

Icon NEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION • MARCH 2012 • ISSUE 39



SPECIAL INTERNS ISSUE

Included in this issue

Botany underfoot

A year in the Hirayama Studio

Fascinating facsimiles

Valuing volunteers

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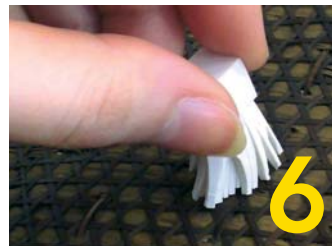
Welcome to this special issue of Icon News in which we celebrate the Icon internship scheme.

The whole notion of internships has had a mixed press recently. On the one hand the Government has issued guidance to employers on what internship should mean, as have the Sector Skills Councils. On the other hand, there is a popular view that in practice internships are unpaid, exploitative and available only to give a leg up the ladder to those whose parents have got good contacts.

There is another way. Icon, in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund, has built a solid brand for the Icon internship: a fully-funded, supported traineeship that is underpinned by the profession's standards. As you will see within, from junks to muster rolls, carpets to crocodiles and banners to bird skins, our interns' experiences are wide-ranging and their acquisition of skills is undoubted: one of our contributors has just achieved her accreditation status. In this edition we celebrate our successes to date and thanks to Heritage Lottery funding we have been able to bring you an expanded issue to cram in as many stories as we can.

I must finish by saying a huge thank you to Georgina Ripley in the Edinburgh training office for all her energy and enthusiasm in sourcing and working on these stories.

Lynette Gill, Editor



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The flora depicted in an 18th century Axminster carpet. From an intern's research project.
Photograph: The Tetley Workshop.
Image by kind permission of Charlotte Rostek, Curator, The Great Steward of Scotland's Dumfries House Trust

In memory of Carolyn Halcrow
1967–2011, an inspirational intern

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introduction

Alison Richmond, Icon's Chief Executive, writes:

In 2005 UKIC – one of Icon's predecessor bodies – set about finding out what skills were needed to conserve cultural heritage and where the gaps were. The profession could not have anticipated the positive results that Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) support for work-based training would deliver over the next six years. Data from recent contact with partner employers and commissioners of conservation shows that Icon's Training Bursaries Scheme has made a substantial start on tackling heritage skills needs. Icon interns are now employed throughout the sector, continuing to develop, beginning to go through accreditation and influencing the way conservators think about on-the-job learning.

The programme's statistics are impressive but perhaps more remarkable is how the scheme has opened doors to a career in conservation for many who would otherwise have been excluded. 50% of all HLF Icon internships were aimed at new entrants, people who had no conservation background. This approach introduced genuine diversity into the sector, something that Icon is very proud of. These results would not have been possible without a huge commitment on the part of the many employers and supervisors who were prepared to find the time and resources to train new entrants.

Icon is enormously proud of our association with HLF and I would like to acknowledge the support we have received from Nick Randell, HLF Programme Manager, at every stage of the project. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation generously part-funded two posts to develop a work-based learning framework and this has in turn served to attract other funders and create a legacy for the HLF scheme.

Our many partner employers deserve recognition for providing the essential ingredients of an internship: the environment in which to learn, the collections with which to train, and experts in their fields to pass on their skills and knowledge. Our Regional Co-ordinators throughout the last six years – Fiona Macalister, Sarah Gerrish, Lorna Calcutt,

Year 1 HLF interns at the 2007 Conservation Awards



The team of Carol Brown, (centre), Gillian Joyce (right) and Georgina Ripley (left)

Susan Bradshaw, Alison Fraser and Gillian Joyce – were responsible for monitoring the interns' progress; the support they have given to both interns and supervisors has been an invaluable contribution to the success of the scheme.

The final words of thanks must go to Carol Brown, who developed the scheme and has run it for the last six years, ably supported first by Gillian Joyce and now by Georgina Ripley. Carol's commitment to high standards of delivery for the programme, combined with energy and imagination, has helped create a sector-wide community ready and willing to continue to engage with work-based learning of the highest order. Icon's strategic aims for education and training will build on this great legacy.

Carol Brown, Icon's Work-based Training Manager, writes:

In September this year, Jennifer Marchant will complete a six-month placement at the Fitzwilliam Museum as part of Icon's Heritage Lottery Fund-supported Training Bursaries Scheme. Six years earlier, Icon's first batch of seventeen interns began their placements; Jennifer will be the last of sixty eight people to finish an internship in the 2006–12 HLF programme. An additional seventeen will have completed other Icon placements by that deadline too – eighty five in all over the six years. This is a great achievement to celebrate in this edition of Icon News, but none of this would have been possible without the initial and continuing support from HLF and from Icon's partner employers and funders.

The hard facts alone show one aspect of the success of the scheme: of Icon's sixty eight completers at the time of writing, forty nine are in employment, seven have set up their own businesses and seven are currently in formal conservation training or research. Of those from non-conservation trained backgrounds, six have moved on directly into conservation training, two into other internships and three into conservation apprenticeships. The most unlooked-for and heartening statistic to date is that twenty one interns were



Regional Co-ordinator Fiona Macalister (far right) on a visit to SS Great Britain in 2009



From left to right: Year 2 HLF interns Richard Williams, Ellin Belton and Alison Foster at the IIC Congress Exhibition in 2008

offered employment with their host organisation.

A lot has been learned along the way and not all results were expected: ex-interns have given us insightful feedback on the pressures of life after the internship – the short contract and project culture, the difficulties of setting up in business and the inevitable skew of work and employment towards the South East. Icon will continue to listen to and learn from its interns and feed results into the work outlined in Icon's UK Education & Skills Strategy.

Two key characteristics define the scheme and have underpinned its success – the goodwill of employers and supervisors and the popularity of the placements with students and other new entrants to the field.

Icon's employer-partners have demonstrated their commitment by offering over one hundred placements from six to twenty four months over the length of the scheme and continue to provide more opportunities for work-based training, despite current economic conditions and their own in-house restrictions and challenges. Time after time organisations and supervisors have made internships possible often because they simply believe in the principle of a professional's responsibility to pass on skills and knowledge to the next generation.

Taking an intern into your workshop or department is not a straightforward matter and never – in my experience – solely about that 'extra pair of hands'. Hosts need to be open to the new ideas and thinking that an intern brings and that often takes courage and a willingness to be flexible; it is a tribute to all our hosts that so many have been prepared to be challenged in this way. An internship host reported: 'it's like opening the barn door and letting the wind blow right through this musty old department'. Brave indeed!

The numbers and breadth of applicants have been impressive over the scheme. It has been salutary to see how conservation attracts such a range of people, many with first careers. Interns – especially those from non conservation-trained backgrounds – have impressed us by their willingness to take a risk on their future, to commit to a fixed-term placement that is often far from home and to submit themselves to the substantial life-changes that this entails. The increased diversity brought by this influx of bright new entrants is going to pay real dividends in the profession within the next few years; Icon will work to make sure it continues.

I personally feel proud and privileged to have been involved with so many committed people; the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge being passed on to interns around the UK is humbling and I have gained so much insight into the



Year 4 HLF interns Elizabeth Hippisley-Cox (left) and Leanne Tonkin at the MA Conference Exhibition in 2010

joys and challenges of many disciplines new to me, from ship models, banners and muster rolls to stained glass, facsimiles and spirit collections.

The final act of the 2006–12 scheme is the Evaluation Report for HLF and it shows that the picture is not static: clients', employers' and commissioners' needs have changed over the years and continue to evolve. Other skills shortages are now emerging which mirror the challenges being tackled by the profession today – these are the new areas to target Icon's work-based training. There is now more of a need for project management skills, for conservators with a broader knowledge of materials and a more flexible approach, and conservators able to put their case and operate confidently at the level of fellow building and cultural heritage professionals.

And the need for internship amongst emerging professionals? The demand for placements on the scheme is one clear demonstration of that shortage and research shows that courses no longer have the teaching resources to ensure the kind of solid grounding in practical work that they would wish for students. Applicants themselves tell us in each round: we need the real-world experience but we also need the reassurance of a supervisor in the background, the status in an organisation where we can ask a question and not always be expected to *just get on with the job*.

Hosts, applicants and interns alike tell us about the power of internship – a bridge from formal education into work, or from a craft or science background across to the conservation path. This is a call therefore for Icon to create a sustainable and reliable funding framework to ensure these bridges can continue to be built. Here's to many more inspiring futures!

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If you haven't already made your selection, then take the chance to do so at renewal time next month.

Remember: it's all included in your membership fee, and you can still keep up to date with news and forthcoming events from all other Groups on www.icon.org.uk and can attend their talks and functions.

Contact Wiebke Morgan – Monday to Thursday – with any questions you have regarding your membership.

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Science
Scotland
Stained Glass
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Textiles

around & about

A round-up of some internship projects past and present

A Chinese Junk

Ship models have been made for centuries and are invaluable for our understanding of maritime history, as they represent changes in style and function of ships and boats from all around the world. A good example of this is the Chinese junk model I am currently working on as an intern in ship and historic model conservation at the Conservation Centre in Liverpool. A 'Junk' is a ship from China and is most unlike the European ships we are familiar with; consequently, this project presented a challenge as the materials used are unusual for ship models.

The model depicts a vessel from the Swatow region in South China. Whilst they may look crude in comparison to their European counterparts, Chinese junks were perfected for their purpose. Most were highly decorated, painted with pictures and symbols, and a common decoration of eyes either side of the hull – called the 'oculus' – is shown on this model. This helps us to differentiate between types of junk, as when the eyeball is set low in the white of the eye it suggests a fishing vessel and when looking straight ahead a trading vessel, to indicate looking for distant peril.

The resinous substance between the wooden planks represents caulking, a technique in which lime, hemp and wood oil (known as chunam) are mixed together and used to fill the gaps between the planks to prevent any water getting in. Wood identification revealed that the hull of the model was made from a type of native pine, and the masts from a hard wood. The wood is coated with t'ung oil, which is a hard yellow wood oil used to make the real junks waterproof.

