

Icon NEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION • JULY 2012 • ISSUE 41



Step by step to a book cradle

Also in this issue

A summer in Turkmenistan

Awards, scholarships and celebrations

Interns, technicians and training news

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Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
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Chichester

JULY 2012

Issue 41



From the Editor

You may have already heard the good news via Iconnect or the website but do take the time nevertheless to read our CEO's happy and important message about the Heritage Lottery Fund's decision to award Icon nigh on another million pounds to continue our successful internship scheme. The March issue of Icon

News dedicated to celebrating the end of a six year HLF programme was, happily as it turns out, premature! No time is being wasted: the next batch of internships is already advertised on our website – the deadline is the end of this month for an October start.

We also update you on the re-launch of the Conservation Technician Qualification, urge you to consider going for accreditation – one Icon member has decided that it is not so frightening after all! – and bring you a preview of the Book and Paper Group's thoughts about the next topics in its Co-operative Training Register scheme.

Of course, if your mind is more on relaxation and summer holidays rather than self-improvement and professional development, there are plenty of stories of other people's endeavours to enjoy.

Lynette Gill



2 NEWS

Restoring a splendid Suffolk ceiling; a new conservation lab in Aberdeen; a parchment project



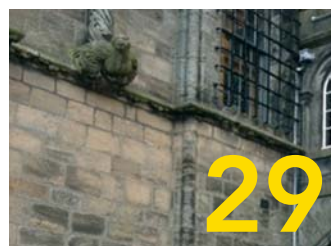
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Making a safe book cradle for digitisation



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Institute of Conservation
1.5, Lafone House,
The Leathermarket,
Weston Street
London SE1 3ER

T +44(0)20 3142 6799

admin@icon.org.uk
membership@icon.org.uk
www.icon.org.uk

Chief Executive
Alison Richmond
arichmond@icon.org.uk

Conservation Register
info@conservationregister.com
www.conservationregister.com

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Icon News

Editor
Lynette Gill
news@icon.org.uk

Production designer
Malcolm Gillespie
icon@ls-printing.com

Printers
L&S Printing Company Limited
www.ls-printing.com

Design
Rufus Leonard
enquiries@rufusleonard.com

For recruitment and all other
advertising
Rebecca Hendry
020 3142 6788
admin@icon.org.uk

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A book cradle purpose-built to
reduce the risks during digitisation
projects.
See In Practice for a guide to its
manufacture.

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around & about

A jubilee ceiling

A 17thC decorative plaster ceiling, rescued from a farmhouse in 1978 before its demolition, is set to be restored after three decades of languishing in a garage. The ceiling is in twelve door-sized pieces, untouched since it was removed from its farmhouse location in the village of Stoven in Suffolk. Now, thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sponsors, the Lowestoft Civic Society has the money it needs for the ceiling's conservation.

Apart from the rarity of three hundred and fifty year old plaster ceilings, it also has an interesting pedigree, sharing similar motifs and probably made from the same moulds as a fine ceiling at Sutherland House in Southwold. The Sutherland House ceiling is said to commemorate the battle of Sole Bay (1672) against the Dutch, when the house was used as the headquarters of the battle commander the Duke of York, later James II.



© Stefan Ganther

One of the twelve door-sized panels



Courtesy of Waveney DC - Planning file

North Green Farmhouse, Stoven 1978

The ceiling in situ prior to demolition



Courtesy of Waveney DC - Planning file



© Stefan Ganther

In cross-section, the ceiling rests on foam

The conservation work is being masterminded by Cliveden Conservation and it includes the training of two students in the requisite specialist skills, to the longer term benefit of East Anglia's heritage. Lowestoft College staff and students will assist in designing and constructing a frame to secure the restored ceiling in its final location and a team of local volunteers will record and document the restoration process. Associated activities for schools are also taking place, along with a series of six 'hands-on' day workshops in the use of lime mortar and historic decorative plaster conservation techniques. Members of the public can also book to visit the conservation work in action.

The work is taking place at Lowestoft's Heritage Workshop Centre and, once completed in the autumn, this is where the ceiling will be kept on permanent public display, fittingly since it has been a place of learning since 1788 as Wildes School. www.lowestoftheritage.org



Royal Arms at St Werburgh's Church, Derby

Revealing Royal Arms

In January we drew attention to The Churches Conservation Trust's new website about wall paintings. They have now added a second project about Royal Coats of Arms in English parish churches. Along with information about arms, their history and heraldry generally, there is also a section on their conservation which has been contributed by Sally Woodcock ACR and which covers their structure, surface decoration, environmental issues, treatments and conservation dilemmas. There are lots of lovely images, too.

Find it at www.visitchurches.org.uk/RoyalArms/

West Dean blog

The conservation profession is in good hands if the enthusiasm of West Dean student conservators is anything to go by. Visit their blog – www.westdeanconservation.com – which was started by MA student Abigail Uhteg with fellow students from all five conservation departments, at all levels, contributing posts about what they're working on. One of its aims is to give the students a platform to begin discussing their work with other conservators and the world at large. Their lively descriptions are well illustrated with pictures of their projects, placements and study tours.

Lost Arts

Last summer a coalition of trades unions got together to keep a record of all the projects, events, performances, organisations and companies that will be lost as a result of cuts in public funding in the cultural sector. To prevent the effects of the cuts being forgotten over time the material is being collected as evidence for the next government spending review in 2015. See www.lost-arts.org

The Great Parchment Book

The Great Parchment Book of the Honourable The Irish Society is a major survey, compiled in 1639 by a Commission instituted under the Great Seal by Charles I, of all those estates in Derry managed by the City of London through the Irish Society and the London livery companies. As such, it represents a hugely important source for the City of London's



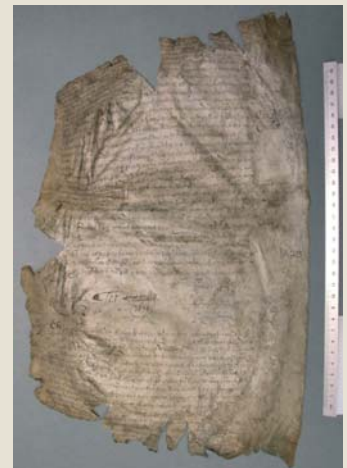
Four of the heat damaged pages

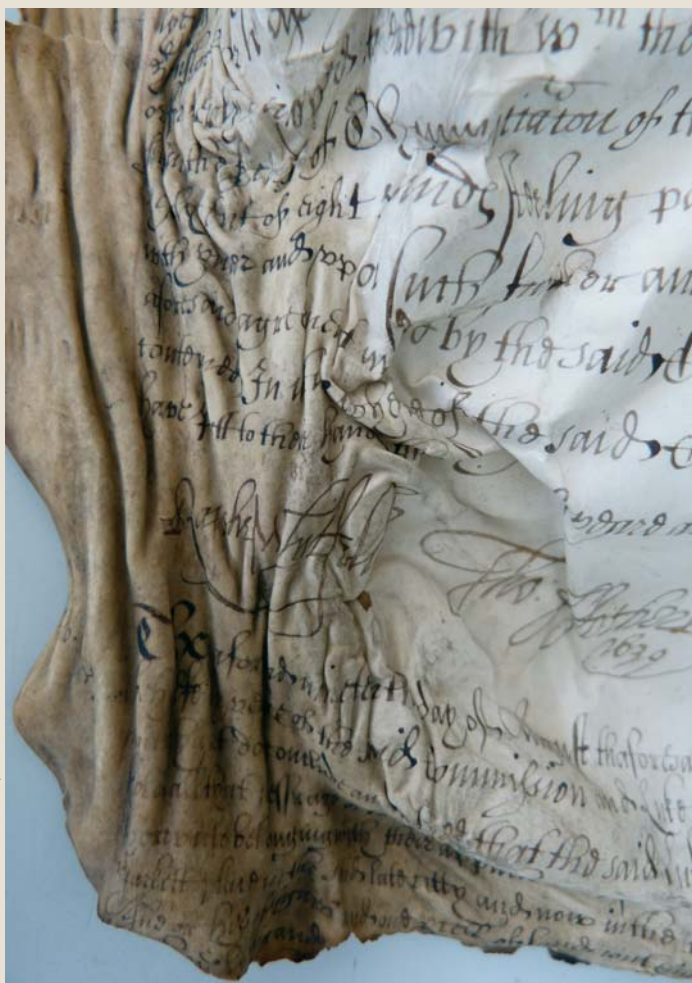
role in the Protestant colonisation and administration of Ulster. However as the result of a fire in 1786 it has been unavailable to researchers for over two hundred years. The damaged manuscript has nevertheless remained part of the City of London's collections held at London Metropolitan Archives. As part of the commemorations in Derry of the 400th anniversary of the building of the city walls, it was decided to attempt to make the Great Parchment Book available as a central point of the planned exhibition.

The manuscript consists of 165 separate parchment pages, all of which suffered damage in the 1786 fire. The uneven shrinkage and distortion caused by fire has rendered much of the text illegible. It soon became apparent that traditional conservation alone would not produce sufficient results to make the manuscript accessible or suitable for exhibition, since the parchment is too shrivelled to be returned to a readable state. Much of the text is still visible (if distorted); following discussions with conservation and computing experts, it was decided that the best approach was to flatten the parchment sheets as far as possible, and to use digital imaging to gain legibility and to enable digital access to the volume.

To make the digitisation process as successful as possible, preliminary limited conservation treatments are being carried out. Obscured areas of parchment, where the camera cannot

Previous conservation treatment: before (l) and after (r)





A close-up

reach the text, will be opened out as far as possible. The format and the condition of the book are being investigated and thoroughly documented. This preparatory conservation work has been supported by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, Derry Heritage and Museums Service and London Metropolitan Archives.

Past attempts at conservation treatment seemed to be successful, but caused tearing. A much less interventive treatment option is now being looked into, the idea being to just introduce moisture to local areas and then ease open the deep creases that are obscuring the text.

The progress of the project and more information can be found on the blog at <http://greatparchmentbook.wordpress.com>

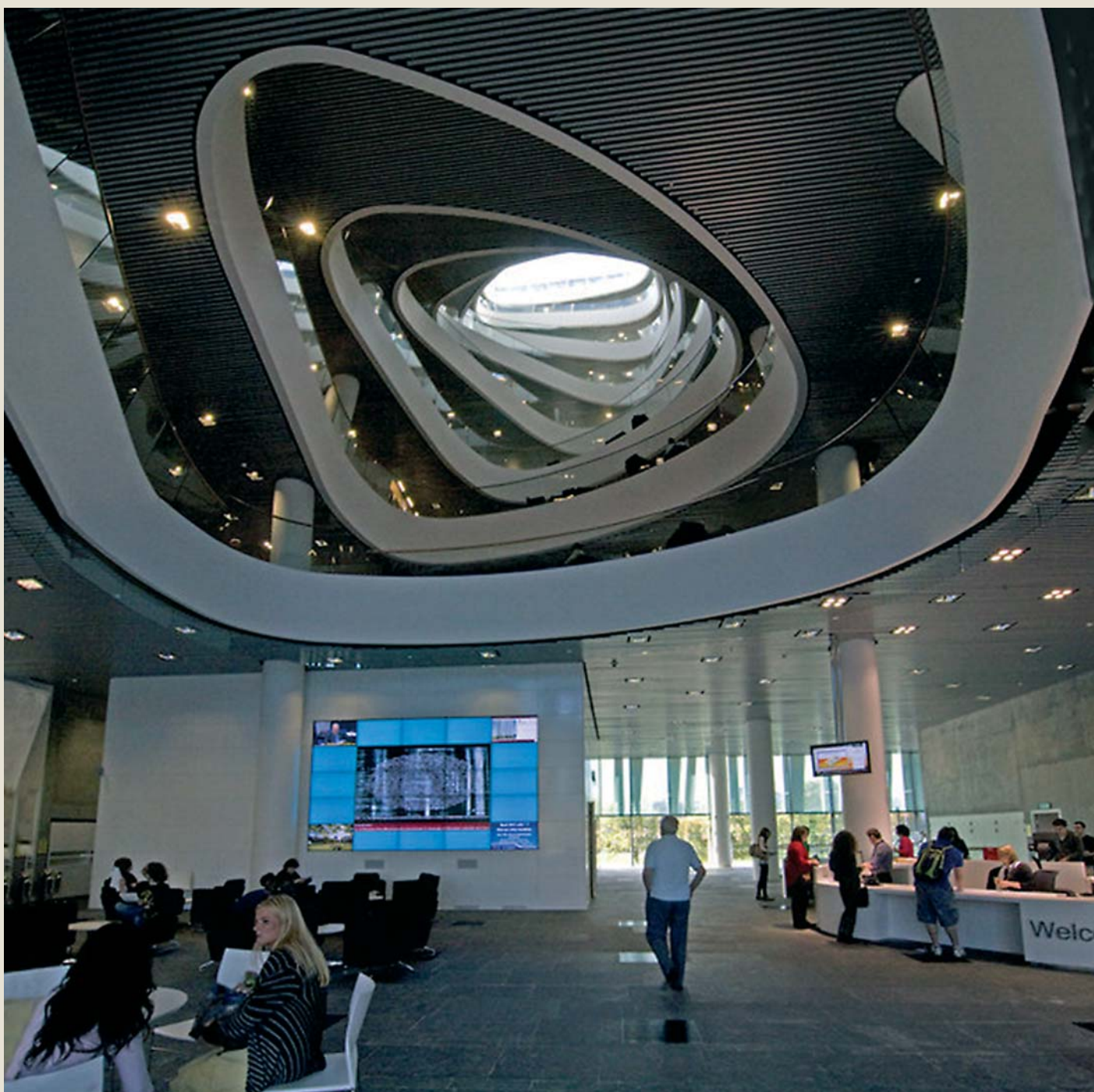
Conservation in the North East of Scotland

At a time of cuts and reduced budgets, it is exciting to report that a new purpose built conservation studio at the University of Aberdeen is entering the final stages of completion. Schmidt hammer lassen architects won the international competition to design the new university library. Building work on the seven floor glass cube library, with its spiralling off-centre atrium, was completed in September 2011. Set on the campus at King's College in Old Aberdeen, the iconic new library building incorporates the main library's modern collection, the Special Collections Centre and the state of the art Glucksman Conservation Centre.

The Special Collections Centre is home to the university's historic collections which include over 200,000 rare printed books, manuscripts, 4,000 irreplaceable archival collections and photographic collections. In addition to implementing a programme of interventive conservation for the collections and preservation programmes throughout Special Collections, conservation staff will support readers' access to material through the Wolfson Reading Room, the ongoing exhibitions' programme in the gallery and the outreach programme within the local community.

The University of Aberdeen's new library building





View of the spiralling atrium from the ground floor of the new library

The current exhibition in the public gallery on the library's ground floor is drawn from glass plate negatives held in Special Collections. A conservation element has been integrated into the exhibition design, and visitors have responded very positively to an electronic display illustrating a glass plate negative repair process and information about preservation considerations for photographic materials collections as a whole. There are plans to repeat this method of widening awareness of conservation and preservation issues relating to the library's collection with future exhibitions.

Covering 250 square metres, the Glucksman Conservation Centre includes a photography room, a large main studio which is divided into wet and dry working areas, a book conservation studio, a material and supplies store, a freezer room and a decontamination room. The Centre also has the facility for changing displays on conservation themes. The architects, design team and engineers worked closely with

conservation consultants during the planning stages to ensure that the Centre is well designed and laid out with enough space for each treatment, natural light, good environmental conditions and suitable services. The conservation team were involved from an early stage in the planning of the studio which has been designed to create flexible and mobile working areas.

To coincide with the completion of the studio fit out, the Glucksman Conservation Centre, in association with the Icon Scotland Group, hosted a one day workshop with David Pinniger on 26 June, which was a great success.

Watch Icon News for details of future events to be hosted at the Centre!

Erica Kotze

professional update

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Great News!



Photo: Matt Wreford

It isn't every day that I am able to report such wonderful news and it gives me enormous pleasure to do so now. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded Icon a grant increase of £960,800 to continue our training bursary scheme 'New Routes into Conservation through Work-based Learning'. This brings our total HLF funding of the scheme to £2.45m. Added to this is the £190,000 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Pilgrim Trust, The Clothworkers'

Foundation and others that has helped to build the legacy of the scheme. Icon is committed to delivering thirty six additional supported internships over the next three years. At the same time, we will continue to promote our internship framework to attract the support of other funders.

The story so far

The award is a huge testament to the success of the scheme to date. Over the six years of the project, Icon has consistently demonstrated excellent results. We tackled identified skills shortages in a wide range of heritage skills, many without training courses or qualifications, such as historic carpets and conservation science. We provided new entry routes to the profession not only for conservation graduates but also for people new to the field (50% of all interns accepted in the scheme do not have a background in conservation). We have followed the careers of all our interns and an astonishing 96% of the eighty five interns continue to be employed in conservation or heritage or have gone on to tertiary education for the first time. Some former interns of the early cohort are already applying for and successfully achieving PACR accredited status, thus taking up their positions as fully-fledged professionals.

For all of the above, thanks are due to Carol Brown and her team, Gillian Joyce, Georgina Ripley, Fiona McAlister, Lorna Calcutt and Sarah Gerrish for their excellent management of the scheme. Nor would the scheme have been possible without the commitment of the sixty seven supervisors and host institutions who have provided – pro bono – the essential elements of the internship: a place to learn, collections and materials to learn on and an expert in the field to learn from. The award demonstrates HLF's confidence in Icon's ability to deliver the scheme to this same high standard.

