I will gain much of this as the year progresses'. As well as extensive site work at St Peter Mancroft church and Shotseham War Memorial, Philip has been doing lots of background reading and is getting into the documentation habit by writing monthly reports to record in more detail the work he carries out.

Patricia Falcão is one of Icon's externally-funded interns for this year, based at Tate in conservation of Time-Based Media. 'Working in an institution the size of Tate means that the first thing you have to learn is how the institution itself works, specially the mechanisms and tools that are used to manage the artworks and their movements. It is a complex system and I believe to fully understand it will be a work in progress until the end of my internship'. Patricia and her supervisor agreed on a research project involving a computer-based work of art that she could pursue throughout the internship. In the first few months she was also involved in condition-checking a neon artwork, Varda Chryssa's 'Study for the gates', working together with the technician to understand the technical problems and the solutions available. 'Through this collaboration I learned a lot about neon, how the components work and what its aging signs are'.

NEW INTERNSHIPS - CLOSING DATE SOON

Two new Icon internships are advertised to start in March this year – in Stained Glass (6 months) and conservation of artefacts from Egypt and Sudan (18 months). Both close on 19 January, so make sure you apply quickly if you are interested. All details are on the Icon website under 'Internships'.

TECHNICIANS QUALIFICATION NEWS

The second trial for Icon's new qualification (CTQ) has started well, with four briefing workshops for candidates, mentors and assessors held in Edinburgh and London over the last two months. A total of fifty-six people are involved in this round,

with thirty candidates hoping to take the full qualification over the next eighteen months. Candidates come from a variety of contexts: textile and paper conservation, engineering, art handling, framing and preventive work within historic houses. Icon will be accepting expressions of interest from new employers with candidates in April this year; we are also seeking volunteers to train for the role of external assessor for this qualification. If you are interested, please contact Carol Brown in the Icon Edinburgh office for more information.

OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

Members with a long enough memory will recall moves by the former Museums Training Institute in the mid-90s to define occupational standards in conservation, as part of the cultural heritage functional map being developed at that time. This work is now being revisited by Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS) – the museum and heritage field's Sector Skills Council – with a view to re-writing the whole cultural heritage occupational standards map and constructing a 'conservation path' within it. While the old standards and their related NVQs have rather gathered dust since 1997, Icon and its predecessor bodies have moved on a long way – notably creating our own standards and developing PACR as the accepted and recognised qualifying process in our profession. Recently the CTQ has also been built from the blocks of PACR, but designed in unit-form as a lower-level qualification aimed at a broader heritage field. Icon is therefore now working closely with CCS on the standards project, using the ready-made Technician Qualification units to inform the new standards. Icon hopes to have our CTQ accepted onto the new Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) as a qualification in its own right within the CCS's suite of cultural heritage qualifications. You can read more about the QCF at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/14/skills-vocational-training-framework>

2020 FOLLOW-UP

2008 provided a plethora of training and education initiatives in conservation. The 2020 meetings in January and June (at Tate and the Courtauld) generated considerable interest, with educators and employers alike united in calling for further action on education and profile-raising. The summary of recommendations from the 2020 meetings is posted on the Icon website under the Careers and Training/2020 pages. Icon is currently responding to these recommendations on two fronts. Educational issues will be tackled through the work of the Professional Standards and Development committee and advocacy challenges will be addressed by a new Advocacy Task Force which had its initial meeting in November. The launch of the Demos report and its recommendations (see page 8)) have clearly added to the impetus, and the recommendations from that report will be addressed in the New Year.

THIS COULD BE YOU!

Why not make a New Year's Resolution to apply for PACR accreditation?

The next application deadline is 22 June 2008. You will need to submit a register of intention by 24 April if you want to apply for this round. Full details are to be found on the Icon website under Accreditation/CPD. For new PACR events available in the Spring please see Listings for dates and the Icon website for full details.



Vicki Humphreys of the British Library(l) and Catherine Nightingale, Museum of London(centre), receive their PACR certificates at a PACR introductory event in October. PACR Assessor Deirdre Mulley is on the right.

From the Library

The Garfield Weston Foundation has generously donated £50,000 to Icon towards the employment of a librarian over a period of five years. The Chantry library board has been reviewing the needs of the library and intends to recruit a librarian with experience in knowledge management in the near future.

MISCELLANY

HERITAGE BILL LOST

The Heritage Protection Bill was dropped from the Queen's Speech on 3 December along with five other Bills, ostensibly due to the prioritising of legislation to tackle the credit crunch. Key measures which have been lost because they require legislative approval include protection for buildings being considered for listing; the creation of a single register of listed assets, the statutory duty for Local Planning Authorities in England and Wales to maintain or have access to Historic Environment Records, and the move of responsibility for listing from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to English Heritage. English Heritage claim that more than two thirds of the changes which were in the Heritage White Paper underpinning the Bill can go ahead without legislation. For the EH response and information on what can and can't be done without the Bill, see www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.20038 A new timeline for

implementation of heritage protection reform action which does not require legislation is at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.20036>

Another casualty is the Cultural Property (armed conflicts) Bill which would have allowed the UK to ratify the 1955 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict.

ANNA PLOWDEN AND CONSERVATION

The first Plowden Medal was awarded in 1999 by the Royal Warrant Holders Association in memory of the late Hon. Anna Plowden CBE, the leading conservator who was Vice-President of the Association at the time of her death in 1997. Since its inauguration the Medal has been awarded to ten distinguished men and women, each of whom has made a significant contribution to the advancement of the conservation profession. As nominations are invited for the 2009 medal, Icon asked Richard Peck, Secretary of the Royal Warrant Holders Association, how he believes Anna Plowden contributed to the conservation profession.

Icon: What do you believe was different about Anna Plowden's approach to conservation?

RP: Anna Plowden was one of the first to identify conservation as a profession rather than a craft. It was important to her that everything should be underpinned with scientific knowledge. Theories and practices were there to be scrutinised to ensure that they stood up to rigorous examination. Her overriding principles covered generosity in sharing ideas, collaboration between interested parties and encouraging others as much as possible.

Icon: How did Anna change perceptions?

Much of conservation was originally carried out by institutions in a closed shop environment, but Anna was determined to open this up to a wider audience and did not distinguish between public and private sector. She was hugely determined and expected that everything be handled with the utmost integrity. As an enthusiastic mentor, training was an extremely important part of the overall picture and it was her belief that conservation was an intellectual as well as a manual profession. There was no doubt that she would have encouraged people with interests outside the profession and with the right intellectual attributes to contribute and so bring new thinking and added value to conservation.

Icon: How did this translate into concrete achievements?

Her belief that conservation should not be the sole preserve of the institutions led to the creation of Plowden & Smith. This was a significant accomplishment as no one had achieved a private initiative on this scale before. Anna Plowden had also tried to start an accreditation scheme, which at the time did not gain sufficient momentum, but has subsequently become an extremely important feature adding credibility and professionalism to the sector.

Icon: What were the personal qualities which Anna brought to the profession?

Anna was, above all, passionate, pragmatic and direct and her drive to bring professionalism to the sector was fundamental to her aims and objectives. It was important to her that quality and standards were never compromised.

Her inquisitive mind led her to question established practices and procedures, and it was her goal to give the profession substance through scientific knowledge. Underpinning all her work was her aspiration for the creation of high standards. Anna could be described as a polymath, embracing all aspects of conservation. She was always looking outside the profession for ideas.

Previous Plowden Medal recipients were: 1999 Garry Thomson, CBE; 2000 Dr Jonathan Ashley-Smith; 2001 Donald Insall, CBE; 2002 Dr David Leigh; 2003 Clare Meredith; 2004 Christopher Clarkson; 2005 Carole Milner; 2006 James Black; 2007 Dr Vincent Daniels; 2008 Dr David Pinniger.

Nominations for the 2009 Plowden Medal are now invited. A nomination form may be downloaded from the Royal Warrant Holders Association website: www.royalwarrant.co.uk or obtained from: The Secretary, The Royal Warrant Holders Association, No 1 Buckingham Place, London, SW1E 6HR. Forms must be returned by Friday 13 February 2007.

YORK BURSARIES

Don't forget that 28 March is the deadline for applications for bursaries from the York Foundation for Conservation and Craftsmanship. Bursaries of up to £1500 each are available to further the knowledge and skills of conservators and craftsmen at various stages of their careers, including CPD courses, work-experience visits or placements. Bursaries of up to £3000 are offered to encourage and assist established conservators and craftsmen to take on a new trainee/apprentice. See November's Icon News for further details or the Foundation's website (www.conservationyork.org.uk). Application forms can be downloaded from the website or may be obtained by email: conservationyork@hotmail.com. Completed applications may either be emailed or mailed to: The Secretary, YCCC, The Merchant Adventurers' Hall, Fossgate, York YO1 9XD

CULTURAL HERITAGE BLUEPRINT

Early December saw the launch of a new action plan for the UK cultural heritage sector – *The Cultural Heritage Blueprint: A workforce development plan for cultural heritage in the UK*.

The Blueprint has been spearheaded by Creative & Cultural Skills, the Sector Skills Council for the creative and cultural industries, with a leadership role from the Museums Association and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), and in consultation with the sector across the UK. Icon was represented on the Cultural Heritage Panel, which drew

the report together, by former Chief Executive Alastair McCapra, and other Icon members were also involved.

The plan identifies a series of actions and recommendations to ensure that the people who work in the cultural heritage sector are recruited and trained to the highest standards. One key finding is the need to increase entry-routes into the sector so that the workforce reflects the diversity of the UK. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council have committed £500,000 to fund apprenticeships to attract people from a range of backgrounds and ensure the future success of an industry which last year contributed more than £1 billion to the economy. The funding will enable Creative & Cultural Skills to launch up to fifty Creative Apprenticeships predominately in the museum sector from 2009 onwards.

ACRYLICS BOOKLET

Copies of the booklet *Caring for Acrylics: Modern and Contemporary Paintings* are still available. To obtain your free copy of this recent AXA Art and Tate publication, please email info@axa-art.co.uk giving them your name and address.

HERITAGE SCIENCE STRATEGY WEBSITE

The steering group for the National Heritage Science Strategy are pleased to announce the launch of the strategy's website: www.heritagesciencestrategy.org.uk

Over the next few months, work will be taking place to produce three reports which will provide the evidence base for drawing up the strategy.

- the first report will detail the current use of science in preserving and protecting cultural heritage (available April 2009)
- the second will assess the use of science in enhancing our understanding of the past (available end of May 2009)
- the final report will address issues of sector skills and consider practitioner and institutional capacity to deliver improvements in the application of heritage science. (available July 2009)

Each of these reports will be available on the website, with a one month consultation period to ensure that the views of the heritage sector are fully represented and integrated in the final strategy. If you have any questions about the strategy please have a look at the website, or get in touch with the strategy coordinator:

Dr Jim Williams
National Heritage Science Strategy Coordinator
PO Box 2075
Bristol, BS35 9BF

Phone: 01454 419228
Email: NHSS@english-heritage.org.uk

people

LIFE BEYOND

The National Archives (TNA) and The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Knowledge Transfer Team have jointly supported an exciting cross-disciplinary research project to explore the application of life-cycle costing models to collections' management.

Alexei Vink, a 22-year-old economics graduate, University of Bath, spent three months working with TNA's Collection Care Department investigating the potential of life cycle costing models as a tool for optimising allocation of resources among Collection Care activities to preserve archive collections.

The primary focus of Alexei's work was to transfer Life Cycle Costing methodology to different preservation and conservation actions in view of their long-term financial impact. The aim was to inform preservation strategies in the future. 'It was essentially an exercise in forecasting and optimising costs', Alexei explained.

This project highlights the benefits and constraints of life cycle cost modelling as a tool for answering strategic questions in the context of caring for an archival collection. Alexei suggested that other economic models may prove more applicable in practice, and these alternatives will be the focus of future projects for Conservation Research.