The cleaning of the wooden components of the hull was fairly straight-forward, as I was able to remove the dirt from the surface easily but other deterioration included aged tape on the hull and lead disease on the anchor. The main area of



The junk after treatment

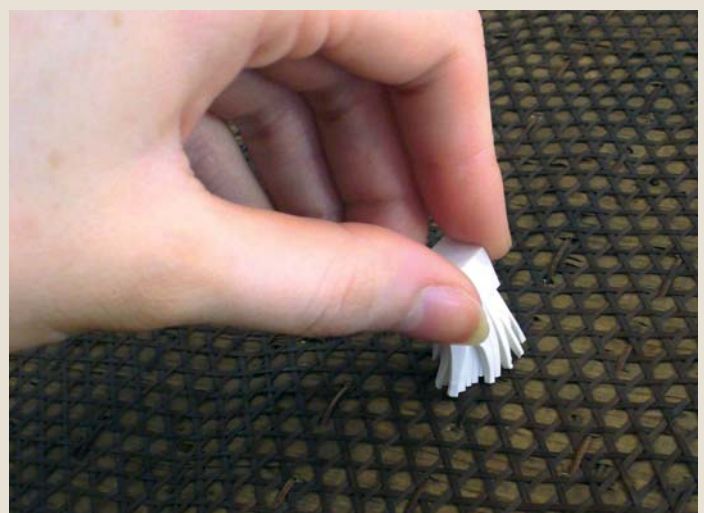
deterioration of the model was the two sails; unusual even for junk models, they are made from plant fibre encased in a rattan matrix and are unsurprisingly delicate. Both sails had holes and were incredibly dirty, with the main sail having a large opening across the bottom and missing material from the left hand corner. The extensive damage meant that neither sail could be hung safely from the masts. After much thinking, testing, and consultation, a treatment programme was devised.

The sails were vacuumed using a Museum vac and a small paint brush to carefully dislodge the dirt away from the surface. I decided to use only dry cleaning methods, as water

Gemma cleaning the sails



The rubber brush





The mainsail before treatment

could cause the plant materials to swell. An eraser provided the most effective method of dirt removal but it would have been dangerous to the rattan to rub the surface. Therefore I used a scalpel to slice up the end of a Mars Plastic eraser to make a flexible brush, which was much gentler on the sails surface and removed the dirt well.

For the repairs Japanese paper was painted using acrylic paint to match the colour of the sails, which was then adhered to the edges of the breaks using wheat starch paste. To replicate the missing rattan, strips of the Japanese paper were



Keeping a careful watch on the horizon

cut and painted to match. These were then attached to the original and woven in the same way on both sides, an extremely intricate process. These repairs not only improved the sails visually, but strengthened them enough to be put back onto the model. Once the rigging was repaired, the treatment was completed and the model can once again be truly appreciated as a fascinating example of a Chinese Junk.

Gemma Thorns

Learning a new approach to conservation

In March 2011 I began a twelve-month Icon/HLF internship in book and paper conservation at The National Archives. I have learned a great deal over the course of the year, benefiting from a broad range of resources and expertise and gaining experience in the various conservation, preservation and public engagement activities of the collection care department.

As a recent graduate from the University of Northumbria MA in Fine Art Conservation, and with previous experience gained primarily in museums and working with small pictorial collections, I had little practical knowledge of the conservation of archival material or of large collections at the start of this internship. One of the key things I have learned from working with a large, on site, open access collection is the practical



Midway through repair

The repaired sail



Photos printed by kind permission of National Museums Liverpool

Lindsey Gibson carrying out a collection survey in the repositories at The National Archives



application of a pragmatic and collection-focused approach to conservation. In this context it is essential to consider the collection as a whole when taking decisions on treatment in order to make optimal use of time and resources. It is often more appropriate to aim for stabilising the condition of an object in order to mitigate risk, limiting treatment to what is really necessary rather than what may be desirable, but without sacrificing ethics or standards of conservation work.

In some situations – such as responding to ‘on demand’ customer requests and enquiries – this can result in a minimal approach in terms of interventive treatment, but in proactive projects undertaken as part of a planned response to the collection’s needs more complex, long-term treatment may be appropriate. One example of a more interventive approach is a project with which I am currently involved, conserving large format parchment charters. In order to prevent loss of information from these documents, consolidation of pigments, ink and gold leaf, repair and backing removal are considered necessary.

No longer is conservation driven by customer demand, but rather prioritisation is based on assessing the relative condition, inherent instability and informational value of material in the collection. Selection of projects is informed through surveys and pilot tests which form an integral part of the process, providing a greater knowledge and understanding of the considerable and varied collection held at the archives.

Nonetheless, conservators still respond daily to staff and reader enquiries and requests, providing in situ assessments, advice and remedial treatment. Working in response to individual demand does not necessarily result in the conservation of documents for which treatment is a high priority, however, providing access to documents requested by readers where possible is integral to the function of TNA. This role therefore involves balancing decisions as to whether or not treatment is necessary and what will be the most efficient approach in each case with the objective of stabilising and enabling access to as much material as possible.

Operating in a real life working environment and carrying out treatment on a large collection has enabled me to improve my speed and efficiency and develop a more pragmatic approach to my work. In responding to reader and staff enquiries I have gained much experience in decision-making: considering the aim and desired outcome of any work I undertake and, therefore, whether treatment is necessary and to what degree. I have also gained a better appreciation of treatment times, which is informing the estimates I produce for treatment proposals and surveys. I have learned to limit the extent of treatment where appropriate without compromising conservation ethics, focusing on what is necessary to stabilise and safeguard the documents in order to promote the needs of the whole collection, which I feel is valuable experience useful in the care of any collection.

Lindsey Gibson



Above, the *Steneosaurus* before treatment, below after treatment



A Jurassic Crocodile Skull

I started my internship in the conservation of natural history collections in September 2011; the first three months were based at the Natural History Museum (NHM) in London and the remainder of my time with the Lancashire Conservation Studios. The main project I was given to work on at NHM looked to be an ambitious task in the limited time I had there. I had never worked with palaeontology specimens before, so I was quite apprehensive when I was given a deteriorating 1.5 metre *Steneosaurus obtusidens* – a Jurassic marine crocodile skull from the Oxford Clay in Peterborough. The specimen posed multiple conservation problems: it was mounted on a wooden board with polyurethane foam support (a known carcinogenic), the specimen was deteriorating due to pyrite oxidation that had caused some significant cracking, and there were existing fills – mainly of AJK dough – and many fractured pieces.

Lucie preparing the epopast jacket



After drawing up treatment plans I dry cleaned the superior surface and consolidated with 5% B-72 in acetone. This was the first time I had made adhesives or fillers and it was one of the most important practical skills I had learnt to date. The damaged fills were removed and all gaps were filled (with micro-balloons in 40% B-72 filler), which was the longest process of this project.

As the full conservation project was unlikely to be completed in the time I had at NHM the main aim for me was to get the brittle PU mount removed, which involved turning the specimen over. To do this safely I needed to make an Epopast resin mount, an entirely new experience for me. I protected the specimen with cling film and plasticine and made sure I had on all the necessary protective equipment as a precaution against the glass fibres in the Epopast mix. I covered the superior surface of the specimen in a layer of Epopast and left it to dry overnight before I removed the hardened jacket from the specimen.

The specimen was going to be turned onto an Aerolam aluminium-skinned honeycomb board, which meant another first for me – cutting with a jigsaw. The jacket was made to be detachable from the board so it could still be used to protect the superior surface when eventually turned out of the jacket onto its right side. To do this I moulded Epopast feet on the Aerolam board to the shape of the jacket, using clingfilm between the feet and the jacket so that they would not stick together. Once this was completed I was able to tackle the PU foam, which had to be worked on in the dust extraction unit wearing a lot of personal protective equipment. I removed the foam from around the perimeter of the specimen using a saw and was then able to get the saw under the specimen.

The jacket and Aerolam board were strapped to the specimen and existing mount and I then recruited three willing colleagues to join me in the dust extractor and turn the specimen over onto the Aerolam board. With fingers crossed the old wooden board was lifted and the specimen was released from the PU foam in a surprisingly good condition. With my time up it would be left to one of my colleagues to finish by making a mount and board as I did for the inferior surface, and turning it back the right way up. This project provided me with many new experiences and consumed my attention for nine weeks and, although I found it frustrating at times, I was glad to have been pushed beyond my comfort zone and now feel more confident to tackle the challenges ahead.

Lucie Graham

Changing the banners

The main galleries at the People's History Museum (PHM) in Manchester close temporarily in January every year to allow for banners on open display to be changed. This allows many banners to be exhibited for the first time in the galleries and



Applying a sleeve onto a late 19th century large silk oil painted banner as preparation for display

gives the banners currently on display a rest. My first experience of decanting and installing the banners in the museum galleries occurred during my Icon/HLF internship in 2009/2010, and proved to be essential training for a further two banner changes that I have since been involved with as a result of securing an extended contract with the PHM. Exhibiting many banners and flags for the first time is rewarding for the visitors but challenging for the small conservation team responsible for preparing the textiles for installation.

Despite being under pressure to stabilise the textiles for a twelve month exhibition period, this also provides an opportunity for the conservation team to document and observe the banners and flags in a new light. Many of the textiles going on exhibition have never been on display and were last documented over twenty years ago. This can present a number of dilemmas: the physical condition of the banners and flags can remain vulnerable if they are not stabilised for exhibition, and the large size and complex structure of many of the textiles present major handling issues during treatment and installation. These challenges require efficient but appropriate treatment solutions. Banner change is also an opportunity for the conservators to re-examine problematic materials – such as modern paints – which have been researched further since the banners were last seen.

Banner change at the PHM has not only involved me in the re-

Examining modern house paints on a cotton banner c. 1948





Leanne working on a banner from the Great Britain Labour Party League of Youth, c. 1938.

evaluation of the banner and flag collection, it has also familiarised me with the challenges of physically decanting, manoeuvring and installing large scale textiles, predominantly with fragile and sensitive painted surfaces. It is essential to be adaptable and to work flexibly when thinking about the physical logistics of safely handling, assessing and repacking these objects with limited resources and within a certain time frame.