Moving ahead

Our record of success demonstrates that the principles at the

heart of the HLF Training Bursary Scheme continue to be relevant. The supported internship supplements, but does not replace, academic learning; it provides opportunities in conservation for people who would not otherwise have them, to learn in disciplines where in many cases there is no formal education provision; and we know from evaluations that the experience of providing an internship enhances the host organisation. We now have a large network of experienced supervisors and committed employers and funders who are ready and willing to continue to train. Moreover, it is gratifying to observe that the internship is now established and recognised by most employers and funders as the model of work-based training for new entrants and graduates alike.

Furthermore, as a result of this funding Icon has built up a collection of data which we will augment and refine through future research: we have a good understanding of the degree and type of demand for training at this level; and we have a good picture of the skills and knowledge needed, where the gaps are and how we can go about redressing them.

If you would like to join our list of employers who have expressed an interest in hosting or funding an internship, please contact: Susan Bradshaw, Professional Development Manager, sbradshaw@icon.org.uk 01626 824510

If you are interested in applying for an internship, please contact: Jayne Sheraton, Training Officer, jsheraton@icon.org.uk 020 3142 6789

Alison Richmond

ICON ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

We are expanding Icon's online marketing and web presence, particularly because we want to create a 'buzz' about conservation.

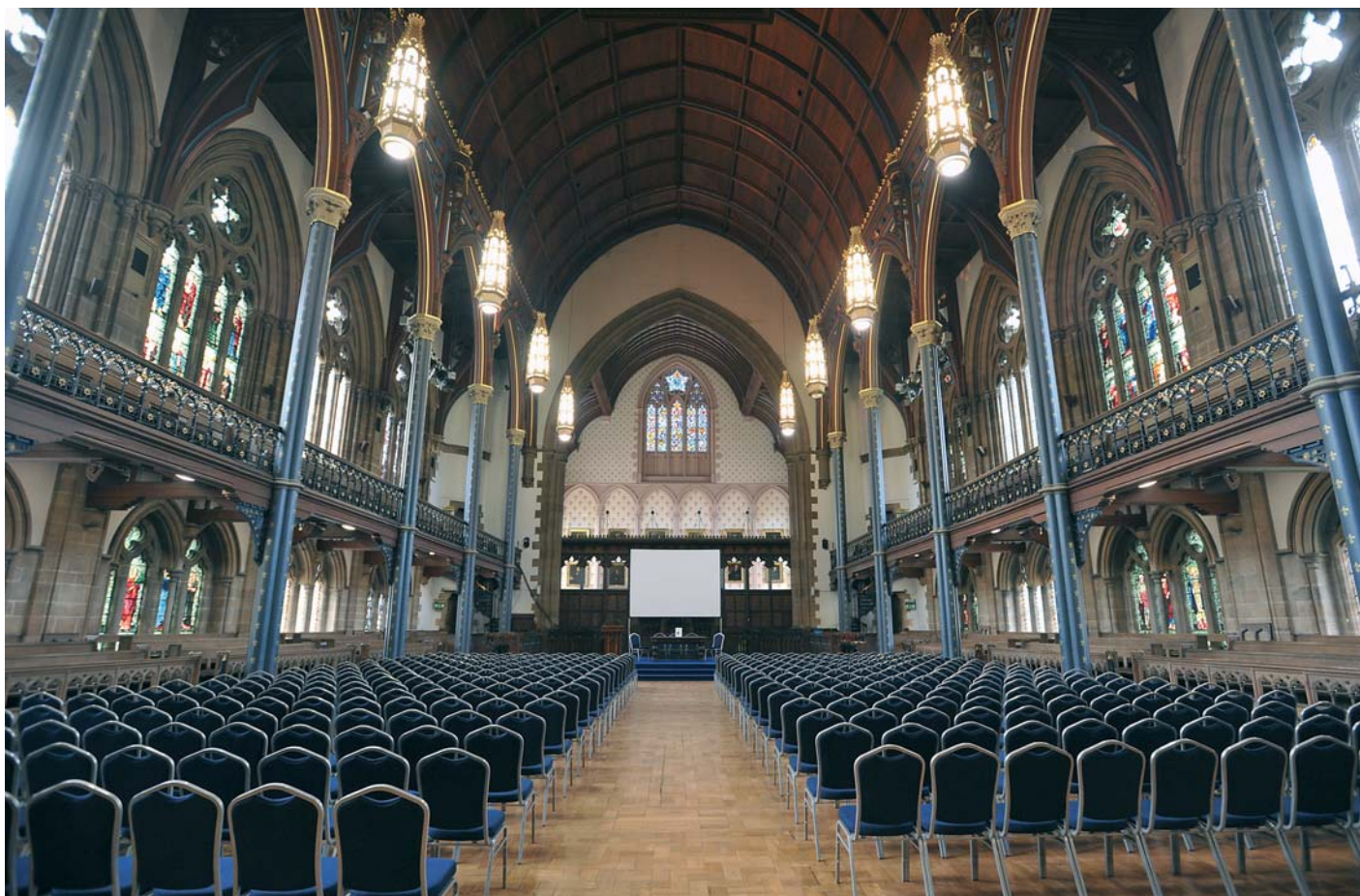
Take a look at our brand new Facebook page: The Institute of Conservation. A big thank you goes to Kerren Harris (Historic Royal Palaces) for setting it up and administering it in collaboration / rotation with Helen L Smith of Tate Britain and Icon's Wiebke Morgan.

Icon's Twitter account @Conservators_UK (originally set up by Carol Brown) has grown to over 1,000 followers, so come and like / follow us, share some comments, spread the word!

ICON'S 2013 CONFERENCE

Hopefully you have all seen the recent special Iconnect which carried the Call for Papers for Icon's 2013 Conference *Positive Futures in an Uncertain World*. As the title makes clear, its mission is to inspire us to face challenging times ahead in the world of cultural heritage.

A packed programme will provide plenary sessions, specialist Group sessions, a trade fair, posters, networking opportunities and entertainment – set in the splendid surroundings of Glasgow University, which is partnering Icon in the organisation of the event.



Bute theatre: venue for the 2013 Conference plenary sessions

We are extremely pleased to be able to hold our welcome reception on 10 April 2013 at the Hunterian Museum and the conference dinner dance the next day will be at Òran Mór, a lively arts and entertainment centre in a former church.

Do make sure you put the following dates in your diary:

- The conference itself:- 10–12 April 2013
- Booking opens:- 1 September 2012
- Deadline for submitting abstracts:- 10 September 2012

RENEWAL REMINDER

Thank you to all those members (over 60%) who have renewed their membership for 2012/13 (April to March).

If you haven't received your renewal or reminder email, please get in touch (wmorgan@icon.org.uk) and I will send you your renewal form.

If you would like to pay your fee by credit card you can renew over the phone – 020 3142 6785

The final deadline for renewals for this membership year is 15 August. Don't let your membership lapse, as this will mean that this July issue of Icon News is the last that you will receive. You will also no longer receive Iconnects or *The Journal of the Institute of Conservation* and miss out on all other benefits which include:

- **Access to our sector's knowledge and support**
Being part of a global community of over 2300 members who share your interest and commitment to conservation of cultural heritage. We keep you in touch with developments essential to the professional conservator via our electronic news bulletins, magazine, peer-reviewed

Journal, library and information services, website and networking events.

- **Career development support**

You receive a weekly news feed of job vacancies. From the moment you start thinking about applying for accreditation, you can access the support and guidance you need to achieve and maintain your PACR accreditation. You benefit from reduced rates for courses, Icon events and our triennial conference.

- **Discounts on services**

Icon has negotiated on behalf of its members: 10% discount on West Dean College's short courses for professional conservators; customised Professional Indemnity Insurance; HMCA Hospital, Sickness and Injury Cash Plan eligibility; discounts on publications.

- **Being part of a forum to influence**

You can get involved and influence the development and direction of your profession. You have the right to stand for election to the Board of Trustees of Icon and to vote in Board elections. You can contribute to the running of Icon and wider conservation policy work through our committees and Specialist Groups.

Understanding the reality of the current economic climate, we have kept the increase in membership fees as low as possible to ensure it still provides excellent value. Concessionary Rates have been kept at last year's level. I hope that you will renew your membership for 2012/13 and I look forward to hearing from you!

Wiebke Morgan
Membership Manager

'THE REAL THING?'

This is the title of another Glasgow conference taking place in December on the topic of *The Value of Authenticity and Replication for Investigation and Conservation*. It looks to be an interesting programme with speakers from the Victoria and Albert Museum, The National Archives, West Dean Tapestry Studio, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Gallery, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Centre de Conservation, Québec. Booking opens this month. www.gla.ac.uk/cca/researchnetwork

THE CLOTHWORKERS' BURSARIES

The Clothworkers' Foundation may regret saying this but they have told Icon News that they would welcome more applications for their bursaries for continuing professional development in conservation. So bear this in mind when you are pondering how to fund your attendance at the Icon Conference in Glasgow next April or indeed December's Glasgow conference mentioned above on the topic of authenticity. The information you need to make an application for support can be found at foundation.clothworkers.co.uk>What we do>Open grant programmes>CPD Bursaries

CLOTHWORKERS' AWARD TO GLASGOW

The Clothworkers' Foundation has awarded its 2012 Conservation Fellowship to Glasgow Museums, to enable work to take place on some of the Burrell Collection's important medieval stained glass. Marie Stumpff ACR is the Clothworker Fellow and she will be working on one of the most significant parts of the collection: a group of three large windows which came from the Carmelite Church at Boppard-on-Rhine. Marie will document the current condition of the windows and study their restoration history to create a benchmark against which future treatments will be measured; she will also undertake their conservation.

The Fellowship pays for a junior conservator to cover the senior post during the project. Depending on how quickly this post can be filled, Marie hopes to get started on the windows in the autumn. She told Icon News that she is absolutely thrilled with the opportunity presented by this two year project, which will be an important contribution to stained glass research and conservation internationally.

THE ZGTF 2012 AWARDS

More support for conservators has just been announced by the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship, which has awarded grants totalling £13,000 for overseas study trips to eleven outstanding conservation students. The ZGTF Scholars will be circumnavigating the globe in their placements which range from various European destinations to India, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Borneo and Nepal. They will be working in leading conservation organisations and learning to conserve paintings, textiles, paper and archaeological



Carmelite Church stained glass panels in the Burrell Collection

artefacts as well as historic gardens.

Icon News was told that the Trustees have awarded more this year than ever before. Since the Fellowship was founded in 2000, it has enabled over ninety students to visit more than thirty countries. For more information about the awards, previous scholars and their reports, see www.ZibbyGarnett.org

NCESS UPDATE

Conservation Technician Qualifications

One of the objectives in the National Conservation Education and Skills Strategy (NCESS)* is to ensure that

there is greater support for existing provision and qualifications – taught courses, structured e-learning, research, and work-based learning – to increase access, build resilience, and unlock funding streams for both students and employers.

One of the ways Icon is tackling this is through promoting the Conservation Technician Qualification (CTQ).

The background

The Conservation Technician Qualification (CTQ) is a means for individuals working in supporting roles in conservation to be trained in the high level knowledge and skills needed in the workplace and then to demonstrate that they can work to the professional standards that these roles require. The Qualification was developed by Icon in 2007 in response to a need that employers were recognising and two successful pilot programmes were run between 2007 and 2010. Icon was in receipt of grant-aid to support those pilot programmes, and this helped to fund the delivery of the qualifications at a discounted cost to host organisations whilst the Qualification was being tested and refined.

The next phase

Icon reviewed the outcomes of the second pilot phase and the refined model, whereby candidates are trained, mentored and assessed in the workplace, will continue to be used. CTQ was formally relaunched at the launch event of the NCESS.

The first round of candidates for 2012–13 have been enrolled for the Qualification, and Icon will be working with National Galleries Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, York Glaziers Trust, Royal Pavilions Libraries & Museums, English Heritage, National Wool Museum, St Fagan's National History Museum and Salisbury Cathedral to support twelve candidates. Enrolment will be in two phases per year, and the closing date for the second enrolment of 2012 will be 31 October 2012.

The CTQ programme is managed by Susan Bradshaw, Icon's Professional Development Manager, assisted by Jayne Sheraton, Icon's Training Officer and supported by a team of external assessors. Anyone interested in being a candidate, or any organisation considering acting as a host, should contact ctq@icon.org.uk.

The bigger picture

Currently, CTQ is entirely owned by Icon, meaning that we are responsible for establishing the assessment process and for awarding the qualification. One possible future development for the Qualification, which is also central to the NCESS, is for Icon to look at the potential to 'migrate' the CTQ onto the national Qualification and Credit Framework, or QCF.

The QCF is the system used by regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to recognise skills and qualifications on behalf of the governments. One of the key considerations about the QCF is that public financial support can only be made available to candidates or organisations that are following or delivering qualifications on that Framework – non-QCF qualifications cannot get public money. Moving the CTQ on to the QCF could also potentially open up routes for formal Apprenticeships in conservation – and, again, these could also attract public financial support.

An initial assessment suggests that the migration process will not involve a great deal of rewriting of the Qualification – it was always based on the right professional and national occupational standards to facilitate such a move – and Icon has had preliminary discussions with EDI, a qualifications awarding body, about the potential for them to take on the formal awarding of the Qualification while Icon could become an assessment centre. Icon has also been talking to Creative and Cultural Skills (the government licensed Sector Skills Council for the UK's creative and cultural industries) about Apprenticeship Frameworks.

A very important consideration for Icon is that employers value the CTQ, and it has been Icon's involvement that has helped to build 'the brand'. We will be exploring ways to ensure the migrated qualification maintains its valued identity.

Secondly, it is enormously important for the migration to be 'seamless' – for candidates who have started building up their evidence towards the CTQ in its current format to be able to get credit for their work if and when the Qualification is migrated, and for people who have already received the CTQ to know that their hard-earned qualification has exactly the same value as the 'migrated' award – and for their employers, and potential future employers to know this too.

For the CTQ to take a place on the QCF also opens up the possibility of a developing ladder of qualifications – at present, there is a very wide gap in terms of achievement between the CTQ and Icon's flagship qualification, PACR. In the future, there could be potential for an intermediate qualification to be awarded between CTQ and PACR.

The migration process is being handled by Kenneth Aitchison, Icon Skills Strategy Manager, and he can be contacted at kaitchison@icon.org.uk.

Kenneth Aitchison, Skills Strategy Manager

Susan Bradshaw, Professional Development Manager

* www.icon.org.uk/images/icon%20educationskillsfinalr.pdf

THINKING ABOUT ACCREDITATION?

If like me you are thinking about applying for accreditation, then I would recommend that you attend a PACR information seminar or clinic. Two Icon Groups, the Stone and Wall Painting and Historic Interiors Groups, joined forces to hold a bespoke seminar on 29 May. This attracted around twenty conservators who were either thinking about or in the process of preparing their application.

We were fortunate to have an assembly of excellent speakers, who spoke on various issues and aspects of the accreditation process. Several, drawn from the Icon Accreditation Committee, have personal experience of the accreditation process, are assessors or are involved in the decision process.

Freelance historic interiors consultant, **Helen Hughes** gave a fascinating canter through the history of restoration and conservation philosophy since the late 19th century, with particular focus on how it has changed in the last fifty years. The role of the conservator has also developed and Helen stressed that conservators now provide a significant contribution to conservation decisions. But we are a timid bunch and we must maintain this professional assertiveness to enhance our role within this dialogue. After all, we often have an input into 'why' and the solutions of 'how' to conserve.

Katy Lithgow, Head Conservator at the National Trust, outlined the agents of deterioration and highlighted the role of preventive conservation. This is an area that many hands-on conservators do not regularly engage in, but Katy emphasised that it is important that conservators have a working knowledge of preventive measures since this plays an integral role in assessment and investigations as well as aftercare and maintenance. The National Trust only contracts with accredited conservators since they adhere to the Icon professional standards.

In her presentation, Icon's Training Development Manager, **Susan Bradshaw** explained the five professional standards, the accreditation process and the support available to candidates. There was uncertainty regarding the degree of complexity required for accreditation projects. It seems that projects do not necessarily need to demonstrate highly technical measures, but exhibit the range of professional standards within the problems, options and management of the conservation process.



The assessment

Private wall paintings conservators and PACR assessors **Mark Perry** and **John Burbidge** gave an overview of what assessors look for on the assessment day, when they visit the candidate. Understandably this is a nerve-wracking time, but with good preparation, this should clearly and efficiently provide the evidence to showcase a candidate's professional judgment and activities. They each emphasised the importance of selecting appropriate projects and presenting them in the best possible way. This may sound obvious, but ensuring that the assessment day goes smoothly gives you and the assessors the opportunity to see the range and depth of your involvement in conservation strategies, planning and interventions. Some conservators may not be involved in contract or project management, but by dividing a project into components: organising resources, health and safety compliance, client and colleague liaison, selection of treatment procedures and materials and so forth, John showed how each stage could demonstrate a conservator's engagement and their adherence to the professional standards.

A practical example

Another assessor, **David Odgers**, reiterated this process through the assessment, cleaning and maintenance of a marble urn. Seemingly a pretty straightforward project but when broken down into philosophy, legislative aspects, planning, intervention and maintenance advice, the audience began to see how such a project could be employed as a 'complex' one. All assessors emphasised that it was important to articulate your individual role within the project, so that your autonomy can be measured.

Start now!

One message that rang out loud and clear was that you should not wait until you apply for accreditation to compile your evidence. By identifying suitable projects early on and recording them as you work on them, you can build up your accreditation portfolio over a period of time. Furthermore there is no limit on how far back you can go with your projects, although memory may render it difficult to recall accurate details! All this makes the task much less onerous when you come to take the plunge.

As Chair of the Accreditation Committee, Katy Lithgow explained the accreditation decision-making process. Great time and effort (given voluntarily) goes into ensuring that decisions are valid, fair, consistent and open. All of those involved in the accreditation process: mentors, assessors and the accreditation committee should be considered as critical friends, who are there to support and encourage rather than intimidate and oppress.