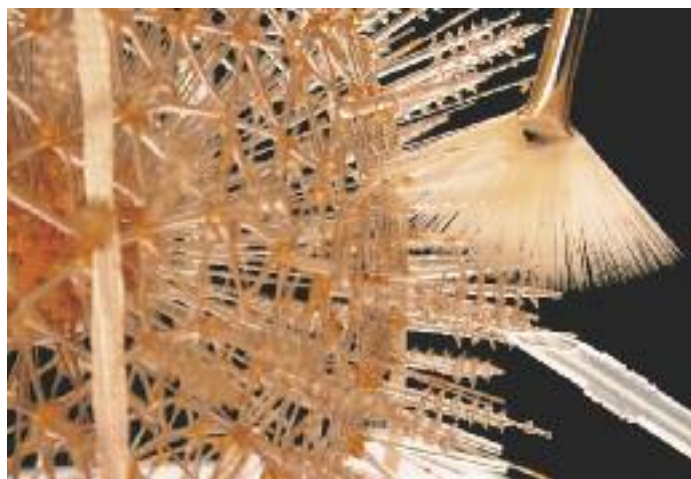
Alexei is now pursuing an advanced degree in statistics at the London School of Economics, but TNA hopes to welcome him back very soon.

NIGEL WILLIAMS PRIZE 2008

Rachel Swift, Chair of the Ceramics and Glass Group, announces the winner and describes the presentation of the biennial award at the new Wedgwood Museum:

On 24 October 2008 the Nigel Williams Prize was presented in a grand ceremony within the new Wedgwood Museum on the opening day of the £10.5m development on the factory site at Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent. The Prize was set up in memory of this pre-eminent figure in conservation and is awarded to celebrate the achievement of excellence in the field of Ceramics and Glass conservation. The winning project will demonstrate ingenuity, complexity, promote best practice, demonstrate clear methodology and be thoroughly documented. It should also be of educational benefit to the profession through potential publication.

It is with great delight that I can announce that the winner of the prize was Liesa Stertz, a recent graduate, whose project



© Natural History Museum

Blaschka model 'Aulosphaera elegantissima' during conservation: detail of cleaning with vacuum cleaner and brush

the judges unanimously agreed, confidently met all Prize criteria. To win this award is a magnificent achievement for a conservator especially in the formative years of her career. Many thanks go to the 2008 Judges Sandra Smith, Head of Conservation at the V&A, Lorna Calcutt, Tutor at West Dean College, and Dave Thickett, Senior Conservation Scientist at English Heritage.

The presentation was given a touch of glamour when the Prize trophy was handed to the winner by the Guest of Honour Hilary Kaye, known to many from the BBC's Antiques Roadshow. Liesa was also presented with a cheque of £500 and a certificate. The presentation was well attended with audience members including Nigel's family, museum representatives as well as members of the Wedgwood family.

The topic of Liesa's winning project concerned the examination and treatment of a Victorian glass model of a micro-organism made by the German glass artisans Leopold and Rudolph Blaschka. This highly aesthetic object had been assembled from several hundred glass elements. Major conservation issues were identified and suitable treatments were developed through the characterisation of original materials and deterioration processes. Liesa's submission demonstrated a high level of conservation skill and judges were particularly impressed with innovative solutions developed to overcome the complexities of reconstructing this fragile three dimensional object. Liesa is hoping to continue the work she began on the Blaschka collection at the Natural History Museum and is in the process of writing up the project and hopes to have it accepted for publication.

After conservation



© Natural History Museum



Winner Liesa Stertz is presented with the trophy by guest of honour Hilary Kaye

It is not without significance that the Prize was awarded at Wedgwood. The scenario imagined by the founding fathers of the Prize has now been realised. Many people will remember the restoration of the Portland Vase project, led by Nigel Williams, which brought conservation to the masses in a 1987 BBC Television documentary. The project was pivotal in raising public awareness of conservation. The copy of the Portland Vase is also an iconographic object produced by Wedgwood since c.1790. The culmination of these factors was the Prize trophy which was commissioned in the form of this symbolic object.

From conception, the Nigel Williams Prize has been lucky enough to enjoy the full support of Wedgwood, offered through Museum Director Gaye Blake Roberts and Group Communications Executive Andrew Stanistreet. This has included the production of the Prize trophy which was donated to the Icon Ceramics and Glass Group for as long as the Prize continues. In an unprecedented effort, an amazing one-off gilded black basalt copy of the Portland Vase was produced, estimated to now be worth an incredible £20,000. For the last four years the trophy has been kindly looked after by National Museums Liverpool but has unfortunately not been on display. In the re-housing of collections in their state of the art museum, Wedgwood was able to rectify this

Liesa with Nigel's family: l-r Mrs Tilly Ward, Mr and Mrs Abbott, Matty Bruce Mitford, Myrtle Bruce Mitford



situation. The Nigel Williams Prize Trophy in all its glory can now be seen on permanent display in the museum alongside other trophies produced by Wedgwood. Accompanying text will provide information about the Prize along with details of current and past winners. Through this the Portland Vase will once again provide the opportunity to highlight conservation to the public and promote the outstanding achievements of Ceramics and Glass conservators.

In the new Wedgwood Museum the Prize trophy will be one of 6,000 items from a unique collection of objects that covers more than 250 years of Wedgwood history. The contents include several thousands of items from the vast ceramic collection, manuscripts and items of correspondence, plus a fine art collection including works by Stubbs. One of the more fascinating collections to be seen here is the extensive catalogue of experimental work meticulously kept by Josiah Wedgwood which includes the test pieces for the creation of the perfect Jasperware.

Having the opportunity to discover the many hidden gems in the museum on its premier day made a very fitting end to an enjoyable day of celebration.

IN APPRECIATION

Bernard Feilden 1919–2008

Sir Bernard Feilden, who has died aged 89, is one of the world's best-known, most highly respected and influential conservation architects. Towering over his profession for nearly half a century, this mid-career latecomer to conservation designed some of the most inventive building repairs of the 20th century, influenced the direction of architectural training, consulted and taught internationally to great effect, and authored key texts in the field.

After qualifying in 1949, Feilden worked for the Norwich architectural practice of Edward Boardman and Son. There he designed the Trinity United Reformed Church, which last year became only the second postwar building in the city to be given listed status. In 1954 he set up his own practice in Norwich. But it was 14 years after qualifying as an architect, in mid-career, at the age of 44 that Feilden first received his calling to conservation when he set to work on one of the most challenging conservation problems of the period: how to deal with the wobbling, cracked stone spire of Norwich cathedral. Armed with a telescope and humility, Feilden consulted local masonry contractors and conservation specialists such as the superintending architect of the ancient monuments division of the Ministry of Works in London and the Architecte en chef des monuments historiques nationaux in France. Thereafter, with his engineer, he devised a clever, internal spring-loaded tensioning system to resist the wind. For the rest of his life he advocated specialising in conservation only at mid-career: "Become a good architect first, and then become a good conservation architect," was his maxim.



During the 1960s and 70s, he was responsible for a number of church, country house and university repair projects, and for the conservation works at York Minster. He was also surveyor to the fabric of St Paul's Cathedral. In 1975, he devised a plan to save the historic centre of Chesterfield from destruction, work that won him a Europa Nostra medal.

In 1968 Feilden was made a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and from 1972 until 1977 sat on the institute's council, where he was instrumental in establishing the body's first conservation committee and developing its policy towards post-graduate, mid-career training in building conservation. He lectured regularly in the architectural conservation course at the Intergovernmental International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in Rome (Iccrom) from 1972 to 1994, and served as its director-general from 1977 to 1981. Feilden's ideas influenced the International Council on Monuments and Sites and the publication of its guidelines on education and training in the conservation of monuments, ensembles and sites in 1993. It remains the basis of much international practice today. As part of Iccrom's mission, and as a Unesco consultant, he visited, consulted and lectured in many countries. He was consulted on the Taj Mahal and the Sun Temple at Konarak in India and on the Forbidden City and the Great Wall in China. In 1986 he received the Aga Khan award for architecture for his contribution to the conservation of the dome of the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

Feilden was appointed OBE in 1969, CBE in 1976 and knighted in 1985. He also found time to publish *An Introduction to Conservation* (1979); *Between Two Earthquakes* (1987); *Guidelines for Conservation (India)* (1989); and *Guidelines for Management of World Heritage Sites* (1993). But he will chiefly be remembered for *Conservation of Historic Buildings* (1982), still the most comprehensive overview of building conservation practice. So profoundly did he believe in education and training that he gifted oversight of the publication in perpetuity to the Royal Institute of British Architects.

John Fidler

This is an abridged version of the obituary which appeared in *The Guardian* on 21 November 2008. Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd 2008.

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As an Icon Member, you will NOT GET:

- A monthly Iconnect email news service
- Regular notice of conservation jobs
- Notice of events and activities from the groups you are signed up to
- Reminders for events, application deadlines or other information

Unless you give us a current email address. Most Icon members are benefiting from these services. If you're not – perhaps you're missing out?

**Email Gillian Drybrough on
membership@icon.org.uk**

Please note that Gillian Drybrough has taken over the Membership & Groups aspects of Charlotte Cowin's post while Charlotte is on maternity leave

Fiery angels and country parsons

Dr John Morgan-Guy, Department of Theology, University of Wales, Lampeter, gives a flavour of IMAGING THE BIBLE IN WALES, a project which has uncovered and recorded artwork in a variety of media of national, and sometimes of international, significance but often little publicised, largely unknown and under threat. Cath Lloyd Haslam of Lloyd Haslam Conservation comments on the work undertaken to preserve one of the examples.

From September 2005 to October 2008 the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded a major collaborative project, based in the Department of Theology at University of Wales, Lampeter, but with the active involvement of the National Library of Wales, National Museum Wales, and the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth. The project, *Imaging the Bible in Wales in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, involved scholars with expertise in Biblical studies and theology, art history and church history, as well as practising artists and designers.

The Bible has taken a prominent place in the formation and development of the religious and cultural life of Wales. Its stories, characters and geographical locations have been, throughout the centuries, depicted in many imaginative ways, not least through the media of sculpture and painting, stained-glass and tapestry, wood-carving and engraving. The nineteenth century in particular was a period in Wales of rapid population growth, of religious revival and of cultural nationalism, and the Christian churches' and denominations' response in the building of many hundreds of places of worship had as a concomitant a burgeoning of religious and Biblical art.

Much of this artwork is today little known or appreciated. In what could be termed a 'post-Christian' age, the subject-matter of much Biblical art is increasingly incomprehensible. The closure of so many places of worship which is characteristic of the present time places the future survival of at least some of this artwork in jeopardy. *Imaging the Bible in Wales* had as its remit the recording of significant examples, and its storage on a



Detail of one of Alfred Stansell's murals at Holy Trinity church, Pontargothi, Carmarthenshire.

Photography by Martin Crampin for the Imaging the Bible in Wales Project, University of Wales, Lampeter

comprehensive database (which it is intended will be accessible, free of charge, to researchers and anyone interested via the website of the National Library of Wales from late 2008), and also an analysis of the social, political and theological issues that that artwork raises. Some at least of the fruit of that analysis will be disseminated through a DVD-ROM, currently in preparation, and a fully-illustrated, multi-authored book, with a probable publication date of 2009.

The fieldwork and research that was undertaken throughout Wales for the *Imaging the Bible* project revealed a number of works of art, the importance of which has, perhaps, been little appreciated outside of their immediate vicinity. Here we focus on two of these.



Holy Trinity Church, Pontargothi.

In her important study *Mural Painting in Britain 1840–1940*, published in 2000, Dr Clare Willsdon noted that 'in its day, mural painting of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was seen by its exponents as a pinnacle of artistic achievement...', but she also warned that as 'an inherently vulnerable art-form, murals have all too often been destroyed, defaced, or discarded in course of architectural renovation, or as a result of changes in ownership and taste'. (p.vii). In the British Isles, the revival of the art of mural painting in the nineteenth century was inextricably bound up with the Tractarian Movement and Anglo-Catholic Revival on the one hand, with a renewed emphasis upon the Catholic heritage of the Established Church and upon the dignified and ceremonial offering of public worship, and of the Eucharist in particular, and the Gothic Revival in church architecture on the other. And, as Willsdon points out, the new Gothic Revival architects were quick to emphasise a 'vital need for wall decoration as in medieval architecture'. (p.215). In Wales, I want to highlight two extensive schemes of mural decoration from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Both are in Anglican churches, in parishes influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the Tractarian or Oxford Movement.