Unpacking banners and flags to assess them for exhibition can reveal some surprises. Time is allowed for this in the project schedule and preparing for exhibition change-over can be very exhilarating; for example, when we unpacked a twentieth-century cotton banner painted with house paints, we felt that the painting techniques used by the original artist/maker to ensure consistency of style and clarity of lettering provided an interesting platform for future investigation into the materials used to define contemporary political messages. Another example we selected for banner change is a synthetic rep woven acrylic painted banner. This object presented many problems: for example, certain painted areas were shedding readily and needed consolidation to prevent further damage whilst on display. The dilemma of how best to preserve acrylic paints is still ongoing; however the PHM has to consider both current research into the conservation of modern paints and the need for appropriate treatment to meet the demands of exhibition

Early acrylic-based paint on the banner pictured above



requirements. Knowledge of paint media, their deterioration and the effects of conservation treatment on them is as important as being aware of the deterioration and effects of treatments on the textile components. This dual discipline approach has developed my knowledge of painted media.

The banner change process has helped me to explore the museum's diverse collection and in particular the challenges of thinking about modern painted textiles, such as the use of poster paints, house paints and acrylic paints. Alongside the complexities of treating such media there is also the need to consider the original artist/client's intent and the (often still live) communities that are built around these textiles. On face value many of the modern banners seem simplistic and naive in creation, yet the political messages they carry combined with the use of modern materials present a continued and rewarding challenge. I would like to thank Icon and HLF for all their help and encouragement and all the staff at the PHM who continue to make me feel welcome.

Leanne C Tonkin

Loan of bird skins to the Watts Gallery

In June 2011 I began a twelve-month internship at the Horniman Museum focusing on the conservation of taxidermy. Over the last couple of months I have been working on a selection of feathers and bird skins to go on loan to the Watts Gallery, Guildford, for display in an exhibition entitled *A Dedication: To Beauty and Innocence*.

G.F Watts' painting *A Dedication: 'to all those who love the beautiful and mourn over the senseless and cruel destruction of bird life and beauty'* (1898–9), oil on canvas, was painted in protest at women wearing feathers in hats and clothes, a fashion which had a devastating effect on birdlife in the U.K and abroad. The painting depicts an angel looming over an altar on which lies a sacrificial heap of colourful birds and feathers. A selection of bird skins and feathers from the Horniman Museum's natural history collection are displayed in front of the painting highlighting the species and number of birds killed for the fashion of the 19th century.

During this century arsenic was the principal substance used as a preservative in the preparation of skins and taxidermy. Preservatives such as arsenic – and pesticides later applied to protect against insect attack – are compounds toxic to humans and are a potential health risk to those in contact with the collections. To better understand the levels of arsenic in the collection and subsequently the risk of handling the bird skins, I carried out spot tests on the skins – a quick and easy way of detecting the presence of arsenic, which can also give some indication of the levels present as well. During this process personal protective equipment (PPE) was worn to minimise any health risks and, as the test results detected



G F Watts' painting *A Dedication: to Beauty and Innocence* presides over the exhibition about the campaign against the killing of birds for fashion

arsenic, appropriate PPE was worn throughout conservation treatment and during the installation of the birds at the Watts Gallery.

The highlight of the selection of skins and feathers to go on loan to the Watts Gallery has to be the Lyrebird tail, which is a fantastic example of the far-reaching extent of plumage trade: the male lyrebird was slaughtered for its tail in Australia, to adorn ladies' fashions in London.

The tail needed both surface cleaning and repairs to bent feather shafts and barbs. In November 2011 I learnt many new skills and techniques while attending the *Conservation of Feathers* workshop held by Allyson Rae at Norwich Castle Study Centre. One technique that we learnt for repairing bent feathers was to apply damp absorbent tissue to the bend for approximately twenty minutes; this compress of moisture allows the bent feather to straighten naturally. A very quick and easy trick, it is a technique I have used many times since attending the course and worked perfectly to straighten the



The bird skins are installed in their case



Natalie conducts an arsenic test

bent feathers of the Lyrebird tail.

The Lyrebird tail and birds skins are now on display at the Watts Gallery – a wonderful exhibition which I have really enjoyed working on.

Natalie Jones

professional update

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Photo: Matt Wrieford

Spring is a time of renewal, and so it is at Icon when it is the time for members to renew their subscriptions. Our new Membership Manager, Wiebke Morgan, is very busy preparing to process the 2300 or so applications that will start to flow in shortly. However, we do not take your renewal for granted. We are very aware that you have a choice, economic pressures are biting hard and Icon needs to demonstrate value for money if we are to maintain

or increase our membership. So if your hand is hovering over the chequebook (or the credit card or the direct debit form), here is a brief reminder of why Icon is your professional home.

You have access to our sector's knowledge and support

You are part of a global community of over 2000 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.

You receive career development support

You receive a weekly news feed of job vacancies. We aim to match conservators offering work experience to those seeking it via our web-based Training Exchange Service. 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.

You benefit from 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; selected Routledge Publications.

You are 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.

You are supporting advocacy

Icon promotes the value of conserving cultural heritage. Our voice is heard through our strong relationships and partnerships forged through advocating our sector's needs and promoting the critical part that our members play in conserving cultural heritage. Icon has been representing its members at all significant policy-setting forums, steering group think tanks and government departments pertinent to our sector since we formed in 2005. There have been some significant outcomes of our advocacy. Employers have adopted our minimum salary recommendations for conservators and support is well established and continues to grow for hiring PACR accredited conservators. Since 2006, Icon has received £1.5M in funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for in-practice conservation training internships. Our Conservation Awards have attracted substantial sponsorship and build our reputation as an innovative, dynamic and relevant sector.

Your membership is important to us. Each renewed member strengthens our ability to champion conservation and influence decision-makers. I hope that you feel your membership is important to you and that you will, once again, sign on the dotted line.

Alison Richmond

ICON 2013

Positive Futures in an Uncertain World

Planning is underway for Icon's next triennial conference to be held at the University of Glasgow. Do put 10 to 12 April into your diaries and look out for more announcements about how you can get involved!

SORRY!

We apologise to overseas readers who received their January copy of Icon News incorrectly addressed. We have now sorted out the problem that gave rise to it and hope that it will not happen again. Contact membership@icon.org.uk if you have not received your January issue.

BURSARIES AND AWARDS

Deadlines looming!

31 March is the closing date for applications to the **York Foundation for Conservation and Craftsmanship**. Bursaries of up to £1500 are available to further the knowledge and skills of conservators and bursaries of up to £3000 are offered to encourage established conservators to take on a new apprentice/trainee. For application forms apply to the Secretary of the Foundation by email: conservationyork@hotmail.com



31 March is also the closing date for entries for the **Nigel Williams Prize 2012**. This award recognises excellence in the conservation of ceramics, glass or a related material and is open to individuals, collaborations and students. Further information is on the Icon website or contact the prize co-ordinator Ronald Pile on ronaldpile37@btinternet.com

1 April is the deadline for **The Textile Society's new Conservation Award**, which offers museums and archives a grant of £2000 for a textile conservation project. The Society's website has more information: www.textilesociety.org.uk

1 April is also the date by which application must be made to the **National Manuscripts Conservation Trust** for grants for the conservation and preservation of manuscripts and archives. Archives, record offices, museums, universities, manuscript owners and others can apply for help to cover conservation binding and other conservation measures. Application forms can be found on the NMCT website: www.nmct.co.uk

Deadlines ahead

Conservation by Design Limited (CXD) is inviting applications for the 8th Annual **Nicholas Hadgraft Memorial Scholarship**. This year the award has increased to £1,500 and covers the cost of attending the world renowned Book Conservation Summer School in Montefiascone, Italy. It is open to students, skilled conservators and book binders interested in honing their skills in a number of historically sympathetic bookbinding conservation techniques. Applications must be received by 30 April 2012 and the forms are available from the CXD website www.conservation-by-design.co.uk.

The next deadline for the **Anna Plowden Trust** CPD awards is June 13. Application forms can be obtained from the Trust's website at annaplowdentrust.org.uk or by emailing Penelope Plowden at

penelopecpowden@btinternet.com. These grants are to help established conservators attend courses and conferences; the Trust will consider funding up to 50% of costs and makes between ten and twelve awards a year. Applications from teachers of conservation and those in private practice are particularly welcome and preference will be given to applicants who work in a team and can pass on the skills acquired with the help of the award to others.

Rolling deadlines

The Clothworkers Foundation awards CPD bursaries of up to £1,000 to help conservators attend conferences, short courses, seminars and events (in the UK and abroad) directly relevant to, and which further their knowledge and expertise in, their discipline. Normally 50% of the total cost of attending the event must be funded by either the applicant (if self employed) or their employer. Up to two applications from the

same organisation will be accepted per event.

Applications must be submitted at least eight weeks before the event. The form can be downloaded from the website: www.clothworkers.co.uk

The Gabo Trust, founded in 1988 by the family of the sculptor Naum Gabo (1890-1977), supports conservators for further training, conferences, workshops and bursaries, favouring applications that have a relevance to modern and contemporary sculpture. The Gabo Trust-IIC Travelling Scholarship is a bursary to allow individuals to take a study-focused international tour. It is organised in conjunction with the IIC (International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works). For more information visit: www.gabotrust.org



SEMINAR FOLLOW-UP

The Mackintosh Conservation and Access Project was a one day seminar held last May, organised by the Icon Scotland Group in conjunction with the Glasgow School of Art. It presented the outcomes of a four-year project to conserve and make accessible the School's collections and building. The video links to the various presentations from that seminar are now on-line at:

<http://vimeo.com/channels/gsofaarchives#31385445>

RESEARCH NEWS

Old paper analysed

Conservators of rare books and works of art on paper, along with other researchers and scholars, will benefit from the realisation of a career dream to research paper from the 14th to the 19th century using non-destructive instrumentation. The dreamer was Timothy Barrett, Director of Paper Facilities at the University of Iowa Center for the Book, and details of the project goals, procedures and results were made available in January with the launch of the website <http://paper.lib.uiowa.edu/>.