For me this seminar de-mystified the accreditation process and I feel that it is something that I want to aim for and can achieve in the foreseeable future. It was also a chance to meet new and old friends which only boosts my feeling of pride and inspiration to be part of this lively and professional community.

You can view a number of the speakers Powerpoint presentations in more detail on the SWP group page of the Icon website.

Clara Willett, Architectural Conservator, English Heritage.

CTR: NEW INITIATIVES

The story so far

The first year of the Book and Paper Group's Co-operative Training Register scheme has been full of activity. The scheme aims to provide training for members in subject areas that interest them and is based in venues across the country. Out of the six training options listed in the 2011 poll of members, the CTR committee has successfully organised two regional training courses in the winning subject area, adhesives. Courses in two other high-scoring topics from the poll – account book structures and print identification – are well into the planning stages for 2013. We also hope to repeat our first and heavily-oversubscribed course, *Recreating the Medieval Palette*, in 2013.

As well as recent courses on preservation issues surrounding the packing and storage of collections and the IDAP parchment assessment (see the Reviews section for details), we have also responded to individual members' requests for training via the CTR submission forms on the website by arranging our next course in environmental control methods, with specific reference to passive methods in library and archive collections. This will take place in October 2012 and further details will be available soon via a Group Iconnect.

Again, in response to a request from members, we are in the process of developing a business start-up day course. This is being organised by Louise Vaile, the Group's new Private Practice Liaison Officer, who, being successfully self-employed herself, is in an excellent position to advise those members considering setting up their own business.

New plans

A new initiative that we would like to develop is day-workshops, based on short practical demonstrations of particular techniques or procedures that members would like to share with the Book and Paper Group as a whole. We appreciate that members may not be able to commit to providing longer courses and workshops over several days but it is hoped that many of you would be willing to consider sharing your skills for all or part of a morning or afternoon session. The CTR committee will provide full support to help you to develop your proposal into an effective and useful workshop for the benefit of your book and paper colleagues, and it counts towards CPD too. The individual sessions can be seen as a conference poster in demonstration form, and any aspect of techniques for book and paper applications will be considered. The workshops can be varied in length, although

it is anticipated that any one session would last for no more than half a day. We would like to have your opinions on this and ideas for training sessions you would be able to provide. Using this information, we aim to conduct a poll of the top six, for members to indicate their preferences.

Play your part

This exciting new initiative relies on you for its success and, as we know we are part of a dynamic and collaborative group, we very much look forward to hearing your proposals. We will also be sending this information out via an Iconnect but, in the meantime, you can submit details on the online forms via the Book and Paper Group pages of the website or contact the CTR committee directly by emailing victoria.stevens@magd.ox.ac.uk for further details or to discuss a proposal. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Victoria Stevens ACR, CTR Chair

LIBRARY NEWS

Spotlight on LAC

LAC, or the Chantry Library Advisory Committee, is a small group that meets regularly to review progress and assist me as the librarian with forward planning. It is composed of the Chair, Kate Colleran, the Honorary Librarian, Jane Eagan, and an External Consultant, Michael Williams.

The work of the Committee and its members is profiled on the Library pages of the Icon website, where you will also find a series of informal interviews which I am conducting with the LAC members – who are they, what do they do and how they became involved with the Library.

First up in the hot seat is Michael Williams. Michael has always provided a great sounding board for me for anything of a techie nature – his clear-headed knowledgeable advice has proved to be invaluable on many an occasion. He has been involved with the Chantry Library since its formation, providing technical support and library management on a voluntary basis. He contributes an independent and professional insight into library strategy, management, policy, and technical expertise.

Read the interview in full on www.chantrylibrary.org.uk/

Photocopies

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



Recently received publications

The Chantry Library has just acquired volumes 2 and 3 in the series *Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of their History and Characteristics*. We already hold volumes 1 and 4, edited by Robert Feller and Barbara H. Berrie respectively

Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics (Vol.2) edited by Ashok Roy, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Archetype Publications, London, 1993, 231pp. ISBN: 978-1-904982-75-3 For details see: www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=157

Artists' Pigments: A Handbook of Their History and Characteristics (Vol.3) edited by Elisabeth West Fitzhugh, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Archetype Publications, London, 1997, 364pp. ISBN: 978-1-904982-76-0 For details see: www.archetype.co.uk/publication-details.php?id=158

The Technological Study of Books and Manuscripts as Artefacts: Research questions and analytical solutions

edited by Sarah Neate, David Howell, Richard Ovenden, A.M.Pollard, BAR International Series 2209, Archaeopress, Oxford, 2011, ISBN: 978-1-4073-0767-1

For a list of the contents, please email chantrylibrary@icon.org.uk

Big Pictures: Problems and Solutions for Treating Outside Paintings edited by Sally Woodcock, papers from a conference held at Tate Modern in December 2000 and organised by the Paintings Section of the United Kingdom Institute of Conservation, Archetype Publications, 2005, ISBN: 1-904982-03-4

Studies in Conservation, Vol.57, No.1, January 2012

Studies in Conservation, Vol.57, No.2, April 2012

The Picture Restorer, No.40, Spring 2012

Journal Exchanges

The following journal exchange issues have just arrived for the Chantry Library collection:

Conservation-restauration des biens culturels (CRBC)

ARAAFU (Association des Restaurateurs d'Art et d'Archéologie de Formation Universitaire) No.26 (2008), No.27 (2009). No.28 (2010), No.29 (2011)

For the Contents pages go to:

http://araafu.free.fr/publications4.htm#CRBC_revue

For further information, please contact me at chantrylibrary@icon.org.uk.

Find out more

For further details of new resources and a full listing of all journal articles received over the past two months, check out the library blog 'Library News' at: <http://chantrylibrary.wordpress.com/>

You can also subscribe to our RSS feed and track new books and journals at the Library in real time. More details on how to do this at <http://chantrylibrary.wordpress.com/feed/>

Ros Buck, Chantry Librarian

people

INTRODUCING SIMON GREEN

When I joined Icon as Business Manager in November 2011, this was a new post intended to allow the Chief Executive and other managers to focus fully on their own priorities. This was part of the major structural changes made to strengthen Icon over the last year. My role covers several main areas.

I have overall responsibility to the CEO for all financial and budgetary matters, working closely with our accountants JS2 Ltd and Rebecca Hendry who deals with all detailed matters such as processing invoices and claims. For a

medium size charity, Icon is very complicated – our budget extends to about twenty eight pages! We have a variety of programmes – mostly related to professional development – as well as sixteen thematic groups. Our cash flow varies seasonally with the membership year and the funders' own cycles. I am also Company Secretary which entails maintaining our records with Companies House and the Charity Commission.

I am also responsible for our infrastructure. In 2010 I identified and negotiated the lease for our new office at the Leathermarket on a part voluntary, part consultancy basis. Our old premises provided four closely packed desks whereas the Leathermarket office now has six staff based here in a better environment at the same price. We even have a nice café in our historic building. Do pop in and visit if you are near London Bridge! I have recently been improving our rather elderly IT system, a process not without trauma and we still have some way to go.

Another role is to oversee the Conservation Register which was completely revamped just before I started. In this case Kat Cresser keeps it up to date and works closely with the practices registered on it. Kat, Rebecca and I now form the Business Team but all of us in the office have overlapping roles like dealing with phone enquiries from members, partners and the general public.

Although new as an employee, I have been engaged with Icon and its predecessors since giving a talk to the inaugural meeting of the Institute of Paper Conservation in 1974. This related to the range of hand-made papers we made for paper conservators at Hayle Mill in Maidstone. I later served as Chairman of IPC for five years and I am an honorary life member of Icon, which I am very proud of. Until 2009 I ran the environmental charity Groundwork Kent & Medway for fourteen years and I have also been involved in railway preservation and nature conservation.

Simon Green



May Cassar with the Plowden Medal presented to her at the award lunch on 6 June

THE 2012 PLOWDEN MEDAL

Congratulations to Professor May Cassar, winner of this year's Plowden Medal for her enduring commitment to improving the professional standing of heritage conservation practice nationally and internationally.

The gold medal is awarded by the Royal Warrant Holders Association and this year's award recognises that May Cassar has played a huge role in transforming thinking and practice in heritage science research, training and policy through her practical, academic and scientific work and experience. With tireless energy and enthusiasm she has raised the profile of heritage science at home and abroad and raised the alarm about the risks to cultural heritage from a changing climate. She is currently Professor of Sustainable Heritage at University College London and Director of the UCL Centre for Sustainable Heritage and was appointed Special Adviser to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee Inquiry on Science and Heritage (2005–06). This led to the five year strategic research programme on Science and Heritage with May appointed its Director in 2007.

THE CLARE HAMPSON SCHOLARSHIP



The 2012 Clare Hampson Scholarship has been awarded to Joanna Kosek ACR to enable her to finish her work on the book *Paper and Environment: a Handbook on Housing Paper*. Joanna accepted the award from Sonja Schwoll, Secretary to the Award Committee, during the Book and Paper Group AGM at the British Library in April. Icon News

caught up with Joanna at the British Museum where she is joint Head of Pictorial Art Conservation at the Department of Conservation and Scientific Research.

What does winning this award mean to you?

I am utterly delighted to accept the Clare Hampson Scholarship Award and truly grateful to the Publication Grant Committee for selecting me. I am moved by the Award, too, as I am of the generation that remembers Clare; her dedication and contribution to forging the specialism of paper conservation and to the ethos of the Institute of Paper Conservation. I can only say that her generous legacy will be put to excellent use and the outcome of the project I am working on will, hopefully, benefit many.

Tell us about your project

This funding will enable me to complete that part for which I am responsible of an ambitious volume (or more likely two volumes, the way the project has developed), entitled *Paper and Environments: a Handbook on Housing Paper*. I am commissioning editor jointly with Birthe Christensen, Head of Conservation and Preservation at the National Maritime Museum Greenwich. Our book has grown out of excellent cooperation and includes contributions by over fifty expert authors and co-authors from all parts of the world.

This volume was conceived as an accessible handbook. It covers a broad range of topics such as collecting; historical and contemporary storage systems for works on paper; environment from climate overview to microenvironments in books, frames, scrolls and others; the nature of paper, media, and housing materials; basic chemistry, physics and microbiology to explain the science of deterioration of paper objects; alongside a full account of the types of deterioration that befall paper objects in different geographical locations and circumstances round the world. The last chapter is on collection management, with achievable best practice adaptable for collections everywhere.

As you see, in the future no-one will be able to get by without this book: conservation students, archivists, collection managers and other heritage professionals round the world will be heaving huge sighs of relief!

How will the award money help you?

The grant will help to cover the editorial expenses that come from research and meetings with contributors. In particular, I wish to travel abroad, including once to follow up contacts in India, to see collections and gather material in support of various topics covered by the book.

What is the time scale for the project?

We will be guided by the publisher. We need the summer months to bring all the papers up to finished standard ready for the editorial review. This will take about six months and then the publication processes another seven to eight months. So we are thinking of 2014.

Have you got a publisher for the book?

Yes, it will be published by Archetype Publications and was conceived as a companion to our two previous paper productions *Conservation Mounting* and *Art on Paper*. Both books have been quite successful and we hope that this new title will also meet with readers' approval. In other words, when our book comes out I hope to be able to share this award with you all.

CONGRATULATIONS

As Curator of Horology at the National Maritime Museum, Jonathan Betts has made a major contribution to horological conservation. So it is good to see that he has been awarded an MBE for services to horology in the latest Honours list.

A STAINED GLASS SILVER JUBILEE

Stained glass conservator Peter Campling ACR founded his company, M. C. Lead Glaziers Ltd, twenty five years ago this year. Recently he talked to Icon News about changes and challenges during that time.

Start up worries

Apart from the usual headaches over tax, VAT, health and safety and so on, the main difficulty about starting up was whether I'd be able to convince clients, who tended to be older than me, that at the age of twenty one I had the necessary knowledge to undertake the most demanding projects to the highest possible quality. Twenty five years on and I still think it!

Taking on staff

I found employing staff quite a responsibility. I still do. You feel obliged to do your best for any employee, understand

The astonishing East Gable at Barsham in Suffolk



© Peter Campling



Fitting Paul Quail windows in Nigeria 1991

their different needs and how best to communicate with them, if you are to pass on your knowledge for their development. But it is also rewarding: it has made me more open to and respectful of other people's opinions; it helps keep your feet on the ground and develops your own ability to read situations better. Two of my employees, Ian and Aaron who joined me from school and collectively have going on fifteen years' experience, are a real asset and team members.

Some favourite projects over the years

Every project has its own unique and interesting aspect but some stand out like when we were in Nigeria fitting three windows for Paul Quail (a stained glass designer and artist who has sadly died now). While at Hemingbrough Minster in Yorkshire we lived away on and off which pleased the wife! One of our current jobs is in Barsham, Suffolk, where we are restoring and conserving a window the likes of which I've never seen before (nor has anyone else that I know!).

Technical challenges

Challenging projects have included the restoration of a stained glass window in Claydon Suffolk where so much damage had occurred that there was very little to establish the subject matter of the scene. This meant very careful examination of the surviving pieces to establish their position. The other missing parts were in-filled with antique glass but without any paint or stain, so that the extent of repair was evident. We won a craftsmanship award for this project from the Suffolk Association of Architects in 1990.

On a different theme we have re-leaded a window behind an organ with no internal access. I had to develop some ingenious solutions so that the whole window was fitted except for one tracery, which was just big enough for the last person to be pulled out before it too was fitted.



Peter, hair now carefully concealed, working on the Chapter House windows at Westminster Abbey in 2010

Significant changes

Of the many changes over the past quarter century the biggest is the move away from automatically re-leading windows where problems exist to one of conservation and minimum intervention. Techniques, developed and adapted over the period, have meant that many situations found now can be treated successfully without re-leading, which is good overall for the glass. Although I have less hair now, one thing that has not changed is our commitment to quality.

Current thinking changes but much has been learnt from past practices – good and bad – and they should be judged on their contribution to the advancement of knowledge as even hindsight knowledge brings benefits. I also believe that the more people share information with other colleagues and hold discussions on current issues, the more this helps in the advancement of practices to preserve the rich heritage shown in glass. I look forward to the next twenty five years!

ANOTHER QEST BENEFICIARY

Icon member Emma Payne from Sittingbourne in Kent has been awarded a £15,000 Queen Elizabeth Trust Scholarship to complete the second and final year of her Masters degree in the Conservation for Archaeology and Museums at University College London.

During her studies Emma has worked as a Conservation and Collections Care Assistant at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology and previously she had volunteered for the Sittingbourne CSI Project working on Anglo-Saxon artefacts.

Emma received her Scholarship at the same event as the award of the Plowden Medal (above), as QEST is the charitable arm of the Royal Warrant Holders Association, funding projects which will contribute to the pool of talent in the UK and reflect the excellence of British craftsmanship.

Emma Payne receives her QEST scholarship from HRH the Duke of Gloucester



Heritage without Borders in Turkmenistan 2011

The conservation charity's work is outlined by Dominica D'Arcangelo, Kelly Caldwell, Stefanie White and Mags Felter

ABOUT HWB

Heritage Without Borders (HWB) is a social enterprise that matches conservation and museum professionals with people in developing countries who want help to conserve and interpret their cultural heritage. Training and knowledge exchange are at the heart of HWB. Skilled volunteers give their time freely and HWB provides the supplies and other necessary resources. Volunteers are presented with the opportunity to interact with very different cultures from their own, interactions which challenge and broaden their world view and understanding of the past as well as honing their communication and conservation skills.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In September 2011 HWB sent three volunteers to the site of Merv, in the south-east of modern Turkmenistan. The work was a collaboration between the Ancient Merv Project (AMP), a long standing expedition run by Tim Williams of University College London (UCL), and HWB. It was jointly funded by the AMP, HWB and the Global Heritage Fund. Support was also given by Thilo Rehren and UCL Qatar (UCL-Q) and kind permission for HWB to join the Ancient Merv project was given by Dr Mukhammed Mamedov, Head of the National Department for the Protection, Study and Restoration of Historical and Cultural Monuments, Ministry of Culture of Turkmenistan.

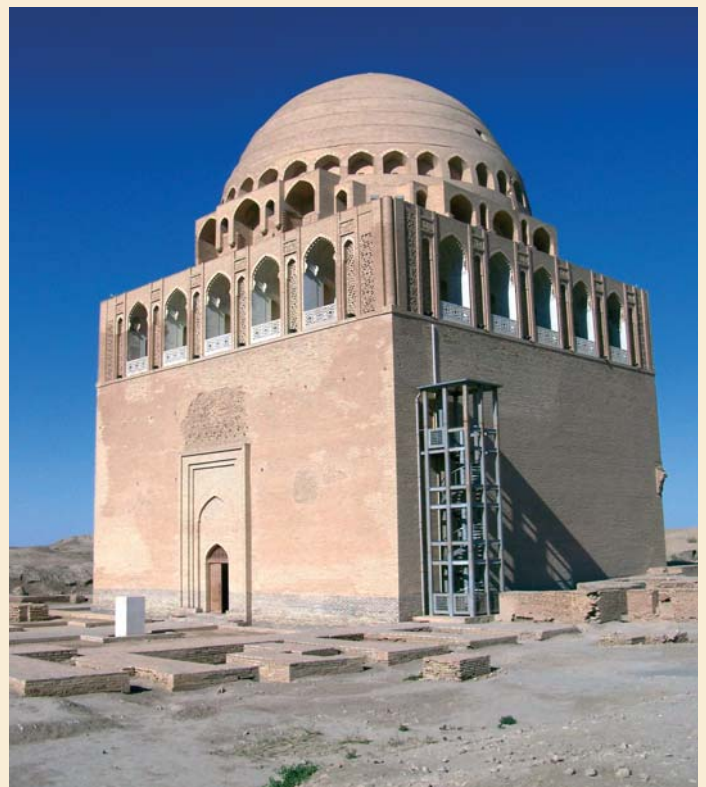
Section cut through Gyaur Kala by Soviet archaeologists shows tunnels and murder holes built into and cut through the various phases of wall



THE HISTORY OF THE SITE

Merv lies in a fertile delta and was once a thriving hub of the silk routes of ancient central Asia. While settlement in the area is thought to date well into prehistory, the first substantial settlement at Merv is attributed to the 5th–6th centuries BCE when a fortified outpost was constructed during the rule of the Persian king Cyrus the Great. The settlement, Erk Kala, was conquered by Alexander the Great during his campaigns against the Persians and during the Selucid period which followed (3rd century BCE) the settlement was expanded, incorporating Erk Kala as a central citadel and forming a new town called Antiochia Margiana, later to be known as Gyaur Kala. The outer walls of this settlement were continuously reinforced, mainly when the city was under Parthian control in the second century BCE, but also when the city was under the control of the Sassanian Empire right up to the seventh century CE. The continuous remodelling of the huge mud-brick defences has resulted in an astonishing monument that survives to this day.