Holy Trinity, Pontargothi, Carmarthenshire.

Holy Trinity is a monument to 'new money'. The extension of the railway westwards from Swansea to Carmarthen in the early 1850s opened up the hinterland and made the purchase of landed estates there attractive to the Swansea industrialists. One such was Henry Bath, who purchased the Ynyswen estate in the parish of Llanegwad in 1857. Bath had married into the Quaker family of Madge, who built four docks in Swansea, and three of his daughters married into the Lambert shipping family, whose vessels brought copper from Chile to their home port, for processing at Llansamlet. Henry's son Henry James built a new house, Alltyferin, at Ynyswen, and also, in 1865, began the building of Holy Trinity on his estate, more or less as a private chapel, in which services could be held in English, as the public worship at Llanegwad was in Welsh. His premature death delayed the completion of the work, and the church was not dedicated until 1878.

The architect was Benjamin Bucknall, a follower of Viollet-le-Duc, with whom he was personally acquainted, and whose work he translated. To decorate the interior of the church Bucknall brought in his friend Alfred Stansell of Taunton, who during the 1870s filled the building with an elaborate and integrated series of murals and stained-glass. Using a limited palette, and very high quality draughtsmanship, Stansell produced what has been called 'a church without parallel in Wales for its interior'. Close examination of the murals, which



St Mary's, Llanfair, Kilgeddin. Murals in the eastern half of the nave.

were carefully cleaned and stabilised in 2006–07 by a team led by Sarah Warburton and Cath Lloyd-Haslam, shows that Stansell did not complete his work. The pencil-lines of the under-drawing are still visible in some cases, as are small initial letters (e.g. y for yellow, r for red) in pencil as guides for the coloration. The scheme is thus of exceptional interest. Not only is the interior of the church almost entirely unaltered since 1878, but the unfinished nature of Stansell's work allows a rare glimpse into the working practice of the artist.

Pontargothi illustrates Willsdon's judgement (p.225) that 'ecclesiastical mural painting during the second half of the nineteenth century was principally the result of partnerships between Gothic Revival architects and the growing army of 'trade' rather than 'fine' decorative artists'. Here the partnership was between Bucknall and Stansell, in which the latter revealed himself to be an artist of far more than average ability.

St Mary's Church, Llanfair Kilgeddin, Monmouthshire.

This remarkable church was almost lost in the 1980s, when some deterioration in the fabric led the Diocesan Authorities to recommend closure and demolition. The Victorian Society alerted public opinion to the great importance of the building and its decorative scheme, and eventually in 1989 it passed into the safe keeping of the Friends of Friendless Churches.

One of the series of sgraffito panels at St Mary's, north wall of the nave.





What happens to these objects when churches close down as at the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Tallarn Green in Flintshire, which housed this Victorian Berlin woolwork depicting Mary anointing the feet of Jesus?

St Mary's is the creation of two men who were outstanding exponents of the 'Arts and Crafts' philosophy, the architect John Dando Sedding, and the artist Heywood Sumner. It is also a memorial to an enlightened and wealthy patron, the rector of the parish, the Revd W J Coussmaker Lindsay. A native of Ireland, Lindsay was well-connected both socially and artistically. His grandfather had been a strict and reforming Bishop of Kildare, and his great-grandfather was Earl of Balcarres. Lindsay's brother married a sister of Lord Tredegar, one of south Wales' leading landowners, and it was Tredegar patronage which brought Lindsay to Monmouthshire, first to Llanfaches – which during his ministry became one of the very first parishes in the county to be influenced by the Tractarian Movement – and subsequently to Llanfair Kilgeddin. Two of Lindsay's cousins were prominent and important figures in the nineteenth century art world: one, Alexander, Lord Lindsay, was a scholar of early Italian art, the author of *Sketches of the History of Christian Art* in 1847 and an advocate of the work of Fra Angelico, and another, Sir Coutts Lindsay, the owner with his wife of the Grosvenor Gallery in New Bond Street, a favoured meeting-place of Pre-Raphaelite and 'Arts & Crafts' artists between 1877 and 1890. It is very likely that Lindsay met both Sedding and Sumner here.

Lindsay's wife Rosamund died in 1885, and Sumner was commissioned shortly after to provide a decorative scheme in St Mary's as her memorial. Sedding, who had largely reconstructed the medieval church in 1875–76, had once said that a church 'should be painted over with everything that has life and beauty – in frank and fearless naturalism, covered with men and beasts and flowers', and this is precisely what Sumner now proceeded to do. The chosen theme was the Benedicite, which, as Willsdon pointed out (p.241) was an appropriate vehicle for the Arts and Crafts fascination with nature and creation, as well as having impeccable Biblical and liturgical credentials. (The Benedicite is taken from the apocryphal Song of the Three Holy Children, and forms one



At risk: The Ascension of Elijah, mural by C. E. G. Gray in the Church of St Nicholas and John, Monkton Priory.

of the canticles at Morning Prayer in the 1662 Prayer Book.)

Sumner's work, as Matthew Saunders has pointed out, has no parallel in Wales and few in England. Here he rediscovered the technique of sgraffito, an ancient technique revived by Gottfried Semper in Hamburg in the 1840s, and then by Henry Cole in what is now the Victoria & Albert Museum in the 1870s. Llanfair Kilgeddin was Sumner's first large-scale scheme in the medium, and as Alan Crawford has said, the verses of the Benedicite 'unlocked Sumner's Romantic admiration for English country life and landscape', and here he depicts the local scenery, the Usk river, the Sugarloaf Mountain, and the neighbouring church of Llanfihangel Gobion. Also, though usually overlooked, the figure of the rector appears, his face turned away, dressed in the style of George Herbert's 'Country Parson', and kneeling in grief and sorrow before a bier upon which rests the body of his dead

Reredos painted by the suffragette artist Joan Fulleylove



wife. Crawford has said that this scheme has 'a very special place' in Sumner's work, and its recent conservation, paid for largely in 2006 by CADW and the Pilgrim Trust, has now restored it to its former glory.

The fieldwork of 2005–08 revealed that a considerable amount of important artwork in churches and chapels was potentially at risk.

The importance of Stansell's work at Pontargothi and Sumner's at Llanfair Kilgeddin has been recognised, both locally and further afield, but exceptions can prove the rule. With declining (and often ageing) congregations faced with mounting maintenance and insurance costs, little if any local funding is readily available for conservation in respect of artwork, even when that conservation is urgently necessary. In addition, the fieldwork revealed that in many cases neither clergy nor congregations were aware of the importance, historically and artistically speaking, of artefacts in their care. So again and again we were confronted with works of art that were suffering perhaps irreversible damage and decay. Blame for this, it needs to be stressed, is not to be laid at the door of wanton indifference, but the situation arises from hard choices having to be made when available funding is severely restricted. The burden falls, with depressing frequency, on a small group of people, many of whom are on fixed incomes.



Martin Crampin, University of Wales, Lampeter

Damage to the murals in Monkton Priory church.

Thus a painted reredos by the suffragette artist Joan Fulleylove, daughter of the Victorian artist John Fulleylove, presented to Robeston Wathen church in Pembrokeshire in 1934 by the composer Sir Walford Davies, has suffered badly from damp. The parish, now aware of its importance, but unable to shoulder the burden of restoration, is actively seeking a home for it in a local museum. Close by, at Monkton Priory Church, murals of the late 19th century covering three walls of the sanctuary, by the Cambridge artist C. E. G. Gray, are visibly deteriorating, largely because of their proximity to an unsympathetic heating system. Even more alarming is the uncertain future faced by major works of art in churches and chapels now closed, such as the enormous and elaborate reredos in St James' Church, Cardiff by a pupil of

Detail of the reredos in the chancel of St James, Cardiff



Martin Crampin, University of Wales, Lampeter



One of the Pontargothi murals and a close-up in the nave showing a small section above the dado being cleaned

Sir Ninian Comper. The church is about to be converted into flats and commercial units, the design of which is already causing concern to the Ancient Monuments Society. There is the likelihood of continuing and perhaps accelerating loss and dispersal of important parts of the local and national cultural

heritage. The biblical and religious artwork in Wales is a largely unrealised and unexploited asset. Its conservation, and the dissemination of its importance needs a higher priority than it has hitherto received.

Notes on the conservation of the decorated interior of Holy Trinity Church in Pontargothi

The interior of Holy Trinity Church contains an extensive scheme of C19th applied decoration. Almost every visible surface has painted or gilded decoration. All the walls in both the nave and the chancel are highly decorated with Biblical scenes. In the chancel the decoration is more opulent with the extensive use of gilding. The painted ceiling of the chancel also has an applied gilded star motif. Over the years the surfaces had collected a thick layer of greasy dirt, probably in part due to candle soot and the use of gas lamps in the church for illumination. This resulted in a two dimensional appearance and diminished the impact of the decorative scheme.

The church attracts much interest and hosts regular visits from groups of all types including historical societies, members of the public and interested professionals, so the preservation of the church and its paintings is vital, not only for its historic value but to its function as the hub of village life. Funding for the conservation work was sought from The Lottery fund, CADW and from fund raising and donations.

It was clear that the decorative work was incomplete, the reason for this was unclear, but it is documented that Alfred Stansell left the area before the project was completed. This is evident in the pencil lines that remain today and the incomplete areas of coloured, patterned infill that are clearly intended to extend over all the paintings

The conservation was carried out by Catherine Lloyd Haslam, Sarah Warburton, and Jane Turner on behalf of Lloyd Haslam Conservation.

There seemed to be no evidence of a varnish layer, perhaps another casualty of the unfinished nature of the scheme, although this is not uncommon in decoration of this type.

The oil paint used on the purely decorative areas in the church seemed to be more oil rich and stable than the paint used on the painted scenes which seemed thinner and quite sensitive, especially the red.

The dirt layer responded well to many water soluble reagents but the paint layers proved too sensitive even when the solutions were of low concentration. Dry cleaning methods (smoke sponges) proved to be successful. After extensive testing it was decided that a micro-fibre sponge should be used. When dampened with de-ionised water the sponge produced a thorough and even result with no evidence of disturbing the paint layer. This method also ensured that no residues remained on the surface of the painting that would later prove detrimental. Care was taken in areas where the original pencil lines were present. Any localised areas of staining were dotted in with artist's acrylic rather than risk the removal of significant material.

Several of the moulded stars on the ceiling were missing and some were damaged. A mould was taken from an original star and new ones were made and regilded with 23¼ carat gold leaf. The damaged ones were restored using milliput and gilded as before.

Two paintings on the nave walls had been crudely restored in the 1980s due to water damage. In the main these were simply isolated with paraloid B72 in Xylene, retouched and corrected. One area in particular however (north side of the chancel arch) was stripped of all inappropriate material using dichloromethane to reveal more of the original painting and then re-touched accordingly. The removal of the old re-touching was facilitated by the fact that it had been carried out over the greasy, un-cleaned surface, providing a barrier to the original paint layer. This enabled the solvent to be removed before contact with the original paint layer was made.



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news from the groups

BOOK AND PAPER GROUP

PM to AM: Highlighting Collection Care at The National Archives and the B&PG Annual Meeting 11 March 2009

This year in an exciting departure for the Annual Meeting (AM), The National Archives, Kew, is welcoming members of the Book and Paper Group to an afternoon (PM) highlighting the latest projects and developments in its Collection Care Department.

Do come and join us, share ideas, be inspired, and learn more of TNA's interesting and innovative work. The afternoon will start with registration at 2pm for a 2.30pm start. Following short presentations and a tour of the department, we will have tea so you have a chance to chat with friends and colleagues. To book a place for the TNA afternoon and tea contact Carlo Roberto carlo.roberto@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

The B&PG Annual Meeting will follow at 6pm with short presentations from the Committee on the past year's work but more on future projects.

If you only want to attend the meeting just turn up and meet at reception but the visit is highly recommended!

More information will be posted to the website near the time.

SCOTLAND GROUP

Icon Scotland Group's recent Plenderleith Memorial Lecture, titled 'Useful or beautiful: places and things' and given by Adam Wilkinson, the new director of Edinburgh World Heritage, was a great success – please see the review of it on pages 9–10.