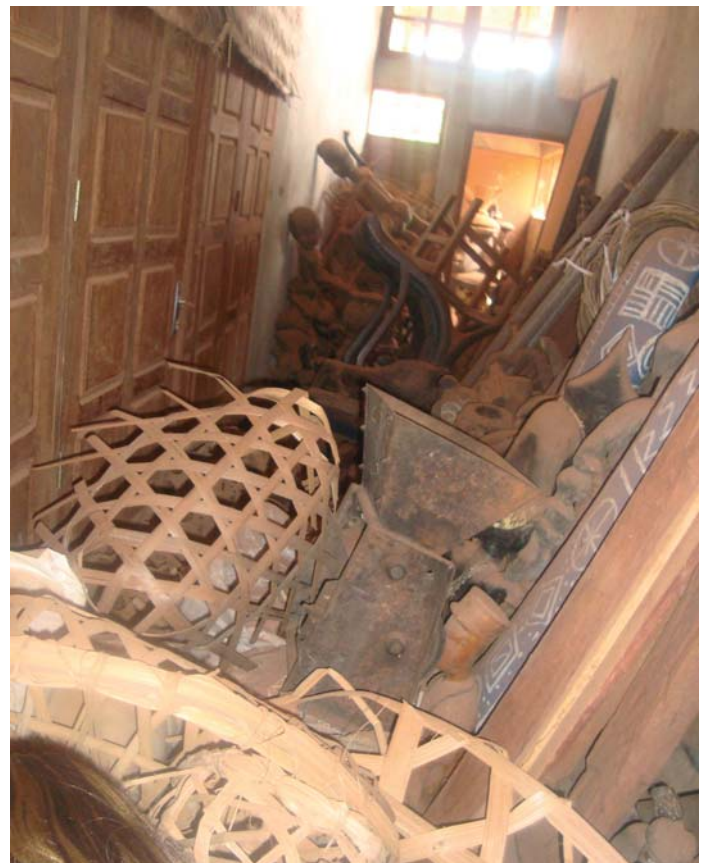
The research results show that the oldest papers were often in the best condition, in part due to high levels of gelatine and calcium. They have implications for the manufacture of modern paper intended for archival applications and for the care and conservation of historical works on paper. One possible explanation for the higher quality of the paper in the older samples is that papermakers at the time were attempting to compete with parchment, a tough enduring material. In doing so, they made their papers thick and white and dipped the finished sheets into a dilute warm gelatine solution to toughen it. 'Calcium compounds were used in making parchment, and they were also used in making paper', says Barrett, '...they helped prevent the paper from becoming acidic, adding a lot to its longevity'.





Photo: T. Barrett

Selection of historical book papers showing a range of condition similar to that in the 1578 specimens analysed by Barrett et al. in their recently completed study



© ICCROM

On average, 90% of museum objects are in storage

Barrett's group included Mark Ormsby, physicist at the National Archives and Records Administration Research and Testing division; Joseph Lang, UI professor of statistics and actuarial science; Robert Shannon at Bruker Elemental; Irene Brückle, professor at the State Academy of Art and Design in Stuttgart, Germany; Michael Schilling and Joy Mazurek from the Getty Conservation Institute; Jennifer Wade at the National Science Foundation and UI graduate student Jessica White. The Institute for Museum and Library Services, The University of Iowa and the Kress Foundation provided funding for the research.

Out of sight out of mind

An international survey on museum storage, run from June to September last year by ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) and UNESCO, confirms that all over the world, museum

Disorganized storage



© ICCROM

collections in storage suffer from poor management, lack of maintenance, inadequate space and equipment.

One in four museums report that their storage areas are so overcrowded that it has become difficult or impossible to get from one end to the other. For two in three museums, the overall lack of space is a problem identified as 'major' or 'drastic'. However, the survey points to important root causes, with two in five museums reporting an important lack of management support for storage-related activities and a lack of trained staff. Also striking is the fact that in a third of museums, it seems unclear who is responsible for storage, whilst in a tenth of them theft from the collection is considered to be a major problem.

A full summary report of the survey's key findings can be downloaded at www.iccrom.org/eng/news_en/2011_en/various_en/10_21StorageSurveyResults_en.pdf. At the 27th ICCROM General Assembly last November a resolution was voted unanimously to encourage ICCROM to develop a long-term programme on storage reorganization and calling on all Member States, national and international agencies, foundations, or other funding bodies to support this programme. In addition, ICCROM and UNESCO recently launched 'RE-ORG' (www.re-org.info), an online tool for storage reorganization to assist small museums in reorganizing their storage and documentation systems. Online registration to RE-ORG is free and grants access to guidelines, assessment tools, an image database, and teaching materials.

By way of a footnote, Simon Lambert, winner of the Student Conservator Award at the 2010 Conservation Awards, has been heavily involved both in developing the RE_ORG project and in the international survey.

LIBRARY NEWS

Chantry Librarian: a specialist role

Icon's Librarian, Ros Buck, has been nominated to take on the role of subject librarian for conservation within the Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford. The role will be to co-ordinate the collection development of conservation resources held within the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford college libraries, and the Chantry Library.

However, the impact of having the Chantry Librarian act as 'subject specialist' in conservation will spread well beyond Oxford. This is because the Bodleian is one of six copyright libraries and when one copyright library requests a copy of a publication, this results in the other copyright libraries automatically receiving the same publication. So holdings of conservation literature will be influenced and kept up to date throughout the UK and beyond. (The other copyright libraries are British Library, Cambridge University Library, National Library of Scotland, Trinity College Dublin, National Library of Wales.)

In readiness, the Chantry Library has already produced and finalised its Collection Development Policy, which can be found on the library's webpages, and the Librarian has been liaising with the Head of Legal Deposit Operations at the Bodleian to recommend new and forthcoming publications relating to conservation which can then be procured and distributed between the copyright libraries. The next stage is to include a new 'Guide to Resources' page for conservation on the Bodleian Libraries website. The page will provide further details of the subject librarian's role, ensuring that they will be first port of call for conservation literature, as well as signposting users to useful resources in conservation.

Icon members who wish to see which publications have been recommended may do so on the Chantry Library blog (<http://chantrylibrary.wordpress.com/>) and can sign up for RSS feed at <http://chantrylibrary.wordpress.com/feed/>.

A recent gift

We were delighted to receive a donation of the following conference papers. Many thanks to **Peter Winsor** for this useful and interesting new addition to our collection:

Integrated Pest Management for Collections: Proceedings of 2011: A Pest Odyssey, 10 Years Later edited by Peter



Photo: Matt Wreford

Winsor, David Pinniger, Louise Bacon, Bob Child, Kerren Harris, Dee Lauder, Julie Phippard and Amber Xavier-Rowe, English Heritage, 2011. Plus DVD
ISBN: 978-1-84802-114-3

This was the conference organised by Icon and others held at the British Museum last October. See review in Icon News issue 38 p. 31

New DVD

Hand Made Paper Moulds – DVD (28 mins) I.A. Recordings (2010)

Hand made paper is still in great demand by artists and for commemorative documents with several mills in the UK still making it using traditional wooden moulds. Making the mould is a very specialised craft and the only man in Britain still doing it is Ron MacDonald who started with E. Amies and Son Ltd of Maidstone in Kent in 1948. He carried on into retirement with equipment moved to his home and this DVD shows the skill and craftsmanship which Ron learned over several decades. Further details here:
<http://www.iarecordings.org/productions/p20.html>

Recently received books and journals

Copper and Bronze in Art: Corrosion, Colorants, Conservation by David A. Scott, Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2002, 515pp. ISBN: 978-0-89236-638-5

Restaurator, Vol.32, No.4, 2011. Abstracts online here:
www.deepdyve.com/browse/journals/restaurator-international-journal-for-the-preservation-of-library-and-archival-material

Studies in Conservation, Vol.36, No.4, 2011

Further information:

<http://maney.co.uk/index.php/journals/sic/>

Find out more

For further details of new resources and a full listing of all journal articles received over 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/>

Photocopies

A quick reminder 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 Ros Buck, Librarian at 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).

people

INTRODUCING OUR MEMBERSHIP MANAGER



Photo: Matt Wreford

My name is Wiebke Morgan. I started in post as Icon's Membership Manager on January 5 and I am very excited to be part of the new team.

I joined Icon from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, where I worked in Membership, Training and Events – both in administration and in development. I am a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and of two Associations working in

the field of membership.

For me, the best part of my job is getting to meet Icon's members and I am most certainly looking forward to recruiting many new members in the coming year. After all, without you, its members, Icon would not exist and it is the lead voice for the conservation of cultural heritage in the UK, because of, and for, you.

There is so much to be gained from being a member as Alison points out in her message earlier and my aim is to ensure that each of you can take full advantage of the benefits and services that we offer. I look forward to meeting you at events and, of course, at Icon's 'Positive Futures' Conference in Glasgow, 10–12 April 2013.

I am here to help you get the most out of your membership so please get in touch. My working days are Monday to Thursday. Phone me on 020-3142 6785 or email wmorgan@icon.org.uk

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Accreditation Committee approved twenty four new accredited conservator-restorers at its meeting in February.

Congratulations to them all!

- **Jess Ahmon**, Preservation Officer, The National Archives, Kew
- **Alexandra Mary Carrington**, freelance decorative stone and plaster conservator
- **Spencer Adam Hall**, Company Director & Project Manager, Cliveden Conservation Workshop Ltd
- **Kathryn Hallett**, Preventive Conservation Manager, Historic Royal Palaces
- **Sarah Healey-Dilkes**, self-employed sculpture conservator,

specializing in stone, plasterwork and terracotta

- **Elizabeth Sara Hephner**, Paper Conservator, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
- **Amy Junker Heslip**, Paper Conservator, Wellcome Trust, including the Wellcome Collections
- **Craig Horsfall**, Paper Conservator, Museum Conservation Services, Ltd
- **Jurgen Huber**, Senior Furniture Conservator, The Wallace Collection
- **Jane Hymas**, Preventive Conservator in Care of Collections on Display, The Natural History Museum
- **Sylvia Elisabeth Krauss**, Paintings Conservator, Glasgow Life, Glasgow Museums
- **Miriam Langford**, Treatment Conservation Manager, Historic Royal Palaces
- **Catherine Littlejohn**, Conservation & Projects Director, Hare & Humphreys Ltd
- **Catherine McConnell**, Conservation & Environment Officer, Aberdeenshire Museum Service (Aberdeenshire Council)
- **Sarah Norcross-Robinson**, Senior Conservator, Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service, and freelance preventive conservator
- **Matthew Read**, Programme Leader for Clocks and Metals, Clocks Programme Tutor, West Dean College
- **Emma St John**, Collections Conservator, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland
- **Keith Scobie-Youngs**, Turret Clock Horologist/Managing Director, Cumbria Clock Company Ltd
- **Sarah Stanley**, Archive Conservator, Kent Archive Service & Canterbury Cathedral Archive
- **Victoria Stevens**, Library & Archive Conservator, Oxford Conservation Consortium
- **Alison Stock**, Easel Paintings Conservator, Alison Stock Ltd
- **Rachel Swift**, Specialist Conservator, Ceramics & Glass, The British Museum
- **Sabina van de Bruck**, Senior Wall Paintings and Stone Objects Conservator, Hirst Conservation
- **Julia Wiland**, Conservation Officer, paper & photographs, The British Library
- **Lucy Wrapson**, Polychrome Wood and Easel Paintings Conservator, The Hamilton Kerr Institute