Sultan Sanjar mausoleum





Treating copper alloy objects

The scale of the site is truly incredible, with a minibus required for even the most abridged of site tours. With each subsequent city enveloping, rather than simply overlaying that which preceded it, the city poured out into the flat fertile delta. This was best appreciated from the heights of the Gyuar Kala wall, where we would enjoy our end of day drinks. At first glance you could be forgiven for mistaking the heavily eroded mud-brick walls of the city defences for natural formations. Stretching out into the reddening sunset, the landscape is almost lunar in appearance with Erk Kala and Gyuar Kala as vast craters. Every now and again large mud brick structures, some dating to the 8th century CE, rise up out of the undulating remains. Much of the town, however, is totally buried by collapsed, unfired mud brick and the oldest parts in Erk Kala now lie over 17m below the current land surface, itself an amalgamation of collapsed mud brick.

THE CONSERVATION WORK

The full aims of the 2011 season's project were defined in

A practical lesson



Talking to trainees

cooperation with HWB's partners and included conserving small finds from Merv, training local graduates and museum staff in basic conservation skills, assessing future conservation needs in Turkmenistan's Museums and piloting the HWB model in general. In addition, the team was also asked to look into the feasibility of creating a permanent conservation lab at Merv which could support ongoing excavations at the site and local museum. Unfortunately the opportunity to put HWB's own in-field methodology to the test was not possible at this stage as large excavations at the site were not tenable at the time.

First and foremost of HWB's tasks were the assessment, stabilisation and packaging of small finds that had been excavated in previous seasons. There were some 1300 finds from across the site that included a range of materials such as copper alloy, iron, ceramics, stone, glass, faience, shell and wall plaster, and the preservation ranged from small corroded fragments to whole objects. With limited time and means, small finds conservation focused on priority objects, ensuring appropriate storage, establishing future conservation plans and helping to facilitate other analyses such as sampling and X-ray fluorescence.

In order to make the most of the short time there, a priority list of artefacts to be treated was made. This was done in conjunction with the finds specialist and archaeologists who highlighted artefacts of high research value, and with a condition assessment that highlighted artefacts in need of

Team photo at the farewell dinner





Animals near the medieval earthen buildings of Great Kiz Kala outside the main city walls of Merv



immediate conservation attention. While assessing the collection the artefacts were re-packed.

Investigative cleaning of copper alloy, ceramic, plaster, stone and glass objects made up the bulk of the work, with copper alloy taking the lion's share of the time there. With the use of microscopes, the HWB team worked away on a long table at the end of an open office shared with finds, ceramic and slag specialists working at the site. Conservation work was improved with the arrival of a new microscope donated by UCL- Q part way into the season.

All conservation procedures and treatments were fully documented and the condition assessment and treatments were recorded in the small finds database. Images taken by HWB and by the site photographer were added separately.

THE TRAINING WORK

Conservation training is a relatively new concept in Turkmenistan and access to conservation grade materials is often limited. This means that there are few opportunities for local students to further their experience, making HWB's presence and involvement with the local team all the more important. The who, what and where of the incoming students was not known until the season of work was well underway, indeed not until the day the students arrived. This, of course,

made it difficult to design a suitable training program prior to the event. However, the two students, Hydyr Atayev & Bashim Doliyev, who were studying 'Restoration of historical monuments' at the Cultural Heritage Department, Turkmen State Institute of Culture, and two professional conservators, Merte Ryzakov from the Regional Museum of Mary province and Muhammed Belgiyev of the State Cultural Historical Park Ancient Merv, proved to be keen and able participants.

The first step was to learn about each other's professional and academic experiences. As we all came from very different backgrounds we had a lot to share. The students were especially keen on gaining experience in conservation of archaeological metal as they had both spent a significant amount of time learning how to make traditional Turkmen jewellery. This practical knowledge gave them a great understanding of the materials they were working with and great manual skills, but a lot less experience with corrosion and buried material. In contrast, the two professional conservators had a good deal of experience with conserving archaeological materials and were more interested in the theory of metal corrosion, its stabilisation and recent developments in conservation and conservation materials.

Discussion and practice were at the heart of the training process which focussed on the following key elements: use of a microscope, the corrosion process of copper alloy and its

Sunset from Gyaur Kale

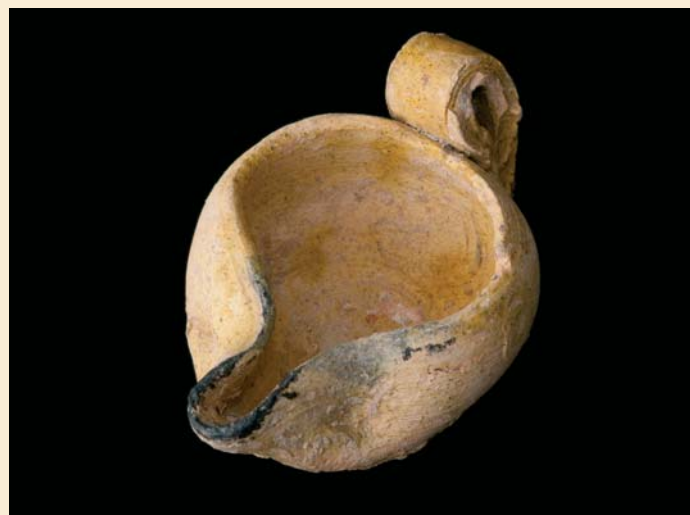


A lesson in microscope use





Group discussion



Ceramic glazed oil lamp

treatment, materials in conservation and making solutions, and the deterioration of glass and its treatment.

Although the team and students developed a good rapport and managed basic communication through gesture, the whole endeavour would have otherwise been impossible were it not for the skills of Gaigysyz Jorayev and his remarkable abilities of simultaneous translation across three languages (English, Turkmen and the dominant language of the region, Russian).

A SUCCESS STORY

The Ancient Merv Project and HWB agree that our project can definitely be called a success. We return this year to build on that success. In addition to working on site, the team will run a four-day conservation training programme at the Institute of History.

The opportunity to see such a site as Merv in person is incredible in itself but to work on the material and alongside the people of the country there is even more of a privilege. We can only hope that HWB's involvement in the project has helped enthuse and teach the students about modern conservation techniques as much as we have learnt from our time there and we wish to thank all those who made this project possible this past season: to Meret Ryzakov for



Small ceramic jug

showing us around Mary Museum and Muhammed Begliyev for showing us around Gonur (after a three hour drive through the desert and the consumption of a very delicious watermelon!) and to Dr. Nuzgozel Bashimova, Head of the Ancient History Department, Institute of History, for inviting us to the Institute and allowing us a share of her very large birthday cake! Thanks also to Tim Williams, Leslee Michelsen, Paul Wordsworth, Alexis Pantos, Ann Feuerbach, Dave Gilbert, Katie Campbell, Elise Thing and Gaigysyz Jorayev.

Copper alloy object with textile



BREAKING NEWS!

In recent weeks, Heritage Without Borders has won University College London's prestigious Social Enterprise of the Year award. In May 2012, HWB was also shortlisted for the Museums and Heritage International Award. HWB is grateful to heritage professionals who support what we do by contributing their time and skills.

We rely on donations and gifts to continue the work. You can support Heritage Without Borders by donating now on the website or signing up for email updates. You can like us on Facebook. Visit www.heritagewithoutborders.org to read more.

For further information on the Ancient Merv Project go to www.ucl.ac.uk/merv/

news from the groups

ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

We had an excellent response to our Archaeology Group Survey which took place in May. A big thank you to everyone who took the time to fill it in. It has provided some extremely informative results that will allow us to better represent your interests and inform our future program of events. You can find the results of the survey via the Group's webpage.

The annual Festival of British Archaeology is taking place 14–29 July. This is a great opportunity to discover new archaeological sites, projects and heritage organisations. A number of conservation laboratories are opening their doors for activities, tours and talks about conservation projects. These include The Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Perth Museum & Art Gallery, York Archaeological Trust, The Manchester Museum and the Ashmolean Museum. For full listings see www.festival.britarch.ac.uk.

Karla Graham, AG Chair

BOOK AND PAPER GROUP

The Icon Book and Paper Group General Meeting 2012 was kindly hosted by the British Library on 4 March. The event was a great success and this year included tours of the conservation studio with short presentations, generously provided by the BL conservators prior to the Committee meeting. The event was attended by over sixty national and international delegates.

The General Meeting gave the Book and Paper Committee the opportunity to introduce the new members to the Group: Ian Watson (Treasurer), Amelia Rampton (Cross Disciplinary Liaison), Louise Vaile (Private Liaison Officer), Anna Brookes (Secretary) officially started their roles. Louise's position as Private Practice Liaison is a new committee post. Private Practice representation is something the committee has long wished to develop, to provide representation and support for a growing proportion of our group membership, but which has become even more vital in the current economic climate. Please contact Louise directly at louisevaile@blueyonder.co.uk for further information, if you have issues you would like to discuss or for the committee to address,

Additionally, there were some role changes within the Group, with the new committee line-up as follows:

Stefania	Chair
Victoria	Deputy Chair and CTR Chair
Ian	Treasurer
Isabelle	Book and Paper Group sub-Editor
Amelia	Cross-Disciplinary Liaison
Louise	Private Liaison Officer
Catt	Student Liaison Officer
Heather	IT
Anna	Secretary
Mark	Regional Co-ordinator

Call for nominations

As I mentioned during our last General Meeting, I will be

stepping down from my role as Book and Paper Group Chair in March 2013 and I would like to invite members who would be interested in such a role to contact me for more information on how to apply at s.signorello@wellcome.ac.uk.

Please remember that 'The Gathering' on the B&PG part of the Icon site is there for you to share and to exchange ideas and information informally with each other. You could write about treatments, equipment, discuss ethical issues, or any conservation problems on this forum. Please visit if you have not yet done so – there are some very interesting articles to inspire you at <http://bookandpapergroupgathering.wordpress.com/>

The B&P Committee Group is currently deciding the length of our session at the Icon Positive Futures 2013 Conference, and also its possible themes. The Call for Abstracts for the conference will be issued in June but in the meantime, if you would like to be involved, please email your ideas to me at the address above. We will need volunteers to help to make our sessions in the conference as beneficial as possible for our group members, so please do consider offering your time. To thank you in return for this help, we would be able to offer a discount of £100 to two volunteer helpers to attend the conference.

Stefania Signorello

SCOTLAND GROUP

Upcoming events

NMS and NTS internship presentations at Hermiston Quay

Date in August to be confirmed, watch the Icon Scotland Group website for details

2012 Dr Harold Plenderleith Memorial Lecture

The 2012 Dr Harold Plenderleith Memorial Lecture will be presented in Glasgow on Thursday 29 November by Mark O'Neill. The title of the lecture is 'Conservation, Morality and the Meaning of Life'.

Further details will be announced shortly

TEXTILE GROUP

The second workshop 'Taking Patterns from Historic Costume' took place at the National Museums Scotland (NMS) on 10 /11 May 2012. Part of the Textile Group's 'Back to Basics' series, the course was run most ably once again by Janet Wood FRSA.

The course was fully booked and the twelve eager participants enjoyed Janet's teaching and sharing their knowledge and skills over coffee and during lunch breaks. Following the introductory session 'Toiles: what, when, how much and how? An Introduction to the art and craft of toile making applied to conservation', there was much concentration during the practical sessions, which were broken by the group sessions looking at progress and by a round of applause for the first participant to actually make a calico toile! The workshop was a great success and thanks are



Participating in the Pattern Workshop at the National Museums Scotland in May

extended to Janet and to the NMS and the Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History, both of which enabled the course to take place by allowed the participants access to historic bodices from their collections so that they could learn the basics of this skill to further their conservation work.

Looking ahead

The Textile Group symposium '**A Woven Alliance: Tapestry Yesterday, Today and for Tomorrow**' is on Friday 21 September 2012. Papers have been selected which reflect the creative, historical, technical and/or scientific partnerships and collaborations that take place when working on a tapestry project.

The event will be held at the Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh and is timed to coincide with their centenary exhibition 'Weaving the Century: Tapestry from Dovecot Studios 1912–2012'. In addition to the lively programme of talks there will be an opportunity over lunch to visit the exhibition, curated by Dr Elizabeth Cumming. This is the first major Dovecot tapestry exhibition to be presented in Scotland for over thirty years. In the evening there will be a short talk by one of the weavers on the weaving floor, followed by a drinks reception.

In addition we are offering a visit on Saturday 22 September to Historic Scotland's **Stirling Castle** to see the reweaving of a set of the Medieval tapestries 'The Hunt of the Unicorn', which form one of the centrepieces of the recent £12m refurbishment of the Royal Apartments.

All details of the programme, visits and booking information are on the Textile Group web pages. Please note that places are limited due to the size of the venue so don't delay as it will be first come, first served.

www.dovecotstudios.com
www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk

Graduate Voice

SEWN DOCUMENTS IN THE CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE REGISTERED PAPERS, NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND

by Audrey Ancé

Introduction

The Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers (CSO/RP) are part of the Irish state papers and consist of a series of incoming letters, reports, memoranda and petitions as well as architectural drawings dating from 1815 to 1924. These documents provide a valuable insight into the administration of Ireland during this period ¹.

In 2008, a five-year project was launched to catalogue the early part of the CSO/RP from 1818–1853 by two archivists. As part of the funding from the Crowley Bequest, a conservation intern who is a recent graduate is appointed each year to work on the papers. A small research project is supported as part of the internship.² In 2010/11 the research focused on those documents which were secured together by some means of stitching. The papers registered in 1822 were processed and a survey of the documents was conducted to define the various types of sewing structures and the materials used. The number of sheets that were attached together, along with the actual historical content of the documents was also noted. The survey highlighted sixty sewn documents from around 4,500 items.

One of the main problems that occurred while conducting this research was how to define the sewn documents. As the registered papers were sewn and contained several pages, it seemed appropriate to call them pamphlets. The Oxford English Dictionary [2005] gives the following definition: 'A short handwritten work or document of several pages fastened together'. However Roberts & Etherington state that a pamphlet is 'few leaves of printed matter stitched together but not bound'.³ As the CSO/RP sewn documents are not printed, this last definition confuses the description of them.

Three types of sewing structures were commonly found in the papers surveyed: those sewn through the fold, others that were side stitched or sewn near the binding edge, and those documents which were secured along the top edge or at the corner.

Sewn through the fold

The documents sewn through the fold were mainly letters, but included minutes, reports, memoranda and schedules from various senders, addressed to the Chief Secretary. These documents are composed of bifolios grouped together in one section and can contain from two to twenty seven folded sheets. In this group different sewing types were identified. There were examples of one continuous piece of thread being used, with three, four or five sewing holes in a figure of eight (Fig 1). There were also examples where small sections of thread or ribbon were used and secured with a knot on the inside of the document, known as tackets.⁴ (Fig 2) The number of sewing holes varied from document to document and some of the letters had a trimmed sheet at the front enclosing the folded pages, which acted as an envelope.