The events team is already organising an interesting programme for 2009. The first one will be a visit to the new Dovecot tapestry studios and gallery (10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh) on 24 January 2009 from 2–4pm. It will cost £8, which includes tea, coffee and biscuits, and entry to exhibitions. To book a place on the tour please contact Helen Creasy on info@scottishconservationstudio.co.uk, or 0131 331 5875. Please book early to secure a place!

For further information on forthcoming events, please see the Scotland Group webpage.

A grant to support conservators in the PACR process is now established. Applicants must be full members of Icon, members of the Scotland Group, and living and working in Scotland. An application form can be downloaded from the Scotland Group page of the website or is available by emailing scotland@icon.org.uk. Completed forms should be sent to: The Chair, Icon Scotland Group, c/o Icon, 22–26 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PQ. Awards to successful candidates will normally be £100 paid on receipt of confirmation that accredited status has been conferred. The Group hopes to make four awards a year and, in the event of multiple applicants, preference will be given to equal distribution between the disciplines. Applications are reviewed by Group office bearers and awards are conditional on achieving ACR status. All applications will be treated in the

strictest confidence.

Committee meetings for 2009 to be confirmed.

The Group Committee is as follows:

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

TEXTILE GROUP

The Textile Group Committee would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and we look forward to seeing many of you at the various events that have been organised for the coming year. You should have already received, or will shortly be receiving the January mailing detailing the new programme. As always we would be very pleased to hear from anyone with suggestions or ideas for events, workshops or visits, we will try to accommodate these as far as possible.

Our last event for 2008 was a one day workshop held on 6 and 7 November – Enzymes and their use in Textile and Paper Conservation – held at the Paper Conservation studios of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Both days were very well attended by both textile and paper conservators which made for a good interdisciplinary mix and raised many interesting questions.

We would particularly like to thank Alison Lister for leading the day and providing an overview of the use of enzymes in textile conservation, Virginia Llado-Buisán for looking at their use in paper conservation and to Elizabeth-Anne Haldane for information about the Albertina-Kompresse – a prefabricated enzyme poultice for the dismantling of starch-based adhesives. Their input made for a very informative, lively and thought-provoking day which will have hopefully helped to dispel some of the mystery surrounding the use of enzymes, generally born through lack of experience in using them, and enable us to consider their use in future treatments.

Please see a review of the day by Rosamund Weatherall on page 27.

We hope to see as many of you as possible at our main event of the year which will be the Forum – Mind the Gap, which will be looking at the structural and aesthetic options for the treatment of loss in textiles, see listings for further information.

Please check the group's web pages at www.icon.org.uk for up-to-date information on events and activities.

reviews

TALKS

A BLUE STORY

Icon Book and Paper Group

London, 30 September 2008

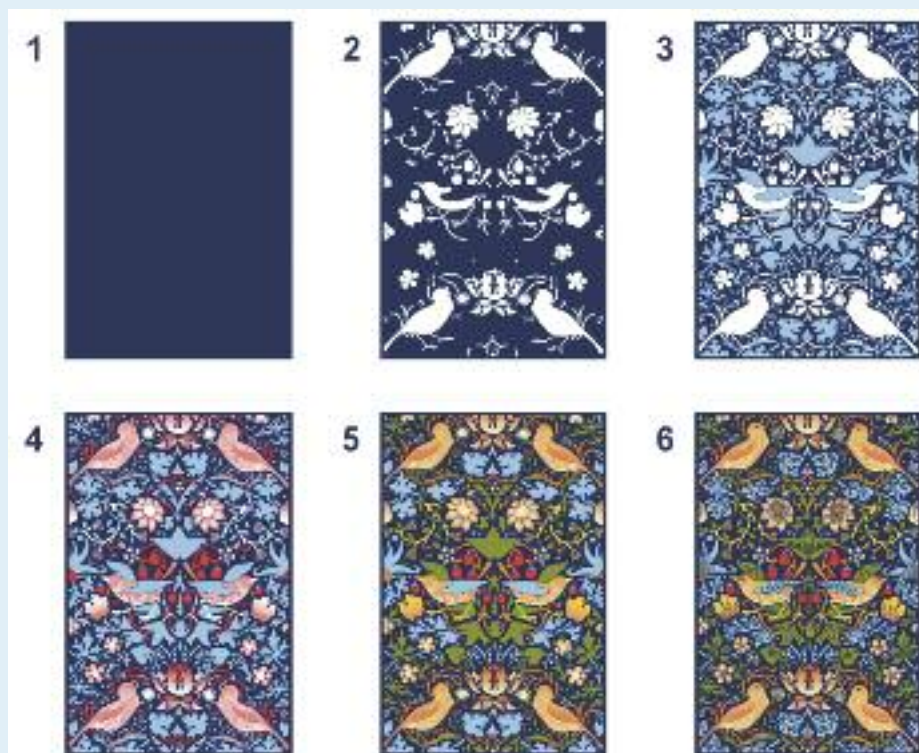
Dr Brian Davies, a retired biochemistry lecturer, now teaches students of archive administration at Aberystwyth University the scientific background to archival materials and their conservation. He began his talk to the Book and Paper Group by telling us that he had spent forty years working on yellow, orange and red colouring materials in plants and animals; his present interest in blue came as a welcome change.

The use of blue in the fine, decorative and applied arts has acquired little, apart from indigo, from the living world. Many of the blues in animals are due, like the blue of the sky, to the physical effect of light scattering while the few visible blue plant colours are unstable. Our use of blue through the centuries has depended, rather, on the discovery of new minerals or on the chemical preparation of new materials. The lecture followed the chronology of these developments and the uses to which the 'new blues' have been put.

The earliest use known in art is that of Egyptian Blue (copper silicate) prepared and used on wall paintings in ancient Egypt. But the Roman literature describes the use of the indigo-blue colours derived from plants as both dyes and paints, and these are of considerable interest to conservators of paper and textiles. Three main species give the familiar indigo-blue dyestuffs: *Isatis tinctoria* (woad) of Europe, *Indigofera tinctoria* of tropical regions and *Persicaria tinctoria* of China and Japan. The same colouring compound is derived from the leaves of all of these plants.

Illustrating his explanation with references to Jenny Balfour-Paul's book 'Indigo' (Archetype Publications, 2006), Dr Davies went on to outline the reduction-oxidation chemical process, which underlies the fermentation of the foliage material to give water-soluble, greenish-yellow leucoindigo, followed by transformation to the insoluble blue indigotin once deposited on fibres and exposed to air.

We then saw some examples of indigo used in a range of traditional textile dye-resist processes, using wax, paste and tying techniques. A process unfamiliar to me was the 'chemical discharge' method of creating a complex pattern on an indigo ground. Dr Davies has studied William Morris's Merton Abbey Notebooks (in the V&A and Huntington libraries), which contain detailed records of the specific dyes and bleaches used to create such patterns as 'Strawberry Thief' (see illustration).



The 'Strawberry Thief' chintz design of Morris & Co. (1883) involved indigo dyeing (1), printing and bleaching (2, 3), printing with alizarin (4), printing and weld dyeing (5), and printing with catechu

Another well-recognised use of indigo is in watercolours, where the dye is notorious for light sensitivity. We were shown a particularly dramatic case of fading on a 1798 watercolour from JMW Turner's Cyfarthfa sketchbook, where only yellow and red tones remained. Peter Bower's study (Tate Gallery, 1999) of 'Turner's Later Papers', including a number of blues, will also be familiar to paper conservators, said Dr. Davies.

We saw examples of the use of indigo in Dutch easel paintings of the 17th century and learned of the significance of indigo in the development of writing ink. When the steel pens which replaced quills in the 19th century became clogged with traditional iron-gall ink, freshly-made ink had to be used but was too pale in colour for practical use (it eventually darkens with exposure to air). The addition of indigo was the brainwave of Henry Stephens; his ink, initially blue, darkened to black, so blue-black writing ink was an invention born of necessity.

Organiser of the lecture and conservator of Japanese woodblock prints, Book and Paper Group member Pamela de Tristan is well aware of the use of other plant dyes on such prints, in addition to indigo, such as dayflower blue and safflower. But she was intrigued to learn of a recent chemical study showing that both indigo (keyblock) and the chemically-prepared pigment, Prussian blue (overprinted colour block) had been used for Hokusai's 'The Great Wave' (from '36 Views of Mount Fuji' 1830). Prussian blue,

discovered in the early 18th century, must have been one of the first imports to Japan after the country ended its cultural isolation in the 19th century. Its use in the west was not confined to painting, printing and coloured writing inks; it was also the basis of blue-prints and cyanotypes. It is known that these images, once faded, can recover some colour in the dark, but our lecturer did not know the chemical mechanism.

As we enjoyed the visual feast of Dr Davies' presentation, he gave us examples of more mineral and chemical colours. Many years before cobalt was recognised as a chemical element, the mines of northern Europe where its arsenic-containing ores were produced had an evil reputation, ascribed to the 'Kobold', or goblins, thought to lurk there. Once a furnace had removed the arsenic, the ore could be used to give blue colours to glass, to ceramic glazes and to the artists' pigment smalt, popular with the English miniaturists around 1600. It was a study of the blue ceramic glaze (cobalt silicate) on Meissen porcelain that led Thenard to a new blue pigment for artists, cobalt blue (cobalt aluminate), in 1802.

The finest and most expensive blue from medieval times had always been natural ultramarine, from the mineral lapis lazuli. In the early 19th century, there was competition among European chemists to produce a synthetic ultramarine; Guimet got the credit for the invention, hence the 'French' ultramarine which quickly became popular with the Impressionists.

Brian Davies

The accidental discovery of phthalocyanine dyes in 1928 occurred in a Scottish chemical plant, when the glass lining of a steel vessel became cracked. Today, phthalocyanine blue is known as an exceptionally important and stable colorant in paints, printing inks and plastics.

Despite modern developments in chemistry, including the introduction of non-destructive methods of analysis such as Raman spectroscopy, the romance of blue must remain with natural ultramarine or lapis lazuli, the semi-precious stone so highly prized as a pigment for centuries. We saw miniature paintings from the sumptuous 15th century 'Très Riches Heures' of Jean, Duc de Berry and, from Victoria Finlay's book, 'Colour' (Sceptre, 2006), the image of an Afghan miner offering huge chunks of intensely-coloured lapis veined with pyrites, fool's gold.

As a skilful guide through the history and use of blue in art, Brian Davies gave us just a glimpse of his own knowledge and that of the many other researchers who have been seduced by the subject. We too were inspired.

Catherine Rickman

Independent paper conservator

WORKING FOR HITLER: THE RESTORATION PROFESSION AND THE NAZI LOOTING MACHINE

Icon Paintings Group

Icon London 21 October 2008

If Morwenna Blewitt can be persuaded to give this lecture again, sign up for it immediately. This is a riveting account, rich in detail and enthusiastically delivered, of an inglorious chapter in the conservation story. She set the scene by first covering why art was so important to the Nazis and the purpose of their looting: to legitimate a false history of an Aryan master race; to cull degenerate art (largely 20thc works by the likes of Picasso); to further the persecution of the Jews and to raise money for the war effort by selling works not needed for museums or private Nazi collections. Looting was systematically and efficiently carried out by state-sponsored agencies and the talk focussed on two of them to illustrate their actions and scope. 'Art' was broadly interpreted, going beyond paintings and frames to encompass tapestries, polychrome statues, archaeological artefacts and, later, furniture.

The Director of the Furniture Project boasted that he was running 'a little concentration camp in Paris' as he forced over 700 Jewish cabinet makers, upholsterers and other craftsmen to repair, restore and pack confiscated furniture, filling 29,000 railway carriages bound for Germany. It was this kind of telling detail which gave the story a vividness that brought home the reality of the choices facing conservator/restorers:



Courtesy of Morwenna Blewitt

Dr Eduard Kniessel was ordered to relocate to Poland where he is shown here at work on a panel painting

stand by whilst an esteemed colleague is removed from her post because she is Jewish? Flee into exile? Work under duress for fear of the consequences to self and family of refusing? Embrace the Nazi ideology? Examples of all these responses were given and, sadly, in the last category, restorers across the board – from the commercial, institutional and academic worlds – took up theft, profiteering and anti-Semitism enthusiastically.