Internship reflections

Andor Vince values the opportunity for professional development

My Icon/HLF internship in Preventive Conservation at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge began in 2008. One of the biggest benefits of the scheme is that it allows the intern the independence to plan the placement freely with the supervisor, adjusting it to the needs of both the organisation and the intern. Having now had time to reflect on my experience, I am able to fully appreciate the extent to which my internship year contributed to the development of my practical, people and problem-solving skills, and how it has supported my professional development. A key strength of the Icon framework is that it maintains focus for the internship, for example, writing quarterly reports and filling in the Activity Monitor provided a useful structure for reflecting on my work. The role of the Regional Co-ordinator and the support they offer to both the intern and supervisor is also of immense benefit – I found that the quarterly visits from my Regional Co-ordinator, Lorna Calcutt, were not only a good opportunity to talk about my projects, but also encouraged discussion about my approach to my work and further improvement of my skills.

The Fitzwilliam Museum provided a stimulating environment for learning, research and the application of knowledge in practice, and this was greatly encouraged by my supervisor Julie Dawson, Senior Assistant Keeper (Conservation), whose support and patience gave me confidence in my work. This enabled me to develop my skills at a rapid pace but also highlighted areas in preventive conservation where I needed to progress further. Having the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of projects – such as the creation of a five year collections care plan for the Museum – enabled me to identify those areas of collections management in which I would benefit from additional training, such as long-term planning, decision-making and prioritisation in collection care. In the second year of the internship I was then able to build on these skills by taking responsibility for co-ordinating a major project: the expansion and updating of the Museum's emergency plan. This project was very challenging, in terms of both managing my time efficiently and co-ordinating and communicating with the large number of people involved, and consequently it helped me to further develop my personal organisational and problem-solving skills. It taught me how to prioritise by asking questions such as 'how is this task/event important to the project?' and 'how much time can we justify using on this task?' I learnt to recognise which tasks actually drive a project and to avoid smaller ones that give a false satisfaction of 'doing' and 'finishing' things.

A collaborative venture with the Department of Architecture at the University of Cambridge provided another opportunity to both apply and continue to build on these new skills. The aim of the project was to investigate whether it was possible to reinstate an original lighting scheme in the 1840s Founder's Building of the Museum without exposing the collections to

excessive illumination. Through the modelling exercises and discussions with the architectural specialist and through working with contractors to find practical solutions to problems, I learned how to explain the needs of conservation and collections care to a non-specialist audience in order to arrive at an effective result. Such projects, running alongside routine preventive conservation tasks, taught me to take a more holistic approach to my work and look equally at the bigger picture when caring for collections and developing projects that contribute to their long-term preservation.

Internships are a unique opportunity to learn and further develop skills within a 'real' working environment. Being part of an Icon/HLF internship contributed immensely to my professional development, much more so than I was expecting. From my experience, the scheme is invaluable to the conservation sector and I hope it will continue to run in the future.



Andor Vince in discussion with Julie Dawson, Senior Assistant Keeper (Conservation)

Learning about deterioration of archaeological ceramics from Christina Rozeik, Research Associate (Conservation)



Rachel Swift ACR decides that it is her turn to pass on skills

It is nearly six years since I began my twelve-month internship during the first year of the HLF training bursaries scheme. I arrived with a Postgraduate Diploma in the Conservation of Ceramics and Related Materials (Glass and Stone), a MA in Conservation Studies and a year of working in the private sector. All of this experience has stood me in very good stead for the variety of projects that I have since been professionally involved with. For me, the most important aspect of the Icon/HLF scheme was the introduction of the Professional Standards. I became much more aware of how important it is to recognise and acknowledge what I was thinking as well as what I was doing. Without this introduction at an early stage in my career I would have found the accreditation process I recently went through much more intimidating. Fingers crossed, I will be a fully fledged accredited conservator by the time this Icon News goes to press.

I have now been a ceramics and glass conservator at the British Museum for over four years. So what kind of projects might a museum conservator in a similar position be involved with? I frequently carry out condition assessments for objects required for UK and international loan. Objects may be going to one institution for three months or around the world for three years and decisions must be made accordingly; I may work on one object for a number of hours or a whole collection over a number of years. I work with scientists analysing objects to gather information about composition, deterioration and conservation history and I also liaise with curators, designers and interpretation specialists in the preparation of exhibitions.

I have also been fortunate to be part of a number of British Museum international projects. Since 2009 I have been the sole conservator for an excavation in southern Turkey. Domuztepe is a large Late Neolithic settlement (c. 6500–5500 BC) which documents the transitional time between village and urban societies in the Middle East. The excavation can produce up to two metric tonnes of ceramic material in one six week season, hence the need for a conservator specialising in ceramics. At Domuztepe my role has comprised of two main aspects: first, cleaning and stabilising freshly excavated material, including bone tools, beads, stone seals and pendants and, of course, ceramics. This work has enabled specialists to study the finds prior to them being packed for long-term storage at the local museum in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey. Secondly, I have carried out practical work in preparation for a new 'Domuztepe' gallery in the same local museum. The workload can be very heavy and time is precious so over the seasons I have provided some basic conservation training to a number of archaeologists and we have worked together to get the tasks done.

In February 2011 I was asked to go with two colleagues to Jordan to realise the final set up of a museum near Safi, a town south east of the Dead Sea. Over sixteen days we



Rachel in full swing as site conservator for the Domuztepe excavation in Turkey

worked as a team to move and clean display cases, assess and conserve objects ranging from large limestone stelae and ceramic honey pots to amber beads, and we designed and made mounts and arranged the objects in almost every case in the museum. Spirits were kept high as we were working alongside a team of Greek conservators who were there to assemble and mount a large mosaic. We left 'The Museum at the Lowest Place on Earth' as text panels were about to be installed and, although it's not open to the public yet, hopefully it will be soon.

It is now my turn to provide training and encouragement to students who come to the British Museum on placements. What happens post-conservation training can be a daunting prospect – I often find myself repeating to students a comment originally said to me in my second year at West Dean College when I was worried about my specialist training and the apparent lack of jobs. My tutor said 'If you really want a job in conservation then there will be one for you'. I completely believe this to be true.

Rachel with British Museum colleagues, the team of Greek conservators and project co-ordinator Dr Konstantinos D. Politis at 'The Museum at the Lowest Place on Earth'



Becoming a conservator

Alison Gilchrist describes her internship experience at Barley Studio

Over the past few years I have made a significant career change from academic and scientist to stained glass conservator. This has been made possible, first, by studying for a MA in Stained Glass Conservation and Heritage Management at the University of York and, secondly, by my internship year at Barley Studio under Icon's HLF Training Bursaries scheme. During the MA programme I learnt a great deal about stained glass as an artistic, architectural and historical medium, as well as the wider principles of conservation. I also undertook work placements, both prior to beginning the MA programme (ten weeks at Barley Studio) and during the MA programme (twenty weeks at Canterbury Cathedral Studios); however, on completing the programme I felt that my practical skills and experience were not yet at a level that would allow me to apply for work as a stained glass conservator.

The Icon/HLF internship therefore felt like the perfect next step following my academic studies. My primary aim was to gain further practical experience, as well as to begin to put into practice some of the theoretical knowledge gained during the MA study. I hoped to explore a range of issues related to stained glass conservation, in terms of hands-on conservation work (in the studio and on site), as well as treatment protocol development and project planning.

Having already undertaken a short period of work experience at Barley Studio, I settled in easily and was treated as a member of the team from very early on. Most of the first

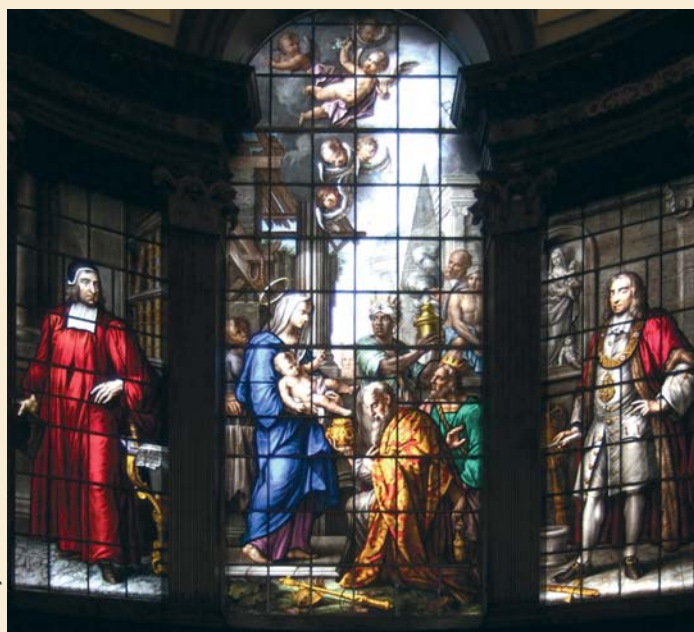
quarter was spent working away from the studio on our major project in the Lady Chapel of Lichfield Cathedral; after a few days of training with Keith Barley I was given responsibility for the pre-conservation recording of nine large sixteenth-century windows which had already been removed from their openings. This gave me the opportunity to examine the glass and its condition and to revise my photography skills – photographing the panels in transmitted light using a light box, as well as in reflected light to show the condition of both the interior and exterior faces of the glass surfaces. In addition, as three or four of us were staying in Lichfield each week, I had the chance to get to know my new colleagues a little better.