Side sewn document

Official reports were sewn through the entire thickness of

Fig 1: Document sewn with a continuous piece of thread

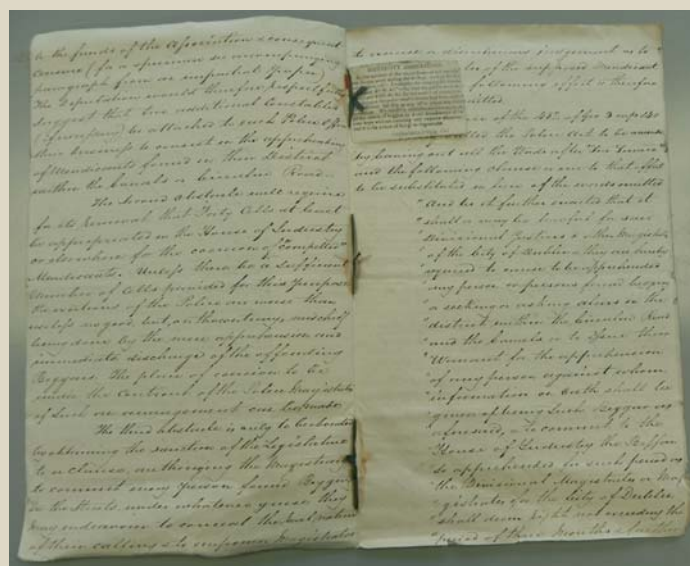
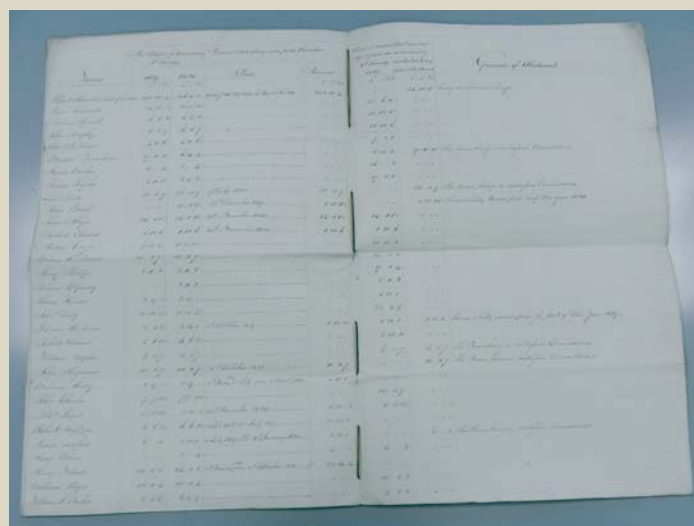


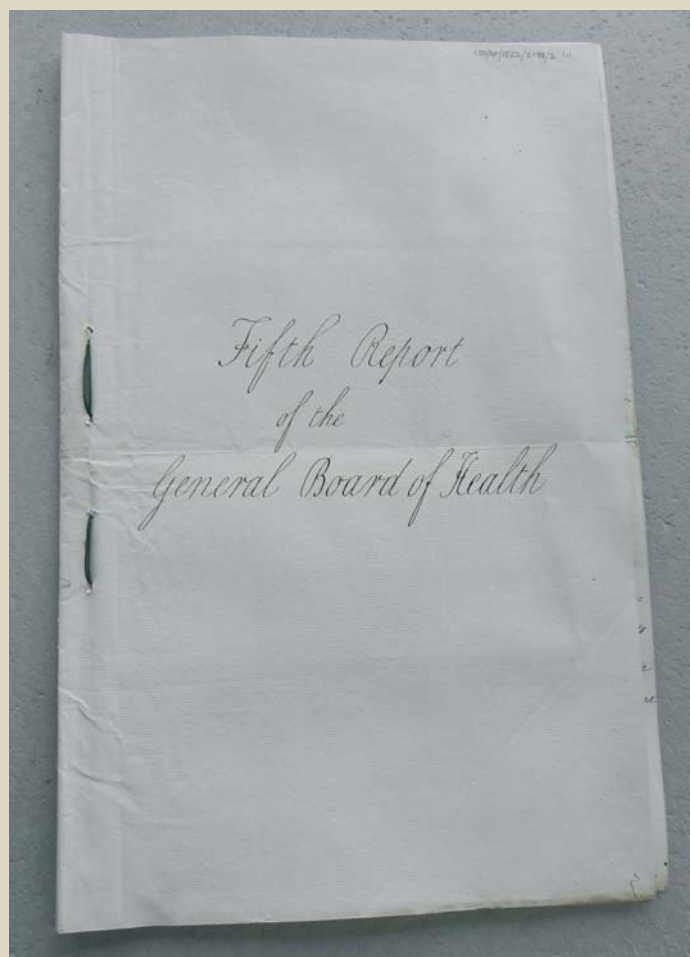
Fig 2: Tackets with small sections of thread

the text block near the binding edge (Fig 3). These documents contained between two and twelve sheets, either single or folded, with an outer folded sheet as a cover. The sewing was executed with either a continuous thread or a disrupted thread. Whilst this method of side sewing was robust against mechanical stress it offered very little flexibility when opening.

The sewing materials

The most common sewing materials found in the stitching of the papers were green cotton thread and green silk ribbon. Both these materials caused problems to the stability of the

Fig 3: Sewing through the text block



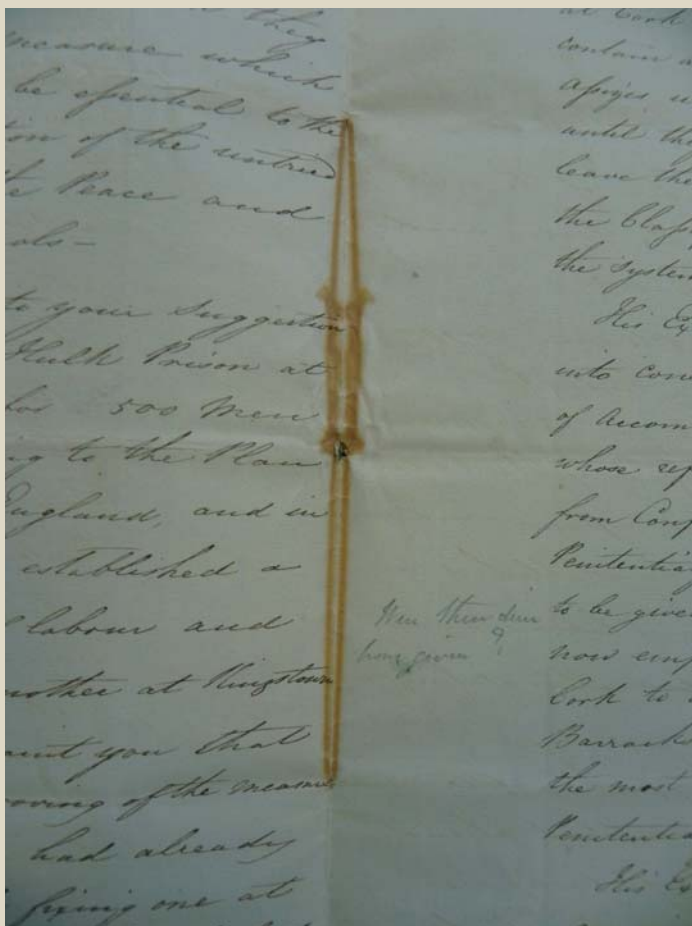


Fig 4: The paper has reacted to the sewing materials

documents. This was confirmed by the reaction of the paper where it was in direct contact with either type of sewing material. In these areas, the paper had yellowed and was brittle (Fig 4). The silk thread was also found to be fragile, delicate and degrading. On testing, both the sewing materials were confirmed to be highly acidic with a pH 2.

As it would be unsafe to leave the thread or silk in position, it was decided that the acidic sewing material would be removed and replaced with a neutral linen thread (25/3) following the original sewing pattern and holes. For the documents sewn on the side, the decision was taken not to re-sew the item, as it would make it difficult to be scanned or handled by readers. The loose pages were enclosed in an archival paper folder.

Fig 5: Documents secured along the top edge with parchment



Fig 6: A parchment guard between ribbon and document

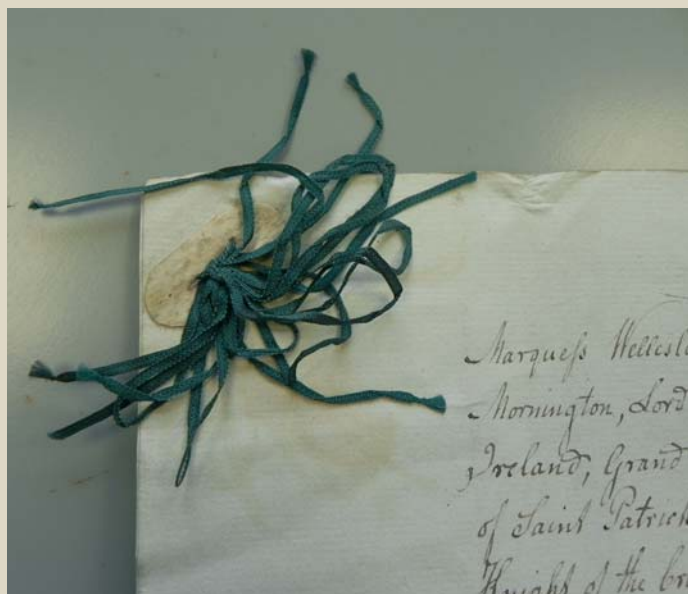
Corner/top stitched

Official documents or manuscript copies were written on single folios and were secured together at the top left hand corner or along the top edge. This type of stitching is interesting and requires careful conservation consideration. There was a great variety of materials used: parchment, paper, silk ribbon and parchment or pink linen ribbon with a wax seal. Often these attachments also included a parchment tacket through a small securing fold of parchment (Fig 5) or a silk ribbon with a parchment guard between the ribbon and the document (Fig 6). This parchment reinforcement was protecting the document from the degrading silk. It was decided to leave these attachments in situ, as the artefactual value is important. In some cases, the attachment was particularly interesting but the use of acidic sewing material was making the item fragile. A solution was devised to protect the paper by inserting an archival paper layer in between the silk and the document and to enclose the silk in Mylar to protect the documents around it. (Figs 7 & 8)

Conclusion

The sewn documents in the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers were difficult to describe, as this type of document is not often mentioned in publications and is often

Fig 7: Paper needing protection from silk ribbon



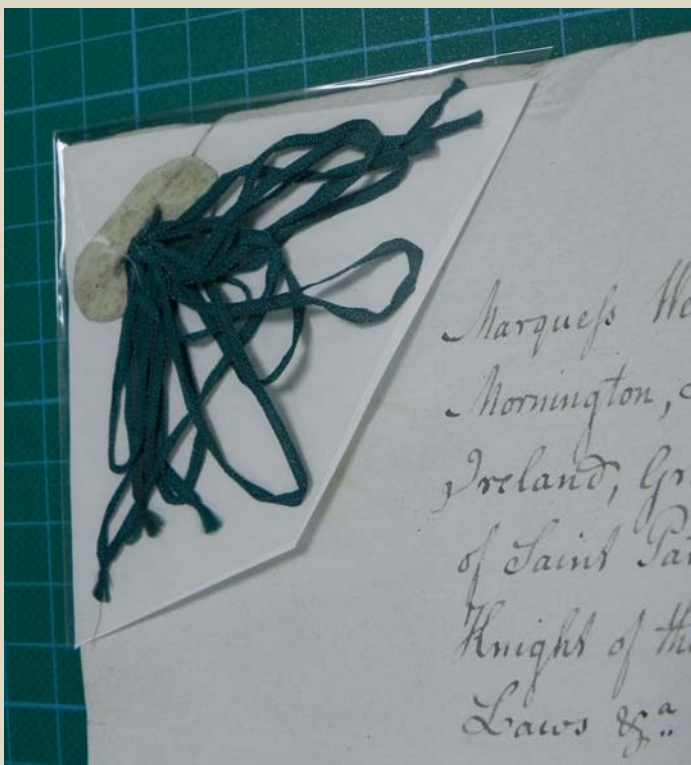


Fig 8: Protecting the paper from the ribbon

under-valued. While the documents sewn through the fold and the ones side-sewn can be included in the definition of pamphlet (as described in the Oxford English Dictionary), the corner/top attachment documents are more related to the history of the paper-clip, which did not appear until the end of the 19th century.

These documents might be seen as a detail in this collection, but it was important to highlight them and devise a solution to conserve them. Keeping the sewing styles and materials in position was important as they are part of the integrity of document and its history. The main challenge was to keep them in a stable condition while trying to find the best option to facilitate the scanning of the document and reader access.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Zoe Reid, Paper Conservator at the National Archives of Ireland, for all her help and advice. I also want to acknowledge the support of other members of staff at the National Archives, especially archivists Julie Brooks and Nigel Johnston and Frances McGee, Acting Director.

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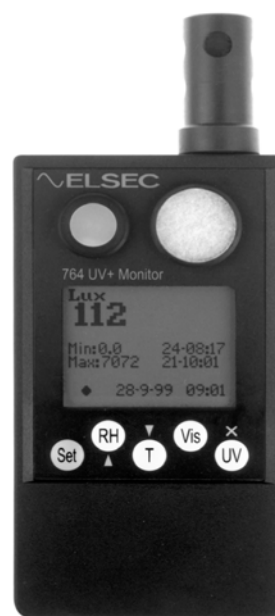
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reviews

BOOK

THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY – Upholstery conservation

Proceedings from the first International Conference in Europe focused on upholstery history held in Vadstena, Sweden

Edited by Karin Lohm

Linköping University 2012

ISBN: 978-91-7519-996-2 288 pp

I was delighted to receive an email in February this year with the news that the papers from the excellent two day upholstery symposium in Sweden in May 2005 had been published. 'The Forgotten History' was fascinating as it not only covered a broad range of topics but also highlighted the approaches taken by conservators from different countries. The symposium's focus was on the historical perspective of the materials and techniques used in upholstery rather than, as in previous conferences, looking at current conservation treatments of upholstered furniture purely from a technical point of view. In addition, the conference wanted to put this information in context; if the right questions are asked, supported by research on the use of materials and techniques, the conservator's investigative antennae will be all the sharper.

So what does this new book offer? It brings together, in an easily accessible format, a considerable amount of historical information on the source and use of upholstery materials and the techniques used across Europe and the US covering five centuries from 17th to the 21st century. The papers span the development in upholstery from the cushion and squab to fixed upholstery, and the use of silk, wool and feathers to the introduction of jute, horsehair and springs and then on to foam rubber, Ethafoam® and polyester twill fabric. It also offers new investigative, non destructive techniques such as the use of a portable X-radiographic unit. As a reference book, it will be invaluable to the conservator to help identify different schemes of work, their place historically and who might have undertaken the work.

This hardback book is lavishly illustrated with colour photos, line drawings and 280 pages of information, of which broadly 50% covers historical information and 50% are case studies. The historical information covers topics such as the evolution of American upholstery techniques to the form and use of slipcovers and the introduction, manufacture and development of upholstery springs. The case studies range from the trimmings on carriages to the conservation dilemmas of conserving a wheelchair, from examining and recording modern upholstery techniques to the representation of a camel back sofa. The

thoughtful discussions and openness of the authors as well as their generosity in detailing, for example, in appendices tables for 'spring documentation chart' and 'chronology of patents' for springs, makes for a very useful addition to any library.

In the editor's introduction, Karin Lohm, explains that it was a conscious choice not to edit the authors' texts in any way. This is my only sadness as some of the text would have benefited from being formatted with subtitles to break up long passages. In such a handsome volume, it is a pity that there is this minor mar.

I thoroughly enjoyed re-reading all these papers (alongside my notes!) and realising that I had only captured a fraction of the information now available in this book. By publishing these papers, the considerable research carried out in the last decade or so is now available to a much wider audience.

Maria Jordan ACR

CONFERENCE

CONNECTING TO CONSERVATION: OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

**AIC 40th Annual Meeting
Albuquerque, New Mexico
May 8–11 2012**

The theme of the American Institute of Conservation's 40th Annual Meeting was outreach and advocacy in conservation, an 'exploration of how conservation connects with allied professionals, the press, our clients, and the general public'. AIC received over two hundred and seventy five abstracts for the conference, showing just how important the role of the conservator in the public realm has become in recent years. Featuring over ninety papers, approximately eight hundred delegates attended the three day conference, which also included speciality sessions, posters, outreach sessions, workshops, a portfolio development session for students and recent graduates, tours, and an exhibitors' hall. The opening reception was held at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History located in the Old Town.

Keynote speakers

Samuel Jones, associate of Demos, gave the first keynote speech on the place of culture in society, using his 2008 publication 'It's a Material World: Caring for the Public Realm'. Discussing the power that conservation could have in public, Jones suggested that a new, wider approach to thinking about the value of conservation was necessary; that it connects people to social and cultural values. **Tyler Green**, an influential arts journalist based in Washington DC, then spoke on the current state of arts journalism today and his perspectives on what makes conservation projects worthy of public



The location for the AIC conference 2012, Albuquerque Convention Centre, New Mexico

attention in the news. His tips included using social media like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Wikipedia to publicise conservation projects and going directly to the audience through these digital media agents. He also suggested that museums need to share conservation stories more readily and to demonstrate all of the activities undertaken by the museum, noting that conservation stories are regularly the most popular on his podcast 'Modern Art Notes'.

The concluding keynote speech was given by Dr. **Anne-Imelda Radice** on the subject of advocacy within political circles, impacting public policy and injecting the importance for caring for cultural heritage into the lives of the public through strategic partnerships and clear communication. A session then followed for all delegates on the subject of articulating value; that conservation has an intrinsic value to society as a whole, not only monetarily but through ethics and expression of identity. The idea that preservation is responsible spending was also introduced in this session, along with some lively discussion. A light-hearted and lively 'Great Debate' concluded the final day.

Textile Speciality Group Sessions

The textile speciality talks were the main sessions that I attended, and the outreach and advocacy topics included those such as *Conservation Outreach Activities at the Minnesota Historical Society* by **Sherelyn Ogden**; *Camera, Rolling, Speed...And Action: Exhibiting the Conservation of Banners through Film* given by **Leanne Tonkin** of the People's History Museum, Manchester, UK and an *Innovative Approach to Preservation for Dispersed Collections* by **David Bayne** and **Emily Schuetz**. I gave a paper on *RAKSHA- Raising Awareness of Textile Conservation in India*; one of the V&A projects for conservation outreach. **Cara Varnell** of the Textile Arts Conservation Studio in California gave recommendations for publicity-shy conservators who may find themselves working on a high-profile project.

The following day's session focussed mainly on practical treatments including a fascinating account of the history of mounting flat textiles at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York by **Christine Giuntini** and *Recent Advances in Dating Silk and Other Innovations in Mass Spectrometry at the Smithsonian Institution* given by **Mary W. Ballard**. A *Successful Treatment Method for Reducing Dye Bleed on a 19th Century Sampler* was discussed by **Katherine Sahmel** and **Laura Mina**, former and current



The Old Town, near to The Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, has many traditional adobe-style buildings

Mellon Fellows in Textile Costume and Textiles Conservation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art respectively. A paper by **Miriam Murphy**, Kress Conservation Fellow at the Smithsonian, on digitally printed fabrics concluded these sessions.

Other group speciality sessions focussed on projects from architecture, wooden artefacts, paintings, photographic materials, objects, book and paper, electronic media and research and technical studies. These included *Mass Deacidification Today*, *Teaching conservation to non-native English speakers*; *Examining and conserving an Egyptian Coffin from 380–250 B.C.E.*; *the Treatment of a Mi'kmaq box made of birchbark, porcupine quills and iron-dyed spruce root* and *Understanding the painter: documentation and technical evaluations*, amongst many others.