Transcripts of the Nuremberg trials and the Allies' interrogation records throw light on the close interest that senior figures, such as Hermann Goering himself, took in the collecting and care of art and reveal the high standing accorded the conservator/restorers and their work. This included treatments, supervising the packing and movement of art, documentation, technical examinations and cleaning in order to appraise the true quality and condition of a work (to establish value and desirability to potential Nazi buyers). Chapter and verse were cited to show that the looting agencies set up their own conservation studios with in-house staff, as well as employing conservators in the commercial and institutional sectors. Such was the demand for their services and the interest in acquiring art that some restorers plumped for the higher profits of dealing in confiscated art.

The evidence also points to the likelihood that conservators accompanied the looting squads to help ensure the seizure of high value artefacts. One dramatic example of a respected restorer co-opted into plundering was Professor Dr. Reinhard Lischka's participation in a raid into unoccupied France to seize the Ghent Altarpiece. Dr Lischka was Chief Restorer of the Alte Pinacothek in Munich and an early advocate of the ethical responsibility of the restorer as a custodian of the art object. It is ironic, then, that he was involved in stealing a masterpiece from the safe haven of rural France and removing it to the heavily bombed centre of a German city. A justification for such actions given by the

Nazi propaganda machine was that Jewish owners had neglected or poorly restored their property, but other subject races too, such as the Poles, were deemed incapable of appreciating or caring for their own cultural heritage.

Morwenna Blewitt has made an important contribution to the history of the profession by throwing light on the significant role played by conservators in the Nazis' efficient regime of theft. A review can only hint at the wealth of material and images she shared with us at this original and sparkling lecture.

Lynette Gill

GAUGUIN AT THE METROPOLITAN: REVELATIONS THROUGH TECHNICAL EXAMINATION

Research Forum Visiting Conservator Programme

Courtauld Institute of Art
London 23 October 2008

On 23 October Charlotte Hale gave the first of a series of three lectures which reflected her day-to-day work as Conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The lecture concentrated on issues of authorship concerning four works by Gauguin in the Metropolitan Museum collections. The technical study of these works was undertaken during preparation for the 2002 exhibition at the Museum *The Lure of the Exotic: Gauguin in New York*.

Hale described how she was able to draw on her research into Gauguin's work undertaken during her time as a conservation student at the Courtauld Institute, which provided an inspiration for current Courtauld students as well as a link to the lecture venue. The first painting discussed was *Tahitian Women Bathing* (dated 1891) a large work on paper mounted on to canvas. Hale described that the attribution of this work to Gauguin has been frequently questioned, criticisms including that it is clumsy, garish or even a parody of the artist's work. Technical examination including X-radiographs and Infra-red reflectography revealed that the work was in fact a genuine painting by the artist and also, in being able to view the genesis of the work, it was possible to shed light on Gauguin's working practices. Deftly tying in art historical research, Hale suggested that the unique nature of the work (the only known preparatory drawing by the artist which progressed into an oil painting) may have been due to Gauguin running out of canvas, which he described in a letter of 1892.

The second painting considered was *Still Life* signed and dated 'P. Gauguin 91'. The Metropolitan Museum had officially downgraded the painting's status to 'style of Paul Gauguin' in 1979 and Hale convincingly demonstrated that the work is in fact a pastiche using aesthetic comparisons and



technical analysis. The discovery in an X-radiograph of a copy of a Cézanne composition underneath the painting which had been transformed into the current work and the appropriation of decorative motifs from other works yielded speculation that the painting was the work of a forger. Comparison of the painting technique with that of autograph works by the artist also argued that the work was not by Gauguin.

Captain Swaton, a bust-length portrait of a neighbour and friend of Gauguin during his first Tahitian stay in 1891 was the next painting discussed. Stylistic and technical investigations suggested that the work was painted using Gauguin's materials but carried out by a different hand. The testimony of the son of a friend and pupil of Gauguin in Tahiti that the painting was by his father gave further evidence that *Captain Swaton* was painted in Gauguin's circle but was not a work by the artist himself.

Tahitian Landscape was a triumphal finale to the lecture. This was initially considered not an autograph work by the artist due to unresolved handling, a random composition and seemingly unusual technical features. However, further investigation suggested the painting was in fact by him. The similarity of figures in the painting to those in Gauguin's sketchbook and his photographic collection and the discovery of characteristic ragged paint along the edge of the canvas which had been obscured by overpaint as well as the use of typical materials used by the artist (such as the chalk and glue ground) argued convincingly for the full reinstatement of the work in Gauguin's oeuvre.

Throughout the lecture Charlotte Hale wove together an impressive array of rigorous technical and art historical research to build her arguments in a holistic and engaging manner. Technical terms were explained during the lecture making it accessible at different levels and she made good use of visual aids to illustrate her arguments throughout. Her detailed description of

Gauguin's materials and artistic practice gave a real vibrant sense of immediacy, and painted a vivid picture of the artist, his working practices and his contemporaries.

Caroline Rae and Katya Belaia

WORKSHOP

ENZYMES AND THEIR USE IN TEXTILE AND PAPER CONSERVATION

The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich 6 & 7 November 2008.

The enzyme workshop, held on two days, was lead by Alison Lister, Textile Conservator, Virginia Lládo-Buisán, Paper Conservator at the Paper Conservation Studios of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and Elizabeth-Ann Haldane, Textile Conservator at the V&A, who discussed the use of the Albertina Kompresse system on a silk banner at the National Museums of Scotland.

There was instruction in the form, variety and action of enzymes and the methods and optimum conditions required for an enzyme treatment to be effective. Health and safety considerations were discussed, as was how and where to source enzymes, their cost and the concentrations used in both textile and paper conservation treatments as well as the denaturing and disposal of enzymes at the

end of a treatment. In the afternoon participants had the opportunity to take part in a hands-on session working in groups of two or three, carrying out a wet cleaning treatment on both aged and new samples of starch adhesives on textile substrates using α -amylase.

The workshop enforced the fact that the use of enzymes can only be successful where there is positive identification of the substance or stain which needs removal and that they are only suitable for use where the soiling is of a different class to the substrate, e.g. a protein stain on a cellulose substrate. Currently available literature on the subject demonstrates the limited use of enzymes treatments in practice and the scope for further testing and research.

Virginia Lládo-Buisán gave an insight into the use of enzymes in paper conservation treatments and talked about the potential of agar as a medium for carrying enzymes to treat isolated areas of an object, a method which participants could see also had great potential as the basis for other treatments.

Elizabeth-Ann Haldane discussed her experience of using the Albertina Kompresse poultice system, a pre-prepared product which only requires water for activation. It was used successfully when she worked at The National Museums of Scotland on the fragile silk Avendale banner which had previously been repaired with a mixture of both starch and animal adhesive, a combination which was ideal for using this system, and it also had the advantage that it could be cut to shape so that only affected areas were treated.

Thanks have to be given to the National Maritime Museum and their conservation staff for hosting the day, the workshop was certainly enjoyed by all and confirmed that joint activities between different groups should be encouraged.

Rosamund Weatherall

Assistant Textile Conservator
The National Trust Textile Conservation Studio

CONFERENCES

ACCESS ALL AREAS

Icon Archaeology Group and Care of Collections Group

13 November 2008, National Conservation Centre, Liverpool

November's joint Archaeology Group and Care of Collections Group Conference 'Access all areas' was a stimulating and useful meeting. Presentations on the broad theme of 'access' were successfully juxtaposed with more technical themes of materials and methods for achieving environmental control in display cases. A talk





Conference participants experience the new 'Reveal' Gallery at the National Conservation Centre, Liverpool



National Conservation Centre Scientists, and Siobhan Watts, demonstrate the interaction of scientists on view with the public at the 'Reveal' Gallery



Dr Tobias Capwell discusses display of arms and armour at Kelvingrove

on the development of a regional resource centre, with facilities for research and public engagement but limited capacity for displays, made for an interesting contrast to a presentation from a curator who spoke of the importance of making collections visually appealing to the public, advocating creative display solutions to allow both maximum visual impact as well as collections safety. The contrast of visual access versus means of mitigating environmental risk to collections on display made for a thought-provoking day.

Helen Ganiaris in her informative talk on 'Current Work on Exhibitions and Displays at the Museum of London', summarised changes in thinking over the years in showcase design and construction. Older designs, such as the museum's Roman Galleries installed in 1996, called for mixed media displays and a liberal use of props. Showcases were designed with venting on top and bottom to prevent build-up of damaging volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and interior lining panels and plinths were generally made of ZF MDF which were sealed with several coats of Dacrylate, aluminium foil barrier film and conservation-approved fabric. Over time, however, it became clear that venting was ineffective for getting rid of VOCs and allowed ingress of unconditioned gallery air and unacceptable levels of dust. Nowadays, the museum aims to construct, or buy in, well-sealed showcases made from a limited, but safe range of materials – primarily metal and glass. Designers also tend to use fewer props and less text. However, the problem of a suitable material for constructing interior lining panels and plinths remains. ZF MDF is inexpensive and versatile and can be rendered safe for displaying objects if fully sealed before being covered with fabric. But what if designers want a look other than fabric? The Museum of London and others have begun to investigate alternative coatings and paints for use with ZF MDF (e.g. other acrylics, polyurethane and epoxies), as well as coating application methods (e.g. brushing versus spray-coating). Alternative boards are also being sought, likewise a search for novel display materials, such as imitation sand.

The theme of 'access' was taken up by Siobhan Watts (National Conservation Centre, Liverpool), who compared the original (1996) conservation exhibition, 'Caught in Time', with the Centre's recently installed 'Reveal' gallery. In 2006, the Centre

decided to upgrade their display. Through consultations, staff learned that the public was especially interested in histories of objects as revealed through science, CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) style, and also enjoyed viewing objects which had some relation to objects in their daily lives. There was strong interest in having more interactive displays as well as opportunities to speak to conservators face to face, rather than through a video-link, as in the past. In the new gallery, a temporary display area and hands-on learning centre were created. Most impressive, though, is that conservation scientists are now on view and seen at work on a regular basis. The public, both on an 'ad hoc' basis and for scheduled events, can speak directly to the conservation science staff and are able to see immediate results from digital x-radiography, microscopy and scanning electron microscopy work. How I wish I had such a facility in my work place!

After a chance to see the gallery, Siobhan spoke of efforts to achieve air-tightness in showcases and controlling VOCs. It was discovered that inconsistencies in Air Exchange Rate (AER) measurements occurred most often in showcases with internal lighting systems, suggesting that even the small amount of heat given off by fibre optics inside cases affects showcase air tightness. After further investigation, it was found that those AERs were also affected by the location of fibre optic projection boxes outside of showcases due to air movement caused by heat rising from the projectors. They now recommend that light boxes are completely isolated from showcases whenever possible. Siobhan also commented on the off-gassing of materials used inside showcases, and recommended that off-gassing times are specified for each type of material used in showcase construction.

A useful comparison of old and new showcase construction for displaying Viking materials was presented by Mags Felter (York Archaeological Trust). The original 1984 displays were designed to accommodate material types and their specific environmental needs, so, for example, wet wood was put on display and allowed to slowly adjust to and be maintained at 55%RH. Conservators had little say in the choice of materials used in creating the cases, however, and light levels were unacceptably high. In the more recent

installation (2001), a number of the cases portray craftsmen at work (for example, a leather-worker and an iron-monger). Interpretation in some cases is provided by a high-tech 'Pepper's Ghost' light effect, creating interesting visual interpretation and also allowing for low light levels. The bought-in showcases are well-sealed and provide flexibility in creating micro-environments as needed, with sensors built in for regular monitoring. An additional feature of the gallery is the use of 'talking heads,' a digital video link to conservators, and interactive computer consoles.

Katherine Andrew (Hereford Heritage Service), in a talk entitled 'Access is All – The Hereford Museum Resource & Learning Centre Eight Years from Ideas to Reality', described planning and implementation to create a central store and resource centre for an enormous regional collection. With a major grant from the HLF and further matching funds, a multi-phase growth and expansion in facilities and service was initiated in 2000 with purchase of an old telecommunications station with a nuclear bunker below. An impressive number of volunteers were used in the process, and satisfying visitor numbers were achieved in the first year of opening. The speaker stressed the key importance of winning over local government officials to the plan, as the centre will rely on their continued interest and financial support.