Over the internship year I have been involved in a wide range of projects both in the studio and on site. I have practised many skills from window removal through recording and conservation to re-instatement; I have taken on sole responsibility for some areas such as photography, and worked with colleagues on others. Working in a relatively small team such as that at Barley Studio (seven in total) means that we need to work closely together and must be aware of the progress of projects through their different stages of work. Although we each have our own specialist areas, many skills overlap and therefore people can take on different tasks if necessary. The management of several projects simultaneously, which ensures that tasks are carried out in the correct order while each person is kept working, is something I previously had little experience of but which I have admired in the studio.

One of my favourite projects during the internship year was the conservation of the Liturgical East Window of Sir William Turner's Hospital Chapel in Kirkleatham, near Redcar. This magnificent eighteenth-century window, with a central light depicting the Adoration of the Magi (after Francesco Sletter) flanked by portraits of Sir William Turner and his brother John, is a rare survival from the period between the medieval and the Gothic Revival; it has been attributed to William Price, one of the most celebrated glass painters of his generation. I was involved in every stage of its conservation, helping to remove the window (in the snow of December 2010), recording its condition, removing previous repairs, edge bonding broken pieces back together, and re-touching areas where paint and enamel had been lost.

A particular area of difficulty with this window arose where the lower edge had been badly broken due to cement cills cast in situ to the outside. Fragments embedded in the cement were carefully collected and, after several hours of examination, as many as possible were returned to their correct positions and bonded back into place using conservation grade silicone adhesive. Broken pieces in the rest of the window were also removed from the leadwork and the pieces bonded together,

Liturgical East Window of Sir William Turner's Hospital Chapel, Kirkleatham (after conservation)





Cold painting

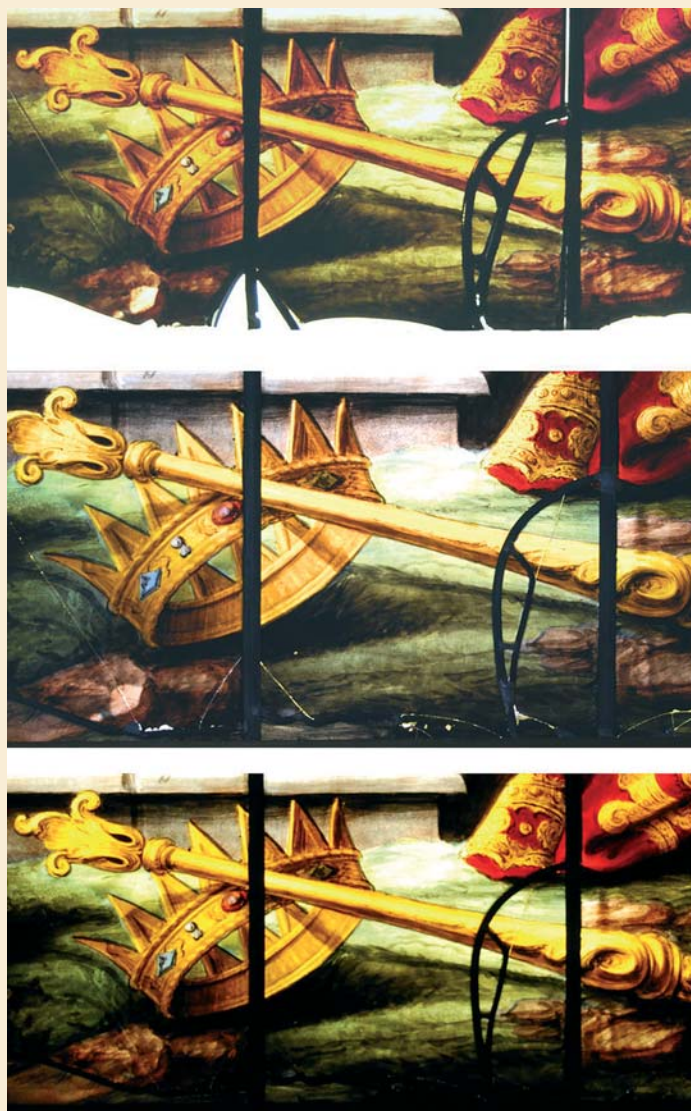
allowing the removal of disfiguring mending leads. This is an extremely satisfying process, as the piece can be returned to its original appearance as much as possible.

The final conservation process was to carry out retouching or 'cold painting' to disguise areas where the original glass paint had been lost, either around the glass breaks or where enamels had flaked away from the glass surface (this is a common problem with enamel painting, particularly blue enamels on glass). Conservation grade oil paints were used for the cold painting as they have a good appearance in both transmitted and reflected light and should be reasonably robust in use, while remaining reversible (removable using acetone) should the need arise. This cold painting was quite challenging, requiring paint mixing to achieve a good colour match and careful application to avoid any spreading over the original paint, but it was also very satisfying as the more obvious breaks could be disguised – at least from a distance.

This internship year has been a really valuable learning experience, both enjoyable and, at times, challenging. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to improve my practical skills by working on 'real' projects, while also observing and taking part in discussions relating to the best treatment options in individual cases. Working alongside such an experienced and thoughtful conservator as Keith Barley, as well as other colleagues at the studio, has been one of the most important aspects of my learning, allowing me to both consolidate and re-assess my theoretical knowledge in the light of practical (and business) considerations.

The framework of the Icon/HLF internship programme has been very useful for me to document and reflect on my learning process; in particular the quarterly 'Activity Monitor' allowed me to review my skills development and also to compare this with my supervisor's assessment of my skill level. I occasionally found the structure frustrating as I could not always find evidence for skills that I felt I would be able to demonstrate given the opportunity, although in general I found that my supervisor rated my skills more highly than I did, which helped to build my confidence. I am sure that familiarity with this reflective process will also be of benefit in the future, when I begin to prepare for accreditation.

Other opportunities offered as part of the internship



Detail of the lower edge, before, during and after conservation

programme included the 'Chemistry for Conservators' course run by International Academic Projects. This is an excellent correspondence course covering many aspects of the chemistry of conservation materials and processes, which has already proved useful in developing treatments in the studio. I also received some funding towards tools for site working and I was able to attend two intern-arranged visits: to Hampton Court Palace and to the Liverpool Conservation Centre. Both were really interesting days combining a view of other conservation disciplines with the chance to meet other interns and to share our experiences.

Towards the end of my internship I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to continue working as a conservator at Barley Studio. I am very aware that I still have much to learn and that there is no substitute for experience in building up both the knowledge and skills necessary to be a successful conservator. However, the internship year has been an excellent start to this process and has proved to be the perfect bridge between my academic studies and a practical career. I have been able to continue working on the projects I began during the internship, in particular to complete the post-conservation recording and to help with the re-installation of the Kirkleatham window described above. I have also begun to take on additional responsibilities, such as the compiling of conservation reports, and I am sure that more will follow as my experience grows. I look forward to many more years of reflective practice.

East meets West

Carol Peacock describes a traditional Eastern training experience within a Western internship framework

INTRODUCTION

At a time when educational establishments are finding themselves under enormous pressure to sustain conservation teaching and amidst on-going discussions regarding the professionalisation of conservation, the notion of *training* comes sharply into focus. What form, quality and duration should that training take? At what stage can one legitimately progress from calling oneself a 'trainee' to a 'practising conservator'? For many interns the Icon/HLF internship acts as a transition point between study and employment, and yet the internship I was privileged to experience last year not only provided me with a fascinating learning opportunity but completely changed my understanding of the way in which conservation training can be approached.

I was fortunate enough to be chosen for an Icon/HLF-funded internship at the British Museum, training in the conservation of Eastern pictorial art. This was to be focused on the centuries-old craft of Chinese scroll mounting – the traditional means by which Chinese prints and paintings are conserved and displayed. The British Museum's outstanding collection of

Chinese pictorial art on paper and silk is conserved within the Hirayama Studio – a unique conservation facility led by experts from both China and Japan, where traditional East Asian techniques are combined with best practice in the conservation of art on paper.

A trainee scroll mounter in China spends up to ten years training within a museum or studio, acting as an assistant to a master mounter in a fashion similar to a traditional (though now less common) Western apprenticeship. These principles were applied to my internship and I had the great fortune of observing and working under Mrs Qiu Jin Xian, a master scroll mounter of nearly forty years' experience who, before coming to the British Museum in 1987, trained and worked at the Shanghai Museum for fifteen years. There are no schools, even in China, where it is possible to learn the techniques I was about to be exposed to. Therefore, as a recent graduate in paper conservation, to receive this training here in London was a unique opportunity to gain an insight into a traditional and exacting Eastern system, framed within a Western institution and internship scheme. In this article I hope to illustrate just what made this training experience so unique and why

A selection of tools and materials bought in Shanghai



engaging in this Eastern practice opened my eyes to the diverse forms conservation training can take, paying particular attention to the importance of familiarisation exercises, the long-term nature of the training, and the teacher/student dynamic.

FAMILIARISATION EXERCISES

Unlike some Western practice, it is common for a student in the Chinese system not to handle or treat older objects until well into their period of training. Indeed, at the start of my internship there was the possibility that I might not get to work on any museum objects directly. As it transpired I did eventually work on museum objects, yet the vast majority of my time focused instead on developing my manual dexterity through tool and material handling exercises and practising complex mounting procedures.

As is practised in China by all trainee scroll mounters, I spent part of each morning working my hard palm-fibred brush against the drying board in an effort to soften the brush and improve the flexibility of my wrist – it is important to build up muscles to successfully execute the demanding lining procedures necessary when mounting a large painting in the traditional style. In other exercises I produced my own bamboo spatulas and knife and needle handles, leaving no possibility for a bad workman to blame his tools as I was wholly responsible for their manufacture! As I grew to appreciate, these familiarisation exercises were in fact practical work; I was training myself to handle these tools as second nature and to learn their capabilities intuitively.

Familiarising myself with the key materials involved in the work of Chinese scroll mounters – namely *xuan* paper, wheat starch paste and fine mounters' silks – was crucial. Repetition was the watchword and repeatedly practising lining and joining exercises formed the foundation of my initial training. As a short-fibred paper, *xuan* paper produces soft, supple scrolls to accommodate ancient paintings sympathetically and safely, but as a result it has very little wet strength and is difficult to handle once brushed with the dilute wheat starch paste used in many traditional lining techniques; learning how to correctly handle these materials in combination with one another is imperative. The importance of my daily brushwork exercises quickly became evident whilst I repeatedly practised lining and joining large sheets of *xuan* paper together in the hope of producing creaseless linings. It was only once I was capable of this basic work that I could progress and put these techniques into practice: not in conserving objects, but by producing brand new hanging scrolls – the first pictorial art format a trainee scroll mounter must master.