The conference was a great opportunity to hear papers from a variety of speakers and the programme was so full it was only a shame that I could not hear all of the papers. AIC and the speciality group committees did a fantastic job of organising and the event could not have run smoother, aided by the many slices of cake and cookies required to keep conservators going! All the international speakers were welcomed warmly and it was great to see a very active group of conservators all joining in organising, discussing the issues and sharing their experiences. Throughout the conference, regular postings on the AIC blog kept those unable to attend informed of the day's events. Official postprints of the proceedings are to follow shortly.

The next meeting will be held from May 29–June 1 2013 in Indiana, Indianapolis, and the theme will be 'The Contemporary in Art'.

Sarah Glenn Textile Conservator
V&A Museum, London

With thanks to AIC, in particular the Textile Speciality Group and the Kress Foundation for supporting my attendance at the conference.

AIC blog: www.conservators-converse.org

Modern Art Notes:

blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes

SEMINARS

RISK MANAGEMENT IN COLLECTIONS CARE

**University of Cambridge Museums
Masterclasses in Collections Care**
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
30 March 2012

Opening the first of the University of Cambridge Museums' Masterclasses in Collections Care, **Julie Dawson** remarked on the combination of increasingly wide interest and a certain hesitancy, born of misunderstanding, concerning the subject of the day's seminar, Risk Management in Collections Care. Her comments were well judged as the seminar, following Stefan Michalski's highly successful lecture at University College London three weeks earlier, was fully booked and the discursive, questioning spirit which prevailed in the Cambridge seminar, drawing together experts in the subject and conservators 'in the field' keen to see what a risk-based approach could offer them, made for a stimulating, good-humoured meeting.

The format of this one-day seminar, although compressed, worked very well, the morning being devoted to presentations from three lecturers with considerable experience of the risk-management approach to collections care, and the afternoon given over to a practical exercise using three of the Fitzwilliam's galleries. Clearly each of the morning's presentations was capable of expansion, and more open discussion time would have been a bonus; but in the current economic climate, where budgets are still being cut and overnight accommodation for longer courses raises costs which few can meet, this was a format which others would do well to emulate. Indeed, there is a certain energy and excitement about an intensive course which some longer formats seem to lack. (And how many courses have you attended where the speakers provide selection bowls of tempting Dutch sweets to help fuel brain-work on a Friday afternoon?)

The morning's lectures were carefully selected to give a compressed but incisive overview of the risk management technique as applied to collections care. As each of the speakers pointed out, risk management is not a new idea dreamed up by preservation managers, but an internationally recognised approach to dealing with the difficult and uncertain practicalities of life which can ruin so many good theories when the ideals and realities collide. **Agnes Brokerhof**, of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (formerly ICN), started the morning session by summarising the risk-management process. The strength of her lecture was rooted in her deep understanding and emphasis on practical applications of the risk-management model.



Photo: Agnes Brokerhof

At the Risk Management Masterclass

One of the most engaging points of the whole seminar was, for me at least, the way in which this 'theoretical' approach to our work is grounded in, and constantly focuses one on, every-day, practical situations by asking highly focussed questions: what, exactly, are the major risks to the survival and use of the objects we are trying to preserve? How can we maximise their long-term preservation as well as their accessibility? What are the practical and financial implications of our decisions? How are our necessarily limited resources best allocated? Conservation as a profession seems to be wary of the idea of ranking objects and collections in order of 'value', either in terms of historical significance or market price, to the point of wanting to side-step this fundamental issue completely. I have a feeling that this stems from bitter experience of financially insignificant but archeologically valuable artefacts having been ruined by repair and restoration work in the past – and I speak as one working in libraries of medieval manuscripts whose 'shabby' original bindings have been ripped off and thrown away in the fairly recent past, to be replaced by unsympathetic modern work which shows off gold tooling rather well.

Risk management prompts and encourages us to redress the balance and enables conservators to communicate concerns about loss of value and accessibility to higher management in the language that managers and finance directors find easy to assimilate. The model, as Brokerhof was keen to point out, has its share of flaws – all models, as she commented, are flawed, but some are more useful than others – and one can be put off by the numerical systems; but the emphasis on wide communication and consensus to arrive at a numerical comparison of a range of risks is powerful.

That power, as **Andor Vince** demonstrated in his case study, can have remarkable results in increasing awareness of significance as well as risk, and result in dramatic increases of budget. But that is not to say that the process is without controversy, as Vince's example of quantifying the impact on 'value'/significance of various types of damage on six paintings demonstrated. Within seconds, good-tempered but increasingly heated arguments broke out amongst delegates, as different perceptions and scenarios were aired! Some critics have cited this sort of uncertainty as a fundamental flaw in the risk management approach: subjective responses refuse to fit into the formula. But to me, the fact that assumptions have to be justified and argued by a wide range of stake-holders is

important in itself, and as Vince argued, the numerical part of the process is not absolute but relative, the point being to weigh up risks, to assess what we do and, equally important, don't know, and to arrive at a balance of value/significance in collections and the probable risks likely to affect them which 'feels right' to the stakeholders.

Anna Bulow, of The National Archive, closed the morning session with a presentation on Cost-effectiveness in Collection Management, based on her experience of applying risk management strategies at TNA and measuring cost-effectiveness using quality evaluation models developed in the health-care sector to assess the impact of interventions in the form of Quality Adjusted Life Years. Once again, issues of value are of crucial importance, but Bulow highlighted a shift in attitudes from the traditional keeper's concern with maintaining value to the current manager's emphasis on optimising quality of and accessibility to the collections they care for. Many conservators have tended to become agitated at this idea, pointing out the damage which readers and users of archival and museum objects can do; but I, as a professional at the bench who increasingly views 'conservation' as an unfortunate necessity rather than an unalloyed blessing, was particularly pleased to hear Bulow point out that an institution's staff tend to cause more problems than its users. Risk Management involves questioning assumptions and recognising the wider context, which is a useful exercise in itself for our profession, made up as it is from people who are generally highly focussed on objects per se more than the value and utility of collections to our understanding of ourselves.

Group-work in the afternoon allowed delegates to try out and debate the risk management process, using three of the Fitzwilliam's galleries (one of which houses the three vases smashed by a visitor falling down the adjacent staircase) to assess 'live' risks. The speakers then guided us through the process of evaluating the various risks using post-it notes and grids marked out on the walls of the seminar room. This simple approach was highly effective and generated interesting debates within and between the groups as we argued for our decisions and modified ideas in the light of other views. These debates, the process of risk management, are one of the method's great benefits and dispel the myth that number-crunching to rid ourselves of uncertainty is the flawed goal. The numbers generated by this method are relative, not absolute, allowing us to make a better attempt at comparing unlike factors.

A wise old friend remarked that timid people often become mathematicians because there is safety in numbers. Groan as you will at that but the comment neatly captures a couple of health warnings which I think need

to accompany this useful approach to collections care. The first is that those hoping that Risk Management will tie up all the problematic loose ends in their professional lives are very much mistaken, for risks, as well as significance values, change over time and the satisfying bar graphs which the process allows one to create are not carved in stone. The second warning is that numbers, particularly when decimal points are involved, can give a false sense of security and certainty. Andor Vince, as one of his examples, argued that knowing that there is an 80% chance of rain tomorrow is more useful than being told that it is likely to rain. But how far can that 80% be pushed before it is no longer useful because it is not truthful? Is a 90% chance more likely to affect my actions, i.e. taking my umbrella, and a 72.467%, for example, less likely to affect the decision. As an Englishman, I am inclined to take my umbrella with me every day; but then again, I am also a conservator, and liable to be highly sensitised to risks! The main use of the statistics is in prioritising actions – i.e. forget about going to buy a new umbrella and use the time to get maintenance to help sheet up the new hole in the roof over my rare books stack.

Many thanks to all the lecturers and to the Fitzwilliam Museum, particularly to Andor Vince as organiser, for a useful and highly enjoyable seminar: the standard is set high for the rest of this Masterclass series.

Edward Cheese ACR
Conservation Manager
Cambridge Colleges' Conservation Consortium

IDAP PARCHMENT ANALYSIS **Icon Book and Paper Group CTR** **The National Archives, London** **27–30 March 2012**

IDAP: Improved Damage Assessment of Parchment. Diagnostic methodology for assessing the condition of parchment documents and collections

The IDAP workshop, organised by the Book and Paper Group's CTR committee and kindly hosted by the conservation studio of the Collection Care Department at The National Archives, was a fantastic opportunity for all delegates with a focused interest in the development of parchment analysis. They came from a wide range of institutions around the world.

The tutors **Dr. René Larsen**, **Dorte Vestergaard Poulsen** and **Kathleen Mühlen Axelsson**, from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Conservation highlighted immediately that our learning would be achieved through our practical work, work that would prompt further questions and in-depth enquiry. First, we learnt about the IDAP EU project which has been investigating parchment ageing and

deterioration mechanisms at macroscopic, microscopic, mesoscopic (collagen fibril) and nanoscopic (micro fibril) levels, and has created databases for the identification of the state of preservation of ancient parchments along with the evaluation of their rates of deterioration. Results demonstrate that there are strong correlations between damage observed on all these levels of observation.

Within the IDAP project scientists and conservators have been working together training their eye and perfecting their working practice assessing parchment collections, in order to build up a central database for damage assessment and research into parchment materials. Consequently, the IDAP network has been developed in order to provide an interactive tool with a wide research scope for conservation professionals, researchers and educators. Those eligible for membership of the network are IDAP partners, cultural heritage and research institutions, as well as private professional conservators trained in the efficient use of the IDAP assessment methods and database facilities.

The use of the IDAP assessment program has the following applications:

- diagnosis of the condition of a parchment object before conservation treatment, storage and exhibition requirements
- establishing conditions of collections i.e. through assessment by random sampling, long term control of the condition of individual items and collections by regular assessment
- evaluation and control of established conservation methods
- the development of new conservation methods

Parchment is a highly complex material due to the numerous uncertainties associated with its production. Factors that contribute to the complexities in degradation are the qualities of raw materials and the manufacturing processes. Production practices vary from country to country, century to century, as do the sequence of operations and duration of the different process steps. Parchment skins are not homogeneous, so their condition can vary considerably over the membrane. Parchment documents most often pose complex forms of deterioration and sometimes these can be so extreme that accessing the documents is prohibited by extensive distortion.

The deterioration of parchment can be summarised as: shrinkage or denaturation, brittleness, overall or localised distortion, tears and lacunae, mould damage, and weakness or loss of inks and pigments. Conservators have limited treatment options, using the application of controlled moisture through either aqueous or solvent-based processes in order to unroll, separate or

lightly flatten parchment documents for access, for example early multiple account/inventory rolls. It was stressed that current research indicates that any humidity is thought to accelerate the deterioration of collagen, so it would be very important to identify the level of physical disintegration at which parchment becomes significantly sensitive to humidity and moisture treatments.

There are two interactive mechanisms causing deterioration of the collagen structure in parchment. In humid storage conditions, acid hydrolysis and oxidation are assumed to result in gelatinisation, the transformation of the collagen fibres into a gelatine-like substance, a process thought also to be encouraged by humidification treatments. In dry storage conditions, oxidation results in cross-linking, fibre fragmentation and brittleness. Fluctuating RH and temperature dramatically accelerate the above processes. The damage may progress faster in some areas or may be only superficial or penetrate part or the whole structure. The deterioration is known to be accompanied by a fall in hydrothermal stability which is expressed by the shrinkage temperature T_s and continues to decrease with increasing deterioration of the collagen fibre. T_s is measured by heating a parchment fibre sample in water. Evidence indicates that the natural degradation pattern of collagen fibre structure is comparable to the changes observed during T_s measurements. These decreasing measurements can be seen as an accelerated visual model of the parchment degradation.

It is thus important to understand that visual observations alone can prove unreliable in condition assessment of parchment documents. Fibre samples from different positions within the same document can reveal great difference in level of deterioration, i.e. from fibres in gelatinised state to almost intact fibres.

If a relationship between damage detected at the different structural levels can be uncovered, more reliable methods of assessment of damage on the macro- and the microscopic level may be developed to help end users in their efforts to optimise treatment and storage of historic parchments.

- Part 1 of the assessment involves all descriptive information of the chosen parchment, IDAP and original identification numbers, ownership, origin, century, date, type of object, storage and present history, hair hole pattern, animal origin, overall colour, damage/properties of parchment and visible categorisation, loss of surface media and related corrosion, photo documentation.
- In part 2, a specific area is chosen onto which all visual identification takes place

such as thickness, flexibility, transparency, transmission of light, colour, followed by an extensive list of surface and damage appearance, each with its relevant descriptor.

- Part 3 covers the microscopic analysis on the specific sample area for damage categorisation and shrinkage temperature. The sample is carefully observed and assessed in both dry and wet states under the microscope. Individual fibres are assessed on slides and characterised accordingly. Undamaged fibres appear long with a relative even and smooth surface with helical formations, whereas damaged fibres can appear frayed, split, flat, cracked, shrunken, bundled, gel-like and, lastly, dissolving. A great deal of experience is required to gain the ability to distinguish these features. The whole assessment is highly dependent on the quality and precision of the visual descriptions and the analysis.

The course was enriched by the presentation and use of high quality microscopes by Leica and space saving microscope mounting systems such as a specialised table mounted stand and a mobile floor stand which could also double up as a photography stand, provided by Opto. Delegates showed interest in the versatile jointed couplers which enabled precise illumination for detailed microscope work. The thermoanalysis instrument for measurement of T_s was performed with apparatus on loan from Mettler Toledo, a hot stage system that gradually and accurately increases temperature in order to record the denaturation of the parchment fibres. All the above equipment was specifically sourced for its quality and ease of use and was generously loaned for the duration of the course.

Although specialist equipment is required to conduct the fibre assessment and the T_s measurements, the tutors reported that accurate results have been successfully collected by simpler methods available to a basic conservation lab.

The presentations were very concise, enabling the delegates to work methodically through the IDAP assessment form and the tutors were always on hand to help with progress. We were taken through the form step by step in small groups completing in sequence the three parts and discussing results. The tutors' in-depth knowledge was inspiring. Another very useful session was a concise presentation of past and current parchment conservation and preservation treatments, during which delegates contributed their personal experiences and practical knowledge.

The results of the fibre damage categorisation ranging between undamaged (1), some damage (2), damaged (3) and

heavy damage (4) generally concurred with the visible deterioration recorded. However, in some cases, samples chosen from less damaged areas, i.e. not considered as heavily damaged by visual identification means, recorded the rounded average of the third category (the average combines shrinkage temperature and fibre assessment). One reason for this can be that these samples are borderline. In some cases, fibres that seem intact may be in a pre-gelatinised state, transforming morphologically when they come in contact with humidity. This type of damage may not give rise to the recognisable yellowing of the parchment surface, which is mostly the case in a gelatinised parchment surface.

The workshop was particularly enlightening for me as a teacher of parchment conservation on the BA and MA courses at Camberwell College of Arts, London. I can now reappraise and utilise the visual identification methodology in the studio practice. By using the IDAP form as a damage assessment tool, a student can obtain all the fundamental understanding of the nature, behaviour and deterioration mechanisms of parchment. This is invaluable for grasping the subsequent implications of these issues for conservation. The ongoing IDAP evidence can thus support the evaluations of the current conservation processes and general approaches to treatment options. I am currently investigating how to integrate elements of the IDAP principles into training activities and adapt them as a learning program. This would require discussion and approval by the IDAP body.

A comprehensive example of the use of IDAP facilitating an important project is the Codex Sinaiticus parchment assessment model developed at the British Library, partner to the IDAP EU. The model has utilised the diagnostic methodology in order to gather objective and consistent data. As parts of the Codex reside in four locations, transferable accuracy and repeatability were vitally important requirements for comparisons with future assessments that will determine the progress of deterioration.

To conclude, even with all the current research, parchment and its conservation remains highly problematic. The consequences of treatment are still not fully established. It is only through methodically collecting such information that significant advances in the safe conservation / preservation of parchment documents can be made.

I would like to give a big thank you to Victoria Stevens and other members of the Icon Book and Paper Group CTR for putting in the time and effort to organise a very successful workshop. Moreover, the CTR was able to offer the university a subsidised place, which in the current financial climate

was greatly appreciated.

The CTR committee would very much like to thank Opto, Leica Microsystems, Mettler Toledo and the Wellcome Trust for their generous loan of the equipment for this course.

Eleni Katsiani Book and Paper Conservator
Associate Lecturer Camberwell College of Arts, London

LECTURE

RECENT ADVANCES IN THE ANALYSIS AND DIAGNOSIS OF PARCHMENT DAMAGE

presented by **Dr René Larsen**,
Icon Book and Paper Group CTR
London College of Communications,
28 March 2012

.....
The Book and Paper Group were fortunate to be able to provide members with access to an update of Dr Larsen's research on parchment degradation in this free evening lecture, as an additional benefit to the CTR IDAP Parchment Analysis Workshop held at The National Archives during the same week and described above. To a packed lecture theatre **Dr Larsen** set out a comprehensive overview and discussion of the research that he and his colleagues had conducted at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Conservation under the recent EC IDAP and ongoing MEMORI projects.

Dr Larsen showed these projects to be a collaboration between scientists and conservators co-operatively working to provide sound and relevant results. The ultimate aim is to help conservators in their approach to parchment handling, treatment and storage by enabling them to relate visual damage to results obtained by advanced analytical methods. In this, the project encouraged conservators to submit their assessment findings to the database produced under the IDAP project following training at the courses which the research team operate, such as the Parchment Analysis Workshop. Dr Larsen highlighted the importance of these workshops, with gratifying new discoveries being made at each of these training sessions – a true case of everyone involved learning something new.