Amongst the points covered in 'Guaranteeing Showcase Performance', Sarah Lambarth (English Heritage) spoke about how water vapour moves in air and how water vapour and acetic acid can build-up in showcases. She suggested ways to increase airflow in cases which rely on silica gel cassettes for conditioning, noting, too, that it is harder to achieve low AERs for upright cases than it is for table-top cases. Sarah also noted that current research on the response of archaeological metals to relative humidity (RH) will lead to clearer specifications on safe RH ranges for storing archaeological iron and copper alloys.

The final talk was given by curator, Dr Tobias Capwell, currently at the Wallace Collection, and curator of arms and armour displays at Kelvingrove. His talk, 'Not Just Blood and Guts: Making Arms and Armour Accessible through Enthusiastic Display Concepts', was a welcome view on the subject of display and showcase design from a curatorial perspective. Tobias spoke of how the initial

visual impact of a display is very important to the success of a gallery, and that sometimes, for the type of objects he curates, this means open display. When objects do need to be behind glass, however, people sometimes view this as a hindrance to access. He argued that, quite the contrary, it is often possible to get closer to an object if it is protected behind glass. His presentation was a useful reminder that ultimate success of a display requires a strong partnership of curatorial and conservation thinking, and that it is crucial for curators and conservators to decide what they mean by 'access' in order to be able to communicate this to showcase designers.

In concluding her presentation, Helen Ganiaris raised the idea of forming a working group on testing of showcase materials. This seems critical to me, as there is currently no solution to the ZF MDF problem and there are so many new coating and paint products, as well as new types of board, which need investigation. There is also clearly a need in the profession for this type of information, one indicator being that spots for this meeting filled up quickly! It is hoped that the Icon AG and CCG continue to address these needs over the next few years through further meetings and perhaps at a larger conference.

Susanna Pancaldo

BUILDING ON THE PAST- CONSERVING FOR THE FUTURE

Icon Metals Group

CUBE – Centre for the Urban Built Environment, Manchester
15 October 2008

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This conference provided a much needed opportunity to review and assess current professional attitudes towards architectural heritage conservation. The diverse programme, delivered by an impressive list of speakers, enabled a wide spectrum of topics to be discussed; ranging from matters relating to solely metal-framed constructions through to issues pertaining to more structural and/or decorative architectural metalwork. The presentations and case studies covered many important aspects such as planning, managing and executing complex and sensitive building conservation projects.

The day's first speakers discussed the conservation, repair and strengthening of Murrays' Mills, a 200 year old mill complex. Kate Dickson, Director of Heritage Works Preservation Trust, started by explaining the historic importance of the site. Murrays' Mills is the world's oldest surviving steam-powered urban cotton mill, situated in an area on the edge of Manchester city centre that has struggled to find a new identity for itself in moving on from its industrial past. The Trust was created in 1996 to help secure funding for sympathetic repair of the

heritage buildings in the area. In 2003, they won lottery funding for the conservation of Murrays' Mills – the largest ever award given to a voluntary sector organisation. Their success is largely owing to the fact that they realise the need to balance preservation of history with a clear understanding of the building and its potential future use, and that creating value is the only way to justify the work being undertaken at all.

Ken Moth, Director/ Architect at BDP (Building Design Partnership), then discussed the practical undertaking of the conservation work. The mill building covers a staggering 150,000 square feet – the largest building in the world when it was constructed. Ken explained the severity of the structural instability that initial assessment of the building exposed. Large sections of roofing had collapsed altogether and it was also discovered just how poorly constructed the mill was: it is difficult to imagine the joists and columns coping with heavy textile machinery and large numbers of workers, when their load bearing capacities wouldn't reach the standards required of a modern house. The weight of the machinery and the vibration during its operation had caused the columns to fail and for some to detach completely. 800mm distortions were recorded in some exterior walls resulting in large cracks and splitting joists. In some locations the floors were no longer attached to the walls and there were no proper foundations.

Therefore, a large part of the work undertaken was underpinning under the masonry and directly under the supporting columns to stabilise the building. Steel plates were also inserted under the masonry to increase the surface area of the foundations and hence the load bearing capabilities. Another challenge was the need to re-align the upright support columns between floors, as they weren't positioned directly above each other. Pulleys and blocks were utilised as support while the columns were moved into an aligned position that would strengthen the structure. A degree of reconstruction work was undertaken, as two storeys of office space and warehouses had been completely lost, although there was documentary proof of their existence. It was also necessary to re-roof the whole structure with new Welsh slate. The images that Ken showed of the completed work speak volumes to the amount of careful workmanship that has been required to get the building to its current state. The results are truly astounding and the finish is in keeping with the Trust's aim of achieving sympathetic repair to heritage buildings. The mill has been developed with a view to becoming office space/units.

Next, Trevor Mottershaw, structural engineer and partner of Wright Mottershaw Lydon, presented his talk: Victoria Baths – A

Victorian Water Palace. Victoria Baths became a conservation project of national recognition when it featured, and went on to win, the BBC's Restoration programme. Although the brickwork construction was reasonably sound, there were some major issues with supporting steel columns within the building. The framework of the building was simply steel columns supporting steel 'I' sections, and in a building which by definition was full of water, and in areas such as the Turkish Baths where there was excessive humidity and temperatures of up to 140°C, these steel supports have suffered severe corrosion. Problems with corrosion and subsequent fatigue were increased by the fact that all the interior walls are tiled with highly decorative Victorian tiles, causing problems with access to allow treatment of affected metalwork beneath.

Cracks in the mosaic floors alerted Trevor to potential issues beneath the building and assessment of the basement revealed the extent of the damage, where steel joists and steel plates imbedded in the external walls were again heavily corroded. The floors had been made using the filler joist method of floor slab construction which entailed encasing steel 'I' section beams within poor quality concrete containing clinker and brick aggregate. Corrosion of the steel beams, due mainly to the porosity of the concrete aggravated by the amount of moisture in the structure, caused the subsequent cracking. So it was necessary to remove the corroded metalwork, and steel supports were introduced to load-bear whilst the columns and joists were replaced. The corroded filler joists were removed by propping from underneath and using a specialist saw to cut either side then allowing the corroded joist to drop out. Where the steel framework had corroded elsewhere, popping the faïences, plaster and decorative tiles from the walls, the tiling was removed to allow the support columns beneath to be treated locally.

Phase I of the conservation of the baths has now been completed and although it is still semi-derelict, tours are provided to the general public one day each month and sections of the building are now available for use, primarily for corporate hire as conferencing facilities. All the attendees were in total agreement about the beauty of the building and the need to preserve such a lovely example of social and community history. As a result of the interest the project generated at the conference the Metals Group will endeavour to arrange a study trip to Victoria Baths to see the completed work first hand at the earliest opportunity.

Ian Clark, Ian Clark Restoration, gave a, dare I say, 'riveting' paper on the restoration of an airship hanger, dated 1910, at Farnborough. The hanger had originally been covered in canvas but due to its size had been ripped apart by wind within a short time, leaving a

monstrous framework echoing the structure of the Eiffel Tower. It had eventually been split into two sections that had been used in the construction of two different buildings but these now lay empty and so the hanger construction could be salvaged. Ian's company had the contract to conserve the metal work, replacing sections and rivets as required. Of particular interest was that the original rivets were not standard and had larger heads than modern rivets for their diameter of haft and therefore each one had to be made accordingly rather than off the shelf. Modern health and safety procedures required more strengthening to be added to the construction but this was kept in keeping with the original form. Before re-construction each joint type had to be tested and so full replicas of the intersections were made. Some intersection areas were so tight pneumatic riveting could not take place and had to be done mechanically instead. An interesting point of debate was how to treat mistakes within the original construction, should they be included in replication? Galvanisation was considered to give protection to the metal but tests revealed that getting an even coverage was difficult, as was preventing warping, so the idea was dropped. The original surface underwent a linseed wash followed by a few layers of red lead primer and then a few layers of red lead paint. This was copied with suitable modern paints following the original colour scheme. The hanger has not been recovered with canvas as this had failed so quickly in its start of life. The hanger is now fully erected and can be seen at Farnborough airfield.

Next to take the floor was Richard Baister, Eura Conservation, talking about the restoration of the Gladstone Pavillion in Stanley Park, Liverpool. This project had the added complexity of not only restoring the glasshouse but also altering the function of the building from botanical garden to banqueting/conference facilities. A basement has been added and access has been increased by the installation of a lift. Each dismantling team used a handheld PDA in order to record the location, condition and treatment i.e. repair or replace, of every piece onto a database. Each item was also double tagged in case of loss of a tag during restoration. Some sections had corroded completely or had gone missing and replicas were designed based on similar buildings of the period. The structure 'floats' on a cement floor rather than being tied into it, this is in line with the building's original construction. The project is still ongoing and so far 4346 components have been repaired and 769 new components (15%) have been added. 90% of all the rivets have had to be replaced using mild steel Imperial rivets.

Finally, Chris Topp, Chris Topp & Co Ltd., put the case for wrought iron and its benefits within restoration/conservation. As an

integral part of our built heritage, it should be treated as art rather than a craft. Although the industrial production of wrought iron ceased in 1974, Chris's company still make it and he wants to encourage others to use it and also produce it so it is more readily available for restoration purposes. Chris showed images of how wrought iron had weathered better than mild steel, concluding that wrought iron is resistant to weathering and also electrolytic action, due to long thin layers of glass that get drawn out within the grain structure during manufacture. Another problem is that mild steel needs to be zinc coated for protection and original marks on the wrought iron are lost. In addition, acid can get into joints and lead to 'snotting' on rivets, i.e. an unsightly running of the zinc as the acid escapes as steam from crevices. Pure iron has been considered for replacement parts but this historically is not common and only came in to wider use from 1906. However Chris showed an example from Bradford of a puddle wrought iron frame with pure iron bars. Although the frame remained in good condition the bars had almost completely corroded. An example of unpainted wrought iron on the Sagrada Familie, Barcelona, showed no corrosion, just a nice patina. And there was no staining to the stone as the iron oxides lock on to each other and remain on the iron surface rather than running off. Mild steel however can show iron staining to nearby stonework in less than ten years. But Chris emphasised that maintenance of wrought iron is still vital as it can suffer from crevice corrosion. He advocated the use of chemically cleaning the iron followed by steam cleaning in order to preserve fire marks, chalk marks, score marks etc. that would be lost in shot blasting. Chris ended his talk on the need to develop the opportunities for blacksmiths to work with wrought iron, as the art is being lost. Traditionally joins are made in metal either via wood working techniques or through forge welding. Often those with experience lose contracts, as work with wrought iron is more expensive than contractors who work with mild steel and join parts via gas welding. If the demand for wrought iron and wrought iron smiths is not created then the skills and the material resource will be lost.

All in all it was an enjoyable and successful day with the subject matter extending beyond the usual remit of the Metals Group and attracting non-Icon members from the construction industry. This brought not only new faces but also different perspectives and approaches that created a healthy discussion on the ethics of materials and methods used in architectural heritage conservation. Many thanks to the committee for arranging the event and also to those who gave their support by attending.

Fran Clarke and Suzanne Dalewicz-Kitto

VISIT

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND Archaeological Leather Group Dublin September 2008

I only recently joined the Archaeological Leather Group and took the visit to Dublin as an opportunity not only to meet fellow members, but also to see some amazing finds.

The trip took place in late September; it consisted of a two-day programme of leather-related visits followed by a weekend to see archaeological sites or visit areas of local interest. The group spent most of its time at Collins Barracks, where the National Museum of Ireland (Decorative Arts and History) and the Conservation Department is based. One afternoon was spent with the stunning archaeological displays at Kildare Street.

We were shown around the Fine Arts Gallery by Caomhán Mac Con Iomaire, Educational Tour Guide, who pointed out some of the more fascinating objects on display (that does not mean the objects we didn't talk about were not interesting) and was very happy to answer questions. The object I most vividly remember was a soliotar that is used for the game of hurling. The little ball is made of a core of cork and horse hair. Legend has it that a girl would weave a strand of her own hair into the soliotar and then present it to her sweetheart. The soliotar is nowadays made of a cork core and leather cover.