THE HANGING SCROLL

As with book conservation, where experience of producing new bindings is invaluable when conserving old books, producing a hanging scroll from scratch is the only way to truly understand its complex format and therefore appreciate how a well-designed mount can best preserve a valuable



A hanging scroll of a facsimile painting produced during training

painting. I was delighted to produce three hanging scrolls of facsimile or self-painted objects during the year, and the benefits of closely observing Qiu *Laoshi* (Teacher Qiu) truly paid off during these exercises. Working under the discerning eye of my teacher was at times nerve-wracking, but invaluable.

The emphasis that the traditional training system places on familiarising oneself with handling tools, materials and formats before ever touching an object absolutely stressed to me the importance of developing intuitive hand skills through applied and dedicated repetition. This must by its very nature take time – something not always afforded to trainee conservators in the West.

DEVELOPING AN INTUITIVE APPROACH

Similarly, when thought of in terms of the depth of understanding that is required to treat such complex objects, a decade of training is not excessive. Chinese pictorial art objects are unique and complex not only in structure, but also in the manner with which they must be approached and conserved. For someone coming to this work from a Western conservation background, the prevailing ethos guiding the way in which these works are conserved takes time to fully appreciate and adopt. Some aspects of the traditional work – such as fully remounting paintings and retouching areas of loss – may remain controversial when viewed through a Western perspective, yet if trained in the Chinese method they are seen as integral parts of the tradition of preservation, and have proved themselves safe and suitable over the centuries in which they have been practised and revisited.

Just as hand skills must become second-nature over time, so must intuitive understanding of the objects – be it in determining the perfect proportions of a new scroll mount, or in dyeing paper the most complementary shade for a painting's new lining. I was inspired by seeing the instinctive skill with which Qiu *Laoshi* assessed and treated the paintings she worked on – something that I know has only been achieved by the extensive period she has dedicated to perfecting this traditional discipline.

A STUDENT AND ASSISTANT

One of the unique aspects of my internship was how my working relationships were so deeply intertwined with my training through the roles I was privileged to assume – as Qiu *Laoshi*'s student and occasional assistant. 'To be a good scroll mounter, one must first be a good assistant' is something Qiu *Laoshi* often told me. The relationship resembles a doctor/nurse dynamic and it is only by fully entering this respectful working relationship of careful observation and assistance that the training can be completed comprehensively. Since, by its nature, most of the practical work is large-format, a second pair of hands can be very useful, although only if trained correctly. This is where good material handling is imperative, be it in holding a six foot-long sheet of damp *xuan* paper at the correct angle and tension to



© Trustees of the British Museum

Assisting Qiu Jin Xian apply a tong oil paper facing to a silk painting

allow the master to line a painting with ease, or manoeuvring an even larger newly-mounted scroll to the drying board. A great sense of teamwork comes from this working relationship and is found far more commonly in Eastern practice than in many studios here in the West.

IN CONCLUSION

One of the aims of the HLF Bursary scheme has been to provide training in areas of conservation in which there is a need for skills to be disseminated to future conservators, and in this respect my internship has been incredibly successful. There still remains a certain degree of secrecy around the work of the scroll mounter in China and it is only by the openness of experts like Qiu *Laoshi*, who recognise the importance of passing on their skills through training others, that this profession, and the invaluable objects it preserves, will survive. Through my Icon/HLF internship I have become completely enchanted with the work of Chinese scroll mounters – an area of paper conservation that was previously unknown to me – and consequently I wish to develop in this specialist field and dedicate the time necessary to do so.

If another of the scheme's aims has been to help interns find employment then my internship has been successful again, as I am delighted to report that I am now employed as a Conservator of Chinese Paintings at the British Museum, continuing my training under Qiu *Laoshi* and other senior conservators. In regards to my initial question as to when trainees can legitimately call themselves practising conservators, I hope that in time I shall fully deserve my job title through committing to this long-term training process, hoping to achieve a standard of practical work and perception that only such an intensive preparation can provide.

THANKS

I must thank Mrs Qiu Jin Xian for the time and effort she dedicated to my internship, to Joanna Kosek my supervisor, Caroline Barry, all staff at the Hirayama Studio and all those who helped me in the wider CSR and Asia departments within the British Museum. Thanks also to Fiona Macalister, my Regional Supervisor, and Carol Brown and all those in the Icon training office for their fantastic organisation, as well as the HLF for making this incredible opportunity possible.

Mustering Assistance

Jennifer Halling shows how volunteers can be invaluable in a time-constrained project

As an intern at North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYCRO) I am fortunate to have the unique opportunity to work on a project-based internship, concentrating on the conservation of the Whitby Merchant Seamen's Muster Rolls. With a two-year time constraint, the completion of this exciting project would not be possible without the support of a team of dedicated volunteers.

The Whitby Merchant Seamen's muster rolls are a rare and culturally important collection that offers an insight into the lives of seamen in the eighteenth century. An Act of Parliament passed in 1747 required all seamen to contribute six pence per month *'for the relief and support of maimed and disabled seamen, and the widows and children of such as shall be slain or drowned in the Merchant Service'*. The rolls, spanning over seventy years, chart every ship's voyage from Whitby during that time – cataloguing the crew, their age, their positions on board, any injuries sustained or deaths, and the amount subtracted from their wage. They also reveal tales of wars and trade, national events and personal tragedies, thus making them an important source of maritime history both locally and nationally.

The rolls were thought to be lost until building works in the attic of the Whitby Merchant Seaman's Hospital in the 1980s led to their discovery. The fluctuating environmental conditions of the attic, as well as the lack of appropriate housing, proved hugely detrimental with over half of the rolls being severely damaged by dirt, mould and pest damage. The rolls were boxed and kept in storage until a grant by the Thomas V.W. Roe Deceased Fund – a jet curator of Whitby Museum – allowed the Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society at Whitby Museum to purchase them and fund this internship to enable access through conservation and preservation measures.

Whitby Museum is run almost exclusively by volunteers, including Christiane Kroebe (the Librarian of the Lit. & Phil. and my contact there), and from the start volunteer participation was intended to be a key part of the project. A new wing at

There are nearly 8,000 Whitby Merchant Seamen Muster Rolls - almost two thirds are categorised as 'poor'



the museum incorporated a small conservation room, however it does not have the facilities to carry out extensive conservation work and so it was necessary to bring the entire collection to the NYCRO in Northallerton. Nevertheless it was important that a project designed to enable access to a collection so important to the populace of Whitby would also be worked on by Whitby people: we decided that two teams should be established for the duration of the project, one at each location, and the work shared between them. There was an existing group of volunteers at Whitby who showed interest in assisting with the project, whilst a team of new volunteers were recruited at NYCRO.

An initial assessment revealed that there were nearly 8,000 muster rolls, far more than had been previously estimated; this made volunteer participation even more important as predictions suggested the two-year deadline would be a challenge. After researching conservation techniques, we decided to train the volunteers to dry clean the rolls and carry out minor paper repairs on those rolls categorised as 'good' and 'fair' (approximately a third of the collection). We decided upon re-moistenable tissue for the paper repairs, which we produced by applying warm gelatine to Japanese paper. When dry, a repair piece can be cut out and then re-moistened with an ethanol/water mix and applied to the damaged paper substrate. This method is favoured for use with iron gall ink as the gelatine and minimal moisture content reduce the migration of detrimental ferrous ions. It is also good for volunteers as it removes the risks associated with open pots of adhesive and water near the documents.

Whilst calculating visits to Whitby into my timescale, fate smiled upon the project. Recently graduated in objects conservation and looking for work, Rebekah Parkinson had offered her services to the museum; in October 2010 she came to NYCRO to reinforce her previous paper conservation experience. Fully confident in her abilities we decided that Rebekah would manage the volunteers based at Whitby, under minimal supervision from me and Rachel Greenwood, my mentor and Conservator at NYCRO.

In November, three newly recruited volunteers attended a training day at the Record Office. Rachel and I introduced them to the rolls, their history, the paper-making process, the effects of mould and iron gall ink corrosion. We then took them through the processes of making a cleaning tray, dry cleaning and paper repair with re-moistenable tissue. The day proved very successful – given the opportunity to work with original documents, the volunteers conscientiously assessed the rolls before acting, cleaned gently and carried out sympathetic repairs.

A week later, Rachel and I trained twelve volunteers at Whitby Museum, with the assistance of Rebekah. We were able to successfully impart all the required information, train and oversee the conservation of several muster rolls, despite the large number of attendees. We left confident that the volunteers would be able to proceed with the rolls overseen by Rebekah and with minimal intervention by us.



Some of the sixteen project volunteers at the official opening, (Jenny Halling is seated on the right)

By January 2011, I had four faithful volunteers at NYCRO, who still work with me every Thursday. Finding their strengths within the project, they have established their own niches, which they relish having responsibility for. Graham Slingsby, a retired engineer, allocates each roll a conservation number which he pencils in immaculate hand; Dominic Hannon, a recent graduate in history, enters data and transcribes small areas of text from the verso into a spreadsheet that charts the progress of each roll. John Owen and Damian Leigh, a retired accountant and a trainee journalist respectively, deftly clean and repair the rolls. There's a wonderful repartee as each tries to find the most disturbing injury in the *'Where & when run, slain, killed, dead or drown'd' column* (*'violently burnt by whale rendering fat'*) or finding the furthest destination (Madras), whilst sharing their knowledge and personal passions. They have gained my complete trust in their abilities and I can leave them to work unsupervised if necessary knowing that they are aware of their limitations and will put aside any work they query.