The lecture opened with an introduction to parchment, its production methods, structure and composition. The degradation factors were highlighted, a combination of biological, chemical and physical forces, with the effect of the chemical and the physical being the predominant subject of the lecture. Using the IDAP project's basic premise that what happens to the parchment fibres at a molecular level must always be visible, Dr Larsen went on to discuss the amazing complexity of the protein chains and their reactions specifically to water, going down the scale from the macroscopic,

to the microscopic, mesoscopic, nanoscopic and molecular level. He began by differentiating between the reactive hydrophilic side chain areas of the molecules, which provide strength and flexibility, and the hydrophobic side chains which allow the molecule to twist. When water enters the hydrophilic areas the ionic bonds between the reactive side chains are broken causing swelling of the fibre structure, the level of which is determined not only by the extent of the cross linking but also by its pH, salt content and the thickness of the affected sample.

By comparing both new and historic samples several aspects of parchment degradation were shown. This started with a discussion of what happens during oxidation and hydrolysis of the parchment fibres, their research having indicated which amino acids and amino acid tripeptide segments are prone to oxidation. Dr Larsen showed how hydrolysis splits the parchment into individual amino acid chains and oxidation causes scission in the fibre and the formation of free radicals, which sets up a chain reaction leading ultimately to acidity within the sample. He went on to discuss the issue of the formation of calcite from the calcium components present from the production process which can move to the surface of the parchment when it is exposed to moisture. This causes inflexibility leading to surface cracking and gelatinisation and the potential disruption of the media layer.

Types of damage were then shown, including unwinding, broken, split and frayed fibres. Usefully, Dr Larsen clearly illustrated the four levels of damage determined by the research according to the percentage of fibres affected when viewed microscopically, with parchment being classed as undamaged where less than 30% of fibres were affected and severely damaged when this figure rose to more than 75%. Reassuringly, Dr Larsen stressed that no sample would display all fibres intact.

A discussion of fibre morphology followed with the different types of chain shape – ropes, strips and 'pearls on a string' linkages – all fully illustrated. During artificial ageing and comparative studies of historic parchment, the evidence of the research indicates that the natural degradation pattern of the parchment fibre structure is comparable to that observed during shrinkage, allowing results to be extrapolated to visually assess the condition of a given sample before treatment.

As a dramatic denouement, Dr Larsen highlighted the influence of ethanol on parchment, which analysis has now also been shown to cause fibre shrinkage in some instances. Various samples were shown which did not distinguish between the fibre types affected by ethanol and those affected by water, making it difficult to determine

without the fibre assessment test which would have the least damaging effect during treatment. This observation clearly adds a layer of complexity to the determination of treatment strategy but at the same time helps the development of a more sophisticated model of the behaviour of parchment.

Dr Larsen concluded the lecture by giving members an overview of the MEMORI project, a pan-European research project to assess the effect of volatile organic compounds on moveable cultural heritage, and in his case, specifically parchment. Although the research into the effect of ethanol on parchment was somewhat of a setback in terms of treatment options for conservators, the delegates left feeling encouraged and reassured that a framework for the effective handling, storage and treatment of the parchment items in the collections they care for may not be too far away.

Victoria Stephens ACR

VISIT

STIRLING CASTLE Icon Scotland Group 4 May 2012

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A group of very enthusiastic conservators, archivists and one local studies librarian met on a chill, windy day at Stirling Castle for a tour of the refurbished Great Hall and Royal Apartments from Richard Welander of Historic Scotland (HS) and his colleagues.

We set off by viewing the Queen Anne Gardens, then had a brief tour of the battlements from Guide, **Gary D'Arcy**, who explained why Stirling has long been such an important location for a castle. Its very important geo-strategic position is reflected in the number of battle sites within sight of the battlements, including the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297 and, of course, Bannockburn in 1314. Our guide explained that all castles change over time and the recent refurbishment of portions of the castle aims to allow the visitor to explore these changes.

The first talking point was the colour of the Royal Palace, which is coated in several layers of yellow ochre lime wash. Several different colours of finish had been found during investigations but when references to 'King's Gold' were found in royal accounts, this prompted the decision to reinstate it, which was tremendously controversial at the time. The people of Stirling (of whom I am one!) took some time to get used to it and there's no doubt it looks absolutely stunning against a brilliant blue sky on a sunny day. Historically, parts of the castle were also harled, though HS have decided not to re-apply this, stating there is 'no need' and that the limewash on its own adequately protects the stonework.



The amazing recreated Stirling Heads

The tour next took in the Great Hall with its magnificent oak hammerbeam roof, constructed from the box cut heart of four hundred trees. No nails, screws or glue were used in the construction – it is all held together by 3228 hand carved wooden pegs. The Hall had previously been a military barracks, which HS decided to remove to reinstate the Hall. It would be interesting to see what the barracks had looked like, and I wonder whether interpretation of the soldiers' experience in the barracks from the 1800s onwards would not have been just as big a tourist attraction. However, the Hall is undoubtedly impressive and provides a very satisfactory venue for various events and productions.

The Chapel Royal boasts restored friezes by Valentine Jenkins and is a very atmospheric space; HS have found that when used for musical events notes 'hang' in the air very well. I have been to a concert here and can certainly vouch for the pleasantness and acoustic quality of the room. Next, we viewed the Royal Apartments, where much effort has gone into re-creating some of the décor, fixtures and fittings. Previously, visitors walked through empty stone walled rooms, which gave little sense of being 'royal'. HS faced several challenges as they set about the work including treating dampness, asbestos and concrete removal, before essentially ending up with a blank canvas. This portion of the tour certainly provoked more discussion and comment from the party, including questions about the methodology of the project, the research, the evidence which informed their decisions and the methods of interpretation.

Richard Welander (Head of Collections, Historic Scotland) explained that they had aimed to create a visitor experience which gave 'more sense of place, atmosphere and colour which the visitor retains long after

The bold colour of the Royal Palace



The hammerbeam roof of the Great Hall

names and dates are gone'. The apartments feature painted friezes on the walls with bright and bold designs. The colours are based on fragments found, though the actual paint in the recreation comprises a mixture of traditional paints through to modern acrylics. One colleague commented that she would have liked to have seen a lot more information about why the designs were chosen for the room and what research showed they were appropriate. Has similar decoration been found in other royal apartments of similar age? Is there enough information given to visitors about the refurbishment and methodology, or do visitors simply walk through without realising this is a recreation rather than a restoration? Apart from sound tours, there is very little interpretation on show, though the costumed interpreters are undoubtedly lively and informative and interact to bring the castle experience alive, especially for the younger visitor. One corridor was left bare to show the building as it appears in its unadorned state, however there is nothing to indicate that this is the case and one wonders if most visitors realise it is deliberate or if they simply stroll through.

The Stirling Heads are bright, bold and colourful. These heads, positioned in the ceiling of the King's chamber, feature the faces of monarchs, gods, and members of the court such as the joker and were described by one young visitor as 'James V's facebook of friends'. Visitors are generally amazed by the impact of these heads and seeing them in situ is definitely striking. The recreated heads were carved by John Donaldson, who was able to make discoveries about the quality and style of the originals along the way. Again, a colleague commented she would have liked to have seen more of this understanding being passed along to visitors.

The tapestries in the King's chamber also provoked a lot of discussion. They are undeniably beautiful, and once complete, the series can be read as an allegory of love or a Christian parable. People in the group wished there had been more information about their origins, the reason for choosing this design, and how visitors are made aware of this. The tapestries portray the Hunting of the Unicorn and are based on 15th Century originals from the Low Countries now held in New York. They are referred to as the 'Stirling Tapestries' in HS interpretation – it is known that James V owned two sets of tapestries featuring a unicorn, but which design is unknown. Richard Welander was very open about musing whether they could or should have chosen another design and



The Chapel Royal frieze

very up-front about the rooms being a recreation aimed at boosting the visitor experience, and balancing the demands of history, evidence, practicality and those of the day to day visitor. The weaving of the tapestries was managed by West Dean College, Sussex, and there is a tapestry studio at the Castle to visit.

One of the most striking exhibits for me personally was the original Stirling Heads. The exhibition area is beautifully designed and lit and I particularly liked the way the heads were mounted. They appear to 'float' in the cases and we learned that the mount also features a quick release system to allow them to be removed quickly in the event of a disaster. The thirty six original Heads (plus one modern addition) are rare survivors of the mid 16th century and this exhibition gallery allow visitors to view them in very close details. There are also fun interactives to play with to bring the heads alive for the younger visitor. The cases are actively climate controlled and the gallery closely monitored by HS to deal with cold flow of air through the room and the effect of 400,000 damp visitors on the objects. Seeing the recreations in situ earlier in the tour definitely helped me appreciate the real objects and I had a much better understanding of their place, purpose and importance through both displays.

At this point most in the tour decided to take time out for tea or depart. There is such an incredible amount to see that the experience can be quite overwhelming. The richness and variety of images and information was astounding, though in truth we only toured a very small portion of the entire building. For those who carried on exploring there was also the innovative 'Stirling Skeletons' gallery, where interpretation is based on forensic procedure as featured in the BBC's Cold Case programme. This gallery is great fun, opens up the subject matter in a whole new way and mixes traditional interpretation with new technology to great effect. For those who didn't make it to this part, I would urge you to do so; it is really worthwhile, as is a visit to the entire castle.

Many thanks to Richard Welander, Eleanor Muir (Visitor Experience Manager) and Gary D'Arcy (Guide & Re-enactor) for welcoming us to the castle and guiding us around. Thanks also to Erica Kotze of Icon who organised the trip. More information can be found on Stirling Castle and its history at www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk/home.htm

Jane Petrie, Assistant Archivist, Stirling Council Archive

in practice

THE CREATION OF A CUSTOM-MADE CRADLE TO MINIMISE RISK DURING THE DIGITISATION PROCESS

by Flavio Marzo, book conservator working at the British Library Centre for Conservation

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, as part of the long-term digitisation strategy, the British Library digitised two hundred and fifty early Greek manuscripts. This was the first phase of an ongoing externally-funded project to digitise the entire Greek manuscript collection. The aim was to facilitate wider access to readers nationally and internationally and to help reduce the amount of physical and chemically-induced harm to their future preservation. The manuscripts chosen for digitisation ranged in condition from fair to good. All those in poor condition were excluded from digitisation and sent to be treated or put aside for later conservation.

The following article describes the creation of a book cradle designed for the handling of manuscripts during the digitisation process and provides instructions for its assembly.

Establishing the risks

The need for a book support for the digitisation process was highlighted during a risk assessment undertaken at the beginning of the project. This collection care risk assessment was aimed at identifying possible causes of harm to the manuscripts and to help mitigate such risks, whilst enabling the ease of project workflow. To manage these requirements, the project included the work of a full-time book conservator to evaluate the risks attached to the digitisation of this collection.

It was established quite early that the main risk factors were around the handling processes, particularly during

- Transport
- Digitisation in studios
- Storage

The main focus of the assessment was to evaluate the risks to manuscripts through the process of mechanical handling throughout the whole project and some aspects of storage.

As handling presented the highest risk overall, it was imperative that all those involved in the process of handling should first observe some of the basic preservation rules, such as clean hands, ensuring that the correct mechanisms were in place, such as trolleys and cradles, and establishing safe access routes before moving items from one place to another.

Handling during the actual digitisation process was identified as presenting the highest risk of all. It was important to consider the worst-case scenario, as handling during this process does not always take place in the presence of the collection care staff.

The need for the cradle

In order to mitigate those risks, it was decided to design and develop an easy-to-use and adaptable book cradle. It was intended to support manuscripts whilst they were being digitised.

The book cradle was designed to be used only where one page at a time was being photographed or digitised. It was used with a common photographic stand with the camera placed perpendicular to the page to be digitised. The book support is also adjustable depending on the type of spine of the book.

The resulting cradle enabled a safe and faster digitisation of many of the manuscripts so far and has also been used recently for other projects such as the digitisation of the St. Cuthbert Gospel this year. Positive feedback from digitisation staff confirmed the success of the implementation achieved with this simple device.

MAKING THE BOOK SUPPORT

The following instructions are intended to explain and show clearly and easily the construction of the book cradle. They are offered to anyone wishing to make a cost-effective cradle for use in their institution.

List of materials needed

- Board
- Buckram cloth
- Plastazote®
- Strips of linen tape or Tyvek®, the length depending on the dimensions of the book support plus the space for the book block.
- Self adhesive Velcro strips.
- Foam wedges

Fig 1 shows the finished article and Fig 2 shows the three components of which the support is made:

1. **A base** formed of two boards covered with Buckram
2. Two **Plastazote® supports** covered with the same archival cloth
3. **Strips of Velcro** placed on the edges of the support

The base is formed by two 3mm identical boards. The boards are covered with buckram or any suitable archival material that join them together creating a central hinge of approximately 10mm. See Fig 3.

The **Plastazote® supports** are made from a piece of Plastazote® and a 3 mm board of the same dimensions. They are covered in such a way as to create a slit at the back of each Plastazote® support into which the base board is inserted. To create this slit place the piece of Plastazote® on the cover material to the left and the same dimension piece of board on the right leaving between them a gap equal to the thickness of the Plastazote® plus the thickness of the

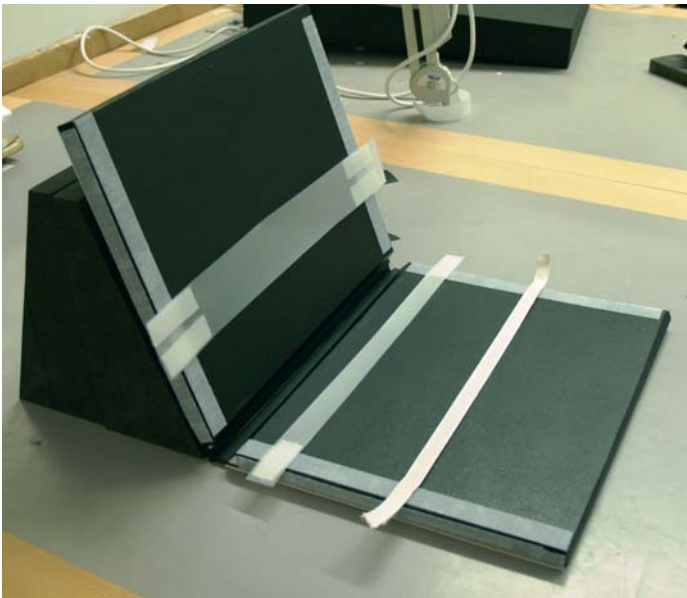


Fig 1 The book support with its holding strips

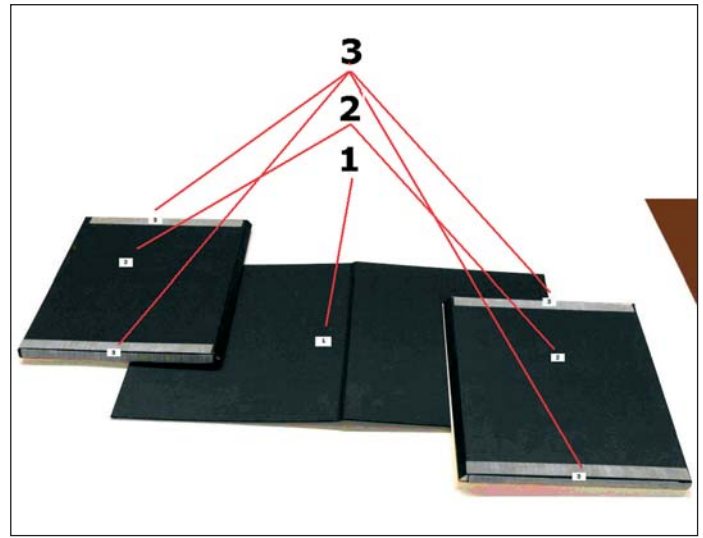


Fig 2 The components of the support



Fig 3 The base (component 1 above)

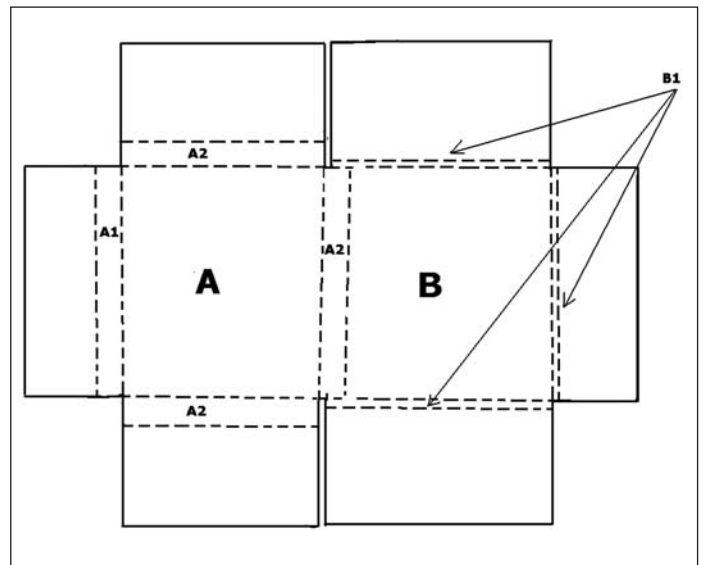


Fig 4
A: Plastazote
B: Board
A1: Fold of covering material equal to thickness of A
A2: Equals A1 plus thickness of covered base board
B1: Fold of covering material equal to thickness of B

covered base board (5mm). The diagram at Fig 4 gives the template for the covering material for the Plastazote® bases

Next, secure the Plastazote® and the board bases to the cover material. Place the Plastazote® on A without gluing it but securing it with a weight. Glue the board on B aligning it with the Plastazote®.