The object I was most eager to see was the recently discovered Fadden Moore Psalter; a book of psalms recently found in a bog. And judging by all the questions that were asked and the time we spent with John Gillis, who was undertaking the conservation, I was not alone with my interest. John gave us a very comprehensive and honest account on the work currently carried out on the Psalter. He had consulted widely, investigated the structure, recorded it in detail, tested dewatering treatments for the parchment

John Gillis talks about the conservation of the Fadden Moore Psalter

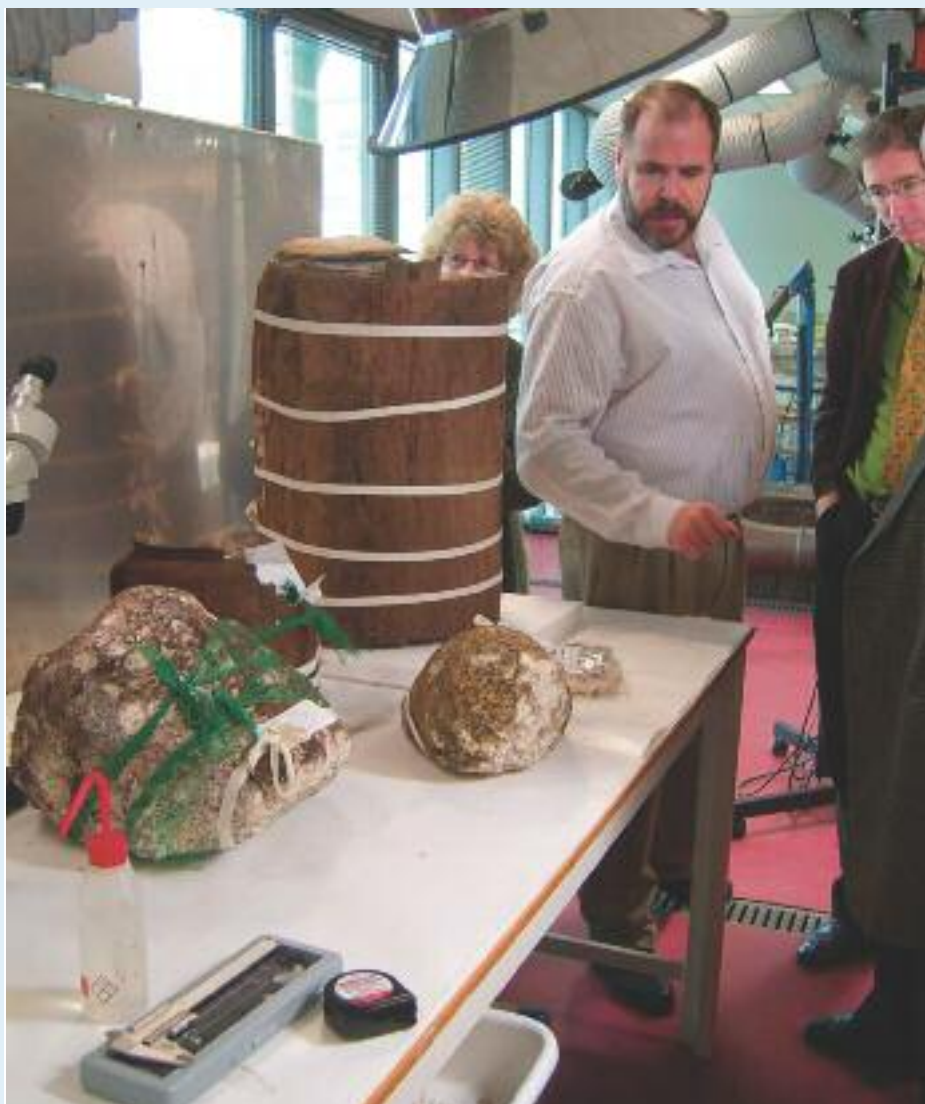




Members of the Archaeological Leather Group looking at the Fadden Moore Psalter



Piera Weir and Quita Mould looking at Viking Leather



Rolly Read shows us the bog butter

and chose an evidently successful procedure. The in depth information on the investigations and findings was accompanied by a chance to examine the Psalter during different stages of conservation.

We were also given the opportunity to examine the leather cover close up and have a go at identifying the material of which the buttons on the cover were made. Warts on cattle skin and larvae of the warble fly that live under cattle skin and bore their way out were just a few things I learnt that day. Another mind-boggling part of the Psalter was an as yet unidentified skin material that the Psalter appeared to be wrapped in. Again, we were all given the chance to have a close look at it and have a brain storming session on what sort of material it could be. The group were in their element, each contributing ideas from their own areas of experience; nothing excites them more than a mystery. The Fadden Moore Psalter is a very fascinating find not least because it is an everyday working Psalter, not the Book of Kells, and more interesting information can be expected from it in the future.

We then went on to see a small fraction of the approximately 6000 pieces of Viking Leather excavated in Dublin from 1961–1982. Piera Weir, Assistant Keeper, and Jennifer

Mulrooney, Conservator, gave us an introduction to the analysis and interpretation work that is planned, which also involves some conservation and re-conservation of leather finds. I think it was quite unusual for most of us to see so much hair/ fur on some of the leather items. Piera and Jennifer showed us some very beautiful and unusual leather artefacts; many of them yet unidentified. I am very much looking forward to future publications of these truly unique leather finds.

The next day was dedicated to bog bodies. Rolly Read, Head of Conservation, gave us a very graphic talk on two recently discovered bog bodies, their examination and conservation. He did ask us in the beginning whether we had a weak stomach, we all shook our heads saying we are leather people and we can cope with it. But when I looked around there was the odd crunched up face here and there. Rolly did not spare us any of the gruesome details! We continued with looking at bog bodies in the studio and it was quite a privilege to be allowed so close up with no showcase between you and the bog body. Another fascinating analysis result was the hair gel that had been used by the smaller of the two bog people, which showed the presence of an imported pine resin.

One other thing I had never come across before was bog butter. Bog butter is probably an offering of butter that can be found in a bog, either in a wooden container or in a cloth like material that has not survived. It was really very strange to see such old butter and experience the unusual smell of it.

After this we went to view the bodies on display at the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street. The bodies were displayed sensitively, screened from the other gallery displays. We got excited too by the Iron Age fur leather cloak. We were given a tour in both English and French, a boon to our francophone members. The breadth, depth and complexity of the collection and displays require far more time than we had available.

This trip was most inspiring and stimulating. I felt very privileged to be given access to these unusual finds. The staff at the National Museum of Ireland made us welcome and looked after us very well. It was encouraging to be given such an honest account of the conservation work carried out by the Conservation Department. I hope that more conservators will share their experience in that way in the future.

Barbara Wills British Museum

Angela Karsten English Heritage

in practice

CONSERVATION OF A TURTLE-SHELL MASK

by Bronwen Roberts, Artefact Conservator at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh

I recently found myself conserving one of the most rare ethnographic objects in the collections of National Museums Scotland. Conservation was required because the object, a turtle-shell mask from the Torres Strait Islands, would have to be transported to new conservation labs and then go on permanent display. When I first saw the object I was nervous about even touching it because feathers and resin were falling off. It was clear that it could not travel across Edinburgh in this condition. The curator of the mask considers it to be one of the ten most important objects in the collection because there are few of this type of mask still in existence, and of these it is an early example, having entered the museum just forty years after substantial contact started with the Islands. So it was going to be very important to get the conservation of it right.

Introduction and Object History

The object has been in the museum for over 120 years and may have been altered a lot. Because of this, its uniqueness, and my unfamiliarity with the culture it came from, I needed to know a lot more before attempting to conserve it. I needed to know how the people who made it intended it to look and to know about the materials and the technologies used in its construction. Then I could work out what changes had



The turtle-shell mask before treatment. The finished work is illustrated on the cover.

happened to it and how it originally should have looked. With this information decisions could be made about the level of treatment necessary.

I couldn't use comparisons to assist because I was only able to locate one similar object but I was able to find out that these types of masks were made of plates of turtle-shell lashed together using string (usually coconut fibre) and the joints

Figure 2





Figure 3

were usually coated in a resin. It was obvious from looking at it that it had undergone at least one episode of trauma in the past: both one wing and one section of the tail had been completely broken and then repaired. The other wing and tail section were both broken most of the way through and were hanging down. Because of this I was first going to have to create a prototype mount to support it during treatment.

Treatment

To conserve the mask I needed to remove damaging dirt, stop resin and feathers falling off, and then carry out reintegration. The thick layer of dirt (a previous treatment report suggested that it was museum dirt) was trapping moisture which was swelling the turtle-shell. I cleaned the shell using smoke sponge because it was effective and easily controllable so that I could avoid removing pigment. The resin was consolidated using 2% methyl cellulose in 70:30 de-ionised water:IMS applied by brush. I chose a water-based polymer because most solvents would affect either the turtle-shell or the resin and although keratin can be swelled by water it is fairly resistant to it. The IMS was added to help the consolidant flow into the cracks. Pieces of resin that were no longer adhering to the turtle-shell were secured with 2.6% methyl cellulose. This stopped pieces falling off and the consolidant was virtually invisible.

The feathers were cleaned next because the dirt was causing the loss of barbs, weighing the feathers down and making them inflexible. The feathers used on this mask are from the cassowary, a flightless bird native to Papua New Guinea and Australia. Cassowary feathers do not have barbs holding the barbs together, rather they are only held in place by the join to the quill. Due to obvious signs of light damage in other areas of the mask, I felt sure that the feathers had also been similarly damaged. Light breaks down bonds in cystine, a sulphur-rich amino acid found in feather keratin, causing embrittlement. Because the dirt is polar, I chose to clean the feathers with water, plus a little IMS to lower the surface



Figure 4

tension. An advantage of using water is that it relaxes the keratin, which then returns to its original shape.

Tests showed that a brush was the best method of application. Cotton wool is frequently used because it doesn't disrupt barbles. But the lack of barbles on these feathers meant that the barbs were open to catching on the cotton wool. I laid the test feather on blotting paper, which supported the feather and pulled dirt and water away.

Although I now felt confident in the chosen method, actually cleaning the feathers attached to the object would be challenging because the turtle-shell would have to be protected from the water. A sheet of Melinex was placed between the feathers and the rest of the mask using rare earth magnets (which are very strong for their size and weight) to hold it in place. The Melinex was arranged so that water would run down it into a tray that was placed at the bottom. I started the process by using a dahlia sprayer to relax the feathers onto the Melinex and to gently introduce water. Once the feathers were resting on the Melinex, I applied water using a brush so that it ran down them like a waterfall and into the tray (see figures 2 and 3). I used blotting paper to remove the dirt, cleaning one side by placing the blotting paper against the Melinex when applying the water. For the other side I tore up the blotting paper and used the feathered edge to brush the feathers when they were wet.

I stopped to reconsider my treatment plan when I cleaned feathers that were more damaged by light, however, as barbs broke off during the cleaning process. I decided to use a nebuliser instead of the dahlia sprayer because it produces a fine mist that would gently diffuse into the dirt and not cause disruption (see figure 4). A nebuliser is designed to administer medicine in a fine mist that is breathed-in and goes into the lungs. The mist is fine enough to lower surface tension sufficiently without the addition of IMS, which evaporates too quickly. I then carried out the rest of the treatment as before. This method worked very well, without causing damage and I

used it on the rest of the feathers.

Once cleaned the feathers had a lot more flexibility and were stronger than before. Additionally, removing the dirt revealed that they were brown not black. This was curious because my impression was that cassowary feathers should be black but some research found that the colour of the young bird is brown – the same as my feathers. As the cassowary is not native to Torres Strait, they must have been deliberately chosen, therefore revealing that their true colour was important.