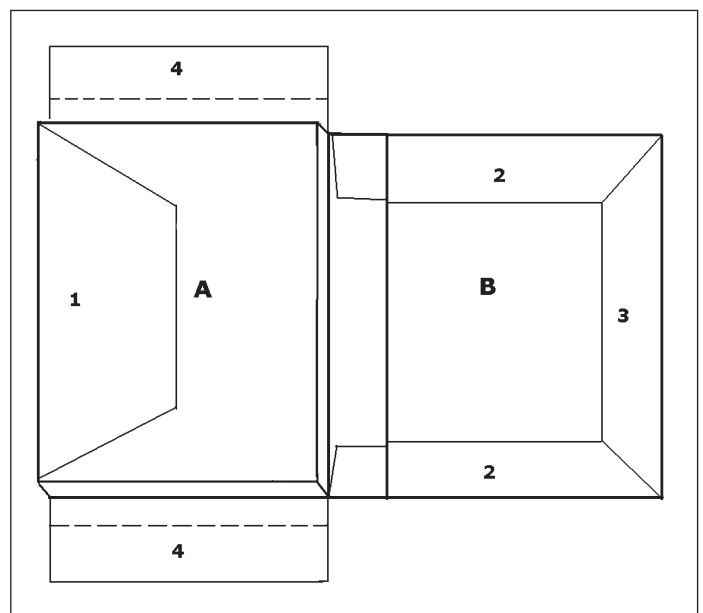
Fig 5 shows the folding sequence for the Plastazote® support covering material

Glue verso 1 to the Plastazote®, do the same with 2 (head and tail) to the board and finish attaching 3.

Close B onto A placing a compensatory thickness equal to the thickness of the covered base board (the base board itself can be easily used for this) to create the slit. Place the glue on 4 and fold it over the verso of B at both sides.

The support is shown end on in Fig 6.

Now place the **strips of self adhesive Velcro** (hook side of the Velcro) onto the Plastazote® supports at head and tail (short sides) of the Plastazote® bases and onto their thickness. This is illustrated in Fig 7.



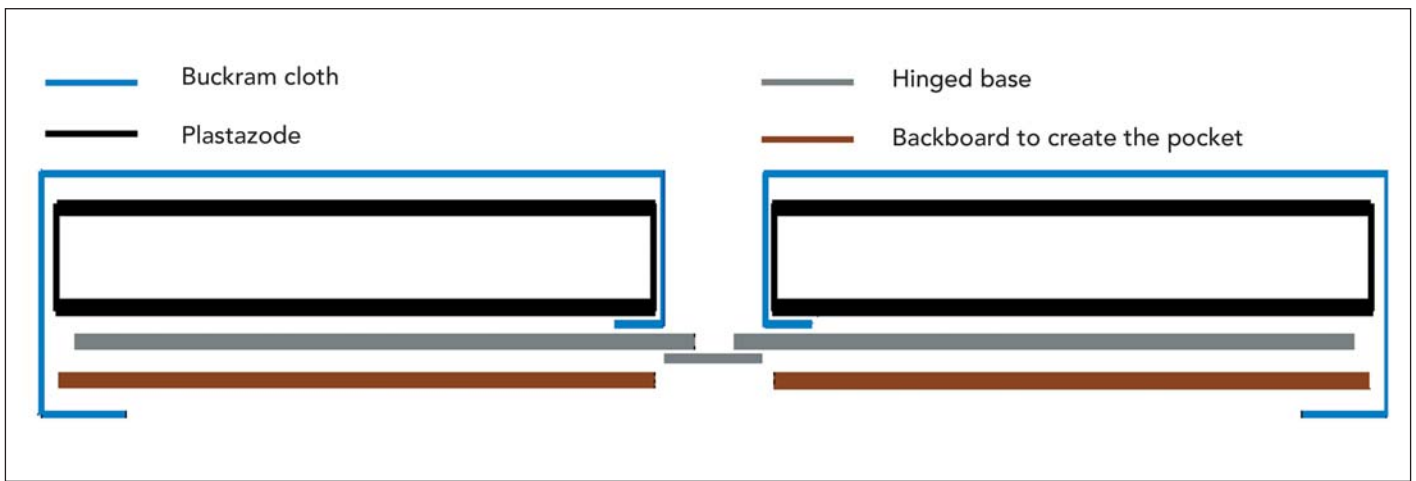


Fig 6 The support in tail view

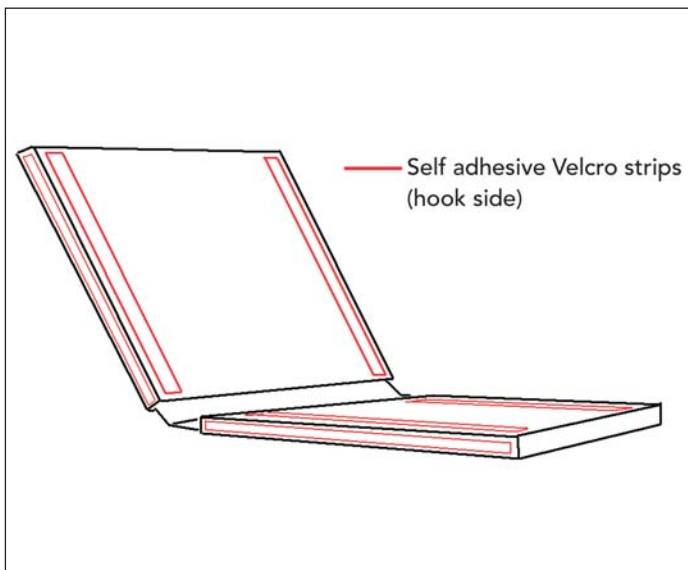


Fig 7 The placing of the Velcro strips

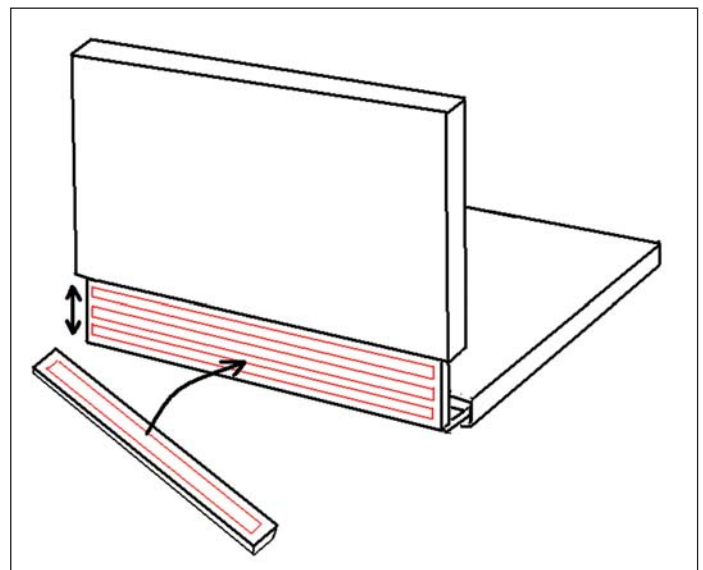


Fig 8 The holding strip

Fig 9 The adjustable groove houses different spine sizes



Fig 10 A pronounced spine properly housed

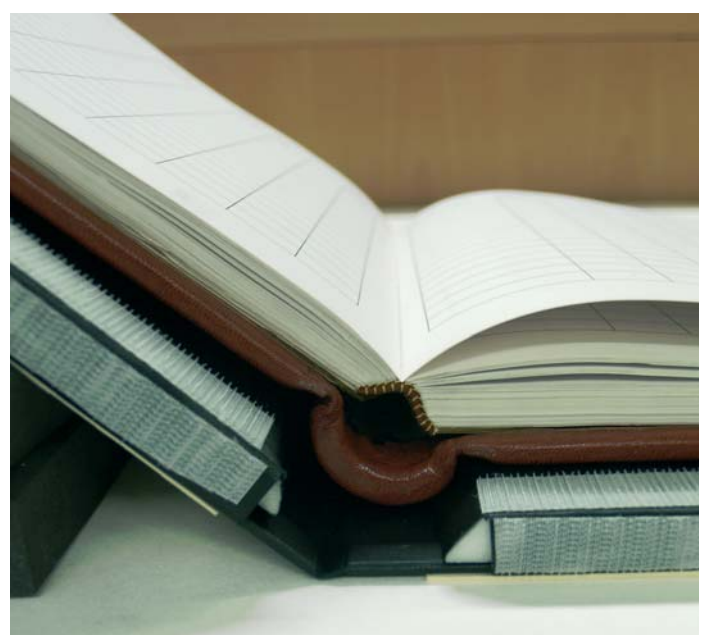




Fig 12 In use

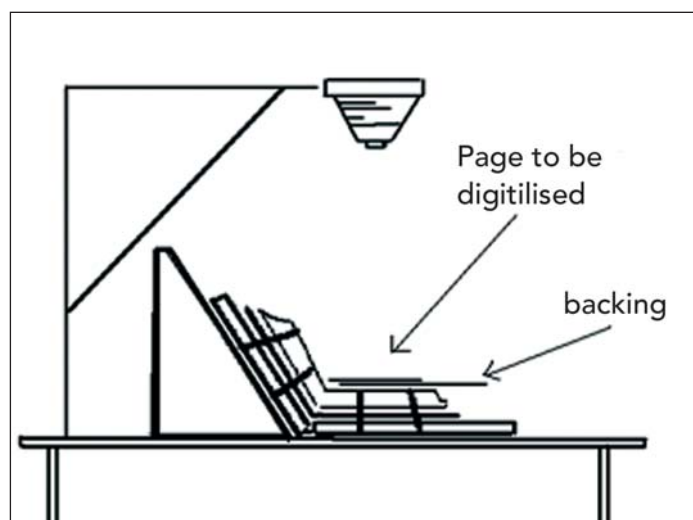


Fig 11 Ready for use

Adjusting the groove

To adjust the groove to accommodate different sizes of the raised spine of a book it is necessary to secure the left side of the Plastazote® support at different heights.

This is achieved by placing three strips of self adhesive Velcro (loop side) on the verso of the left part of the base board. These strips need to be placed at 1 or 2 cm interval parallel to the groove. Cut a strip of board of the length of the base board or slightly shorter and 40 mm wide. Adhere to the strip a new strip of self adhesive Velcro (hook side) and use the strip to support the Plastazote® base at the desired height.

The diagram at Fig 8 illustrates the technique, whilst Figs 9 & 10 show the end result

Holding the book in place

The book is held in place by strips that can be made of linen tape, or conservation paper or even Melinex® or Mylar® or Tyvek®. These strips are secured to the base with Velcro (loop side of Velcro) at each end to secure the books to the book support during digitisation. The strips both gently hold the left part of the book block out of the camera range and also provide an easy and fast way to change the page. The strips, placed behind the page to be photographed can also help to secure the right side of the book block in place during the

photographic process. To hide the strips, a sheet of archival paper can be placed behind the page being photographed as a blending background as shown in Fig 11.

The diagram at Fig 11 shows the system ready for use, whilst Fig 12 and the front cover of this magazine show books in place with different opening angles

The opening angle of the book support can be changed as necessary. Different thicknesses of foam wedges can be used behind the book support to achieve a different opening angle. The opening of the book should not to be more than 120 degrees and the book should never be forced to open further than it will naturally.

Refinements can be made to the design when you have made the basic cradle; for instance, the Plastazote® bases can be bevelled at the edge close to the groove where the book spine will be placed to follow the shape of rounded book spines. Also, where natural hollow or tight back spines need support a rolled linen cloth can be used to fill the groove to support the book block from behind, as illustrated in Fig 13

CONCLUSIONS

The book support cradle was designed to reduce the handling of the books during the digitisation process. The book is secured on a non abrasive surface that keeps a suitable constant opening angle and allows the book to be positioned on the photographic table without further direct handling as the book rest itself can be moved with the book already in place.

The dimensions of the supports can be varied depending on the dimensions of the books to be digitised, more than one dimension should be available to the photographer/imager and the book support needs to be bigger then the book to be digitised.

The strips made of conservation-grade material (Tyvek® and linen tapes were the more suitable choices due to their properties of strength and non-abrasive surface) keep the books open and reduce the risk of damage to delicate paper or parchment surfaces. The use of Velcro to secure the strips to the book support means they can be secured with a slight tension to prevent the angled opposing pages from slipping. The Velcro also means that the page turning operation is quicker and safer.



Fig 13 A hollow spine supported with rolled linen cloth

The adjustable space in the centre of the book support between the covered Plastazote® bases enables the safe positioning of the spine of the books placed on the support. Different book sewing structures open in different ways during use, for example: hollow back books need space to accommodate the spine which is detached from the text block. Positioning books properly on the support enables the pages to be turned more easily and the adjustable cradle enables the dimensions of the gap to be increased or decreased to accommodate books of different thicknesses safely.

The increase of book digitisation projects has meant that the involvement of conservation/preservation departments is an essential part of successful project planning. Never before has so much emphasis been placed solely on the books as mere textual carriers. Much of the funding for these projects is awarded towards the accessibility of this textual information alone. For this reason, book conservators have a vital responsibility to contribute to these projects by supervising the safety of the physical items through the stressful process of digitisation.

Books now, more than in any other period, need to be preserved for future generations as artefacts and museum objects too. Important features of the artefacts can be lost,

simply because they are presently undervalued due to pressing work schedules and other agendas, but it must be remembered that they are carriers of information on many levels, not just intellectual content.

Experience at the British Library has demonstrated that the involvement of the conservation/preservation element in digitisation projects must be factored-in at the beginning of the planning process. The early assessment of condition and risks is vital for the future conservation and safety of our irreplaceable heritage.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my then manager Roswitha Ketzer for her mentoring and immeasurable support during the project and especially during the conception of the overall Risk Assessment, the book cradle itself being only one of the mitigating tools for the risks uncovered.

I would like to also thank the Manuscript Department, the Imaging Department and Preservation Department for their constructive and open working approach.

Thank you to my colleague Isabelle Egan for her support in pushing me to share through this article my experience and for her invaluable editing.

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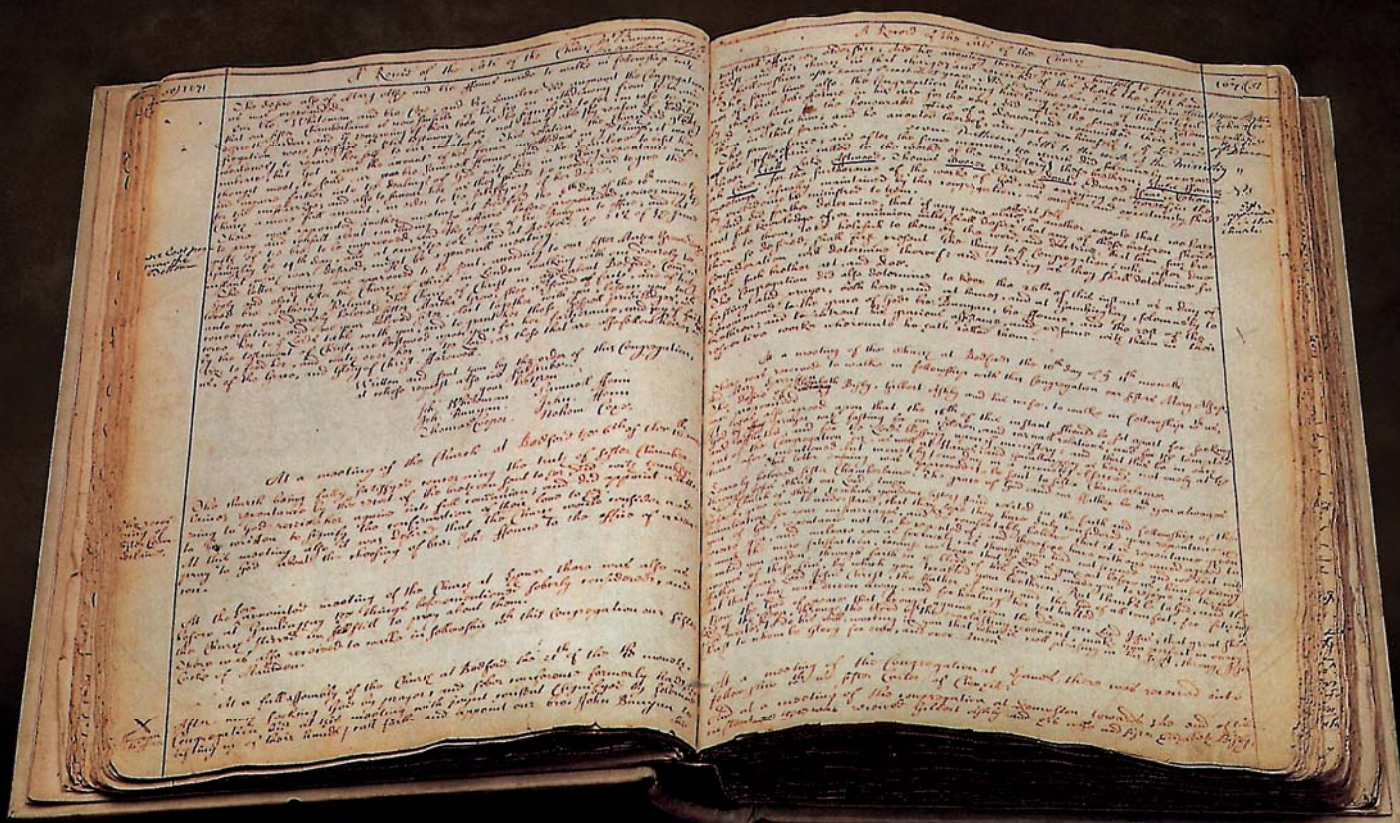
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Barocci, Federico, The Institution of the Eucharist (1603), The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, United Kingdom. Work glazed with Optium Museum Acrylic.
Photography by Mr. Michael F Jones, Fitzwilliam Museum.

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