Broken and almost broken feathers were repaired using 20% Mowilith 50 in 50% IMS/ 50% acetone, because of its working properties. Mowilith 50 (a polyvinyl acetate) has very good tack, so unlike other adhesives it requires little pressure to adhere. This was important given the brittleness of the feathers. At a concentration of 20% there was enough working time to position the splints before they became stuck to my gloves, and the tack was good enough to require little pressure. To limit the time handling the splints the adhesive was applied whilst they were on silicone release paper. I used barbs that had fallen off as splints because cassowary feathers are too thin to use the usual method of cutting down quills of new feathers and impregnated string was too flexible and weak. Ethically, using the barbs seemed acceptable because their original locations could not be found and because of the adhesive used it should be obvious that it is a modern repair. Broken feathers were reunited with the object and damaged feathers were more stable after this was completed.

The final stage was to make sure that the mount was not only supportive, but also holding the mask as it would have been when worn. One wing had two poles attached to the underneath and the other had none. To find out whether these poles were original, or if one had been borrowed from the other wing, I created a drawing and colour coded it to show what string was original. It turned out that both poles were in their original positions and that the other wing should also have had two poles. Originally the poles would have supported the wings, but as they were no longer doing their job the mount would have to do this instead. I also discovered that one piece of turtle-shell was attached with modern string and in the wrong position. It would have to be reattached after mounting because it should be below the main body of the mask.

The mount was made in two parts, one with a Plastazote support for the head, and another with supports for one wing and the tail. This held the bird in a position that was both supporting and aesthetically pleasing. After mounting I reattached the removed piece using three linen threads twisted together, which were chosen because linen is not found in Torres Strait and the thread was sufficiently thick. The brown chosen was a good blend but different enough to the original string that it could be identified as a replacement in the future. I also used wire covered in medical grade silicone catheter tubing to ensure that it was sitting in the correct position (see figure 5). Catheter tubing is made of silicone and



Figure 5

is therefore inert, and to be medical grade its stability will have been tested. With this piece attached it was much clearer how the mask would have been worn. The final task was to tidy up the hair and string. Once all this work was completed the turtle-shell mask was a much more stable object. I now felt confident handling it and that it would not suffer from being on display.

Summary

Before treatment I was anxious about handling the mask, for fear of causing damage and it was hard to interpret. It is now possible to handle it without causing damage, the feathers are much more flexible, bits are no longer falling off and the colour of the feathers blends better with the object, making it more visually appealing. Supporting it has allowed the true shape of the bird to become clear, which has made an enormous difference in the interpretation of the mask.

Suppliers

Catheter tubing, McQuilkin, 6/8 Rennie Place, College Milton North, East Kilbride, G74 5HD

Linen thread, Coats, Coats Crafts UK, PO Box 22, Lingfield House, Lingfield Point, McMullen Road, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 1YJ, also available at John Lewis

Methyl Cellulose, Sigma-Aldrich, The Old Brickyard, New Road, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4XT

Mowilith 50, Conservation Resources (UK) Ltd., Unit 2, Ashville Way, Off Watlington Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 6TU

Nebuliser, Pari Boy SX compressor and LC Sprint family, Pari Medical Ltd., The Old Sorting Office, Rosemount Avenue, West Byfleet, Surrey, KT14 6LB, UK

Rare earth magnets, Axminster Power Tool Centre Ltd., Unit 10 Weycroft Avenue, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5PH, United Kingdom.

Bibliography

Jeremy Uden, The conservation of a turtleshell mask from the Torres Strait Islands, in *The Conservation of Fur, Feathers and Skin*, edited by Margot Wright, 2002, Archetype, pages 33–42

Gina Drummond, The mending of feather vanes, in *AICCM Bulletin*, Volume 19, no. 3–4, 1994, pages 39–59

Janet Mason and Fiona Graham, A review of feather cleaning techniques, in *Fur Trade Legacy: the preservation of organic materials*, Canadian Association for Conservation, 2005, pages 79–95

Acknowledgements

Chantal Knowles, Principal Curator – Oceania, Americas and Africa, National Museums Scotland

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Neil McLean, Photography Manager, National Museums Scotland

listings

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

Icon Offices: Please note that many events are now being held at the Icon Offices at 3rd Floor, Downstream Building, 1 London Bridge, London SE1 9BG. Security clearance for entry into the building must be arranged in advance so please follow any instructions included in the listings entry. The Icon website provides comprehensive directions on how to find the offices – from the home page, go to 'About Icon' and then to the 'Find us' page

22 January

Icon Stone and Wall Paintings Group

Westminster Abbey Seminar: Cosmati Floor and Edmund Crouchback Tomb

Opportunity to visit the Abbey for talks and tours by Mary Louise Sauerburg and Head Conservator Vanessa Simeoni.

Cost: £15

Contact: Clara Willett, 18 Albert Street, Tring, Herts., HP23 6AX, e-mail: clarawillett@english-heritage.org.uk

February

Icon Metals Group

Metalworking workshop at Hampshire Museum Service.

A practical introduction to welding, soldering, brazing. The history, use and health and safety.

Cost: £65

Contact: Mark Holloway
mark.holloway@hants.gov.uk

2–6 February

The History of European Bookbinding 1450–1820

Venue: York Minster Library

Tutor: Prof Nicholas Pickwoad

Cost: £445.00

Contact: Jeni or Sandra on 01904 557213, email: suep@yorkminster.org
For further information see the Icon website

3 February, 6pm

Icon Book and Paper Group Globe sphere X-radiography at the National Maritime Museum

Venue: Icon Offices, London;

Speaker: Paul Cook ACR, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

An intact globe sphere reveals little of the possible complexities of construction beneath the drawn or printed image. X-ray imaging provides a non destructive method to investigate these otherwise inscrutable structures. Some seventy globes from the Museum collection have so far been X-ray imaged and some of the more interesting and unusual aspects of this investigation will be presented.

Cost: £6 (students £3, with card) – correct money at the door please.

Contact: Please register by 30 January with Maria Vilaincour on email: mariavilaincour@hotmail.com.

10 March, pm

PACR Clinic, Edinburgh

Further details via the Icon website

11 March, pm

PACR Clinic, Leeds

Further details via the Icon website

17 March

Icon Book and Paper Group A Day Out in Cambridge

Following the popular 'Day in Oxford', there will be an organised 'Day Out in Cambridge' where there will be the opportunity to visit several conservation establishments, including the Cambridge Colleges Conservation Consortium, the Parker Library, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Penny Jenkins' independent conservation studio.

Contact: Maria Vilaincour on email: mariavilaincour@hotmail.com

23–27 March

Society of Archivists Conservation Training Scheme for Conservators

Week of Lectures

Venue: Devon Record Office, Exeter

Further details via the icon website

25 March

Introduction to PACR, Exeter

Part of the event organised by the Society of Archivists (see previous entry)
Further details via the Icon website

March/April TBA

Introduction to PACR, Birmingham

Further details via the Icon website

3 April

Icon Stone and Wall Paintings Group

Filling the void – grouting issues from flakes to fractures, from spalls to walls.

Venue: Bridewell Hall, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London EC4

Cost: Icon members £45, non-members £60, students £25

Further details via the Icon website

22 April, pm

PACR Clinic, London

Further details via the Icon website

22 April

Icon Gilding and Decorative Surfaces Group Conference

Picturing the Frame: Attitudes, context and treatment from conception to consolidation

Venue: Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place, London W1B 1AD

Cost: £55 Students, £75 Members, £95 Non members

Contact:

Suzanne.Sacorafou@tate.org.uk

Further details via the Icon website

24 April

Icon Book and Paper Group Book Wrapping Workshop

Venue: Book Conservation Studio, V&A Museum, London SW7 2RL

Tutor: Rachel Sim

The workshop will focus on the making of various simple archive quality dust-jackets and wrappers intended for books that are in fair to good condition (i.e. in one piece with hard covers still attached.) The day will provide the delegate with all the skills necessary for handling and making these protective covers in a variety of styles suitable for continued and frequent use of the books.

Cost: £50.00 for Icon members, £70 for non-members.

Contact: please reserve a place in advance with Jane Rutherford on email: janer@vam.ac.uk

24 April

**The British Museum
Going Green: Towards
Sustainability in Conservation**

Venue: Clore Education Centre, British Museum, London

Focusing on practical examples of adapting working methods and sourcing alternative materials whilst safeguarding the integrity of professional practice.

Further details via the Icon website.

27 April

**Icon Textile Group
Spring Forum – Mind the Gap**

Venue: V&A Museum, London SW7 2RL

The forum will be looking at the structural and aesthetic options for the treatment of loss in textiles. Topics include the use of all types of in-fills, including digitally printed, and compensation for structural loss particularly involving unusual materials or fabric structures; also ethical considerations and evaluation of past treatments.

Solutions for all types of textiles are encouraged, including painted, printed and embroidered textiles, archaeological, ethnographic, costume and furnishing textiles.

Contact: Elizabeth-Anne Haldane at e.haldane@vam.ac.uk

Further details via the Icon website

12 May

**Icon Book and Paper Group
Colour lithographic inks in early
posters: their history, composition
and deterioration processes**

Venue: Icon Offices, London.

Speaker: Virginia Llado-Buisan - Head of Paper Conservation Section & Prints & Drawings Conservator, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

A review of the printing process and the composition of early lithographic inks, giving special attention to the pigments used in their manufacture.

Contact: Maria Vilaincour on email: mariavilaincour@hotmail.com.

28 May

**Icon Ceramics and Glass Group
Perfect Perfectionism? – One-day
Spring Forum and AGM**

Venue: Sackler Room, British Museum, London

Is perfect then still perfect now? Materials and ethics change, have we? Is the perfect treatment perfect? Presentations on related topics will be discussed.

Conservators will also be discussing

their experience of treating the Sir Percival David Collection of Chinese Ceramics and Lead Curator Jessica Harrison-Hall will provide valuable insight in to the history of the Collection followed by an exclusive tour.

Contact: Julia Barton, jbartoncgg@hotmail.com to discuss any presentation ideas or register interest. Further details via the Icon website.

May – June

**Icon Metals Group
Visit to the Birmingham Assay
Office**

Learn about the history of the assay office, hallmarking, find out what goes on behind closed doors. Speak to the Scientist and Gem specialist. Afternoon at BMAG testing out the hand held XRF.

Cost: £6

Contact: Deborah Cane
Deborah_Cane@birmingham.gov.uk

1–3 June

**Forum for the Conservation and
Restoration of Stained-Glass
Windows**

The Art of Collaboration: Stained Glass Conservation in the 21st Century.

Venue: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

3 June

Introduction to PACR, London

Further details via the icon website

July

**Icon Metals Group
Visit to the Gun Barrel proof
House in Birmingham**

Cost: £12

Contact: Deborah Cane
Deborah_Cane@birmingham.gov.uk

30 August–5 September

**XIVth International TICCIIH
Congress
Industrial Heritage: Ecology and
Economy**

Venue: Freiberg, Germany
Sessions will include preservation measures related to Industrial Heritage. Further details via the Icon website

September

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

Venue: TBC

What is the current thinking on cleaning decorative metalwork? What protective coatings are being used or not? Are new display methods and

cases rendering coatings unnecessary? Do you coat jewellery? How to clean a stone set piece of jewellery? What do you need to know about gem stones?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline: February

Contact:

Deborah_Cane@birmingham.gov.uk
srobinson@museumoflondon.org.uk

16–18 September

**The National Gallery
Technical Bulletin 30th Anniversary
Conference**

Studying Old Master Paintings – Technology and Practice

Venue: The National Gallery, London

Further details and link via the Icon website

24–25 September

**Royal Academy of Arts
Conservation: principles, dilemmas
and uncomfortable truths**

Two-day symposium following the summer publication of the book 'Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths', edited by Alison Richmond and Dr. Alison Bracker.

The symposium seeks to re-examine conservation principles, theories, and taboos regarding art, artefacts, buildings, monuments and sites, human remains, natural history, the arts and antiquities markets, and cultural heritage institutions within the context of the changing global economic and environmental climate of the early 21st century.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline: 31 March

Contact: Alison Richmond,
a.richmond@vam.ac.uk or Dr. Alison Bracker,
alison.bracker@royalacademy.org.uk

• Visit www.icon.org.uk for more events and full details of all the entries listed here. There is also lots of information about short training and CPD courses available from a variety of providers. On the website Home page choose Events and Careers & Training and follow the links.

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



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