With sixteen volunteers between Whitby and NYCRO each working a day a week on the project, we were nearing completion of the 'good' and 'fair' muster rolls by June 2011. The 'poor' rolls, however, were proving more of a challenge, as extensive mould damage made the majority fragile and thus slow to clean. These rolls are repaired using the suction table. Supported on the perforated table top, the air pressure is adjustable: low initially to allow positioning of loose fragments and adjustment of the fragile documents, before turning up the pressure to hold the flattened item in place during repair. With this in mind – and since they had proved their consistent ability over the previous six months – Rachel and I decided to extend the volunteer's responsibilities to include cleaning 'poor' rolls. I had already been slowly introducing the NYCRO volunteers to these rolls to assess the suitability of this course of action and found them to be entirely competent. The Whitby volunteers came to NYCRO with Christiane and Rebekah for a day of training and were easily able to adapt their skills to the more delicate 'poor' rolls.

After nearly a year of working alongside four dedicated volunteers, and with the deadline looming closer, Rachel and I took the decision to increase their skills and responsibilities further still by training them on the suction table. It was a task they were keen to learn and had enquired about previously and I spent a day demonstrating the techniques involved; we then worked together until each individual was confident. I have limited their treatments to those rolls where the mould damage is along the bottom edge, so that the repairs are



Playing to their strengths: the Northallerton-based volunteers have taken responsibility for different aspects of the project

relatively simple and do not encroach on any iron gall ink. They have all produced very good results and are enjoying the increased variety in tasks, combining their new responsibilities with their previous roles on a rota system.

As part of my internship, in December 2011 we produced an exhibition for Whitby Museum, which illustrates every aspect of the muster rolls: their history, discovery, conservation and future use. Whilst Rachel and I designed the exhibition and I wrote the section on conservation, volunteers from Whitby gathered their knowledge on seamen and trade to scribe the remaining panels. In addition to this, three volunteers assisted with installation of the panels and original rolls.

Volunteers have not just been present but have had a vital and necessary part in every phase of this project. In the wider aspect, volunteers now play an important – if not sometimes controversial – role in the conservation world and this project has been a positive first experience that I can draw on in my future career. Developing confidence in training and managing people has been one of the most positive aspects of this internship experience for me. When talking to others about volunteer experiences, and from my own past encounters, I acknowledge that I have been very fortunate within this project. However, for those who dismiss taking on volunteers as disruptive or too demanding of their time, I truly believe that with proper training and feedback – and by working to their strengths and providing increased responsibility – it is likely that the volunteers who are so eager to give their time will provide skills, knowledge and good humour when you need it, and prove themselves invaluable in the successful completion of a project.

Volunteers assisted in writing and installing the exhibition at Whitby Museum



Training in Facsimiles

Anne Marie Taberdo sheds light on the arcane skill of making replicas

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of my twelve month Icon/HLF internship in the Facsimile Service of the British Museum I was introduced to moulding, casting and colour matching techniques from past and present that are used to make aesthetically accurate replications of museum artefacts. This unique opportunity not only served as a worthy introduction into the field of conservation, but it has also given me – as a previously trained sculptor – the ability to experience a new avenue of object making and diversify my practical skills. I gained my first qualification in conservation studies through the International Academic Project's *Chemistry for Conservators* course and I have visited various relevant organisations, sites and private companies, both through Icon planned group visits and independently. Gaining experience in this way will, I hope, contribute to building career prospects in this specialised industry. This article gives a brief background to the history of the Facsimile Service and covers the projects that formed the basis of my training.

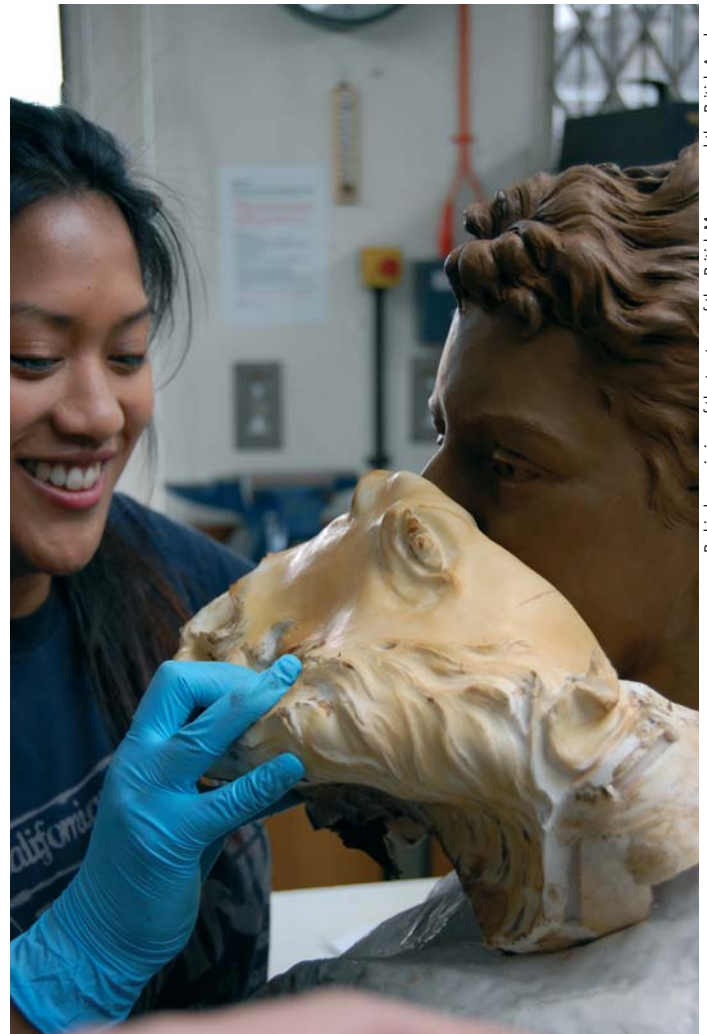
THE FACSIMILE SERVICE

The British Museum has a long history of acquiring reproductions of antiquities. In the nineteenth century replicas were seen as a thriving business opportunity for use as studies and private sales. Moulds and impressions would be taken from the museum's existing collection as well as directly from archaeological sites. Plaster casts were then made from the moulds by skilled *formatores* (mould/cast makers) which were outsourced to London-based establishments such as the Victoria & Albert Department of Casts and D. Brucciani & Co., Ltd. Over time the British Museum formed its own cast service, which is known today as The Facsimile Service.

The Facsimile Service is operated solely by its Replication Specialist, Mike Neilson, as a section of the Department of Conservation & Scientific Research. For the duration of my internship I was fortunate to be supervised by Mike and guided through the skills and methodologies used to fabricate a greatly diverse range of museum objects. Today much of the museum's collection is available for loan to other museums both nationally and internationally, therefore replications take their place on display until they return. Facsimiles are also used for study purposes and made by request from various other institutions.

THE MATERIALS

Mould and cast-making materials have developed in accordance with the invention of new materials in the manufacturing industry, moving away from non-flexible and fairly weighty plaster moulds to the light-weight and flexible silicone rubber moulds used today. The result of this shift is a less time-consuming moulding process and more accurate impression of minute surface detail.



By kind permission of the trustees of the British Museum and the British Academy

Demoulding the cast of Frida Mond

Silicone moulds are backed up with a rigid support case made from glass fibre laminates and polyester resin in order for the rubber to retain its shape. Hollow casts are then made from the moulds in resin, which is once again backed with glass fibre laminates to strengthen the structure. The final stage of the casting process is to hand finish and colour-match the surface to create an aesthetically accurate copy of the original.

SELECTED PROJECTS

The Early Technique: Plaster-piece mould

The objective for my first project was to gain an insight into the history of cast making through research and practice of nineteenth-century traditional techniques. I was given a twenty-three-piece plaster mould made in 1893, stamped by the Anglo-Italian casting firm D. Brucciani & Co, to study and



Colour matching of Frida Mond

recreate. The mould was a floral design relief taken from a portion of a pilaster at the Parisian basilica, *L'église de la Madeleine*. My task was to use the same methods, tools and materials previously used over one hundred years before to make the original, in order to replicate the mould and cast. As the method used is long outdated by the discovery of flexible moulds such as silicone rubber, I found it challenging to source detailed descriptions of the old technique. As in many cases with sculptural practice, expertise on the subject is passed down from person to person – for example, through training as an apprentice – and as the technique slowly became obsolete, specific skills were also lost.

Preventive Conservation: Bust of Septimius Severus – c. 2nd Century AD

A facsimile of the British Museum's life-size marble bust of Roman Emperor Septimius Severus was acquired by Tully House Museum in Carlisle for permanent exhibition. While assisting my supervisor with this project the focus was on preventive conservation methods such as pre-moulding barriers in order to protect the surface of the artefact from any contact with moulding materials. We did this by careful application of a laboratory film called *Parafilm*, an approved conservation standard malleable film that is carefully layered

onto the marble surface using a wooden modelling tool. It took a total of three weeks to coat the entire surface and only then did we proceed to make the mould.

Major Project: Bust of Frida Mond – 1887

My main focus for the internship year was the replication of a late nineteenth-century bronze-effect plaster bust of the Anglo-German Frida Mond, requested by the British Academy and King's College London. I had already worked on various objects alongside my supervisor before starting this project and was therefore given the opportunity to complete the entire replication process of the bust – from acquisition to completion – with minimal supervision. This was an invaluable experience as I gained an insight into, and practice in, the many different facets of facsimile making: transportation, restoration, preventive conservation, moulding, casting and colour-matching. This facsimile is now on display at the British Academy in London.

Electroforming: a pigeon feather

The Facsimile Service also holds the resources to replicate metal objects – known as electrotypes, they use the process of electrolysis to form and plate an object in copper, silver or



Busts of Frida Mond. The original is on the left, the facsimile on the right

gold. Although the original is not a metal object, I was given the task to mould and cast a pigeon feather as an exercise to learn about plating processes and the associated metal-working skills such as soldering, as well as the history and development of the process. With the original feather remaining intact throughout the process, the successful silver-plated, copper cast did astound me with the level of detail that was transferred from such a fragile and delicate specimen.

TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES

A large part of the success of the training scheme for me was due to the opportunities to meet with fellow Icon interns and industry professionals, and to visit various English Heritage sites, museums and workshops in both the public and private sector. The accessibility of resources and information was invaluable and I found myself in a privileged position of being able to explore and focus my craft with the security of support behind me. The internship, I feel, gave us permission to be more inquisitive about the faculties of conservation and how it operates today in the most reputable organisations and private companies. Although we cannot ignore the effects of the current economic climate upon this sector, the experienced

conservators I spoke to have a great deal of encouragement for and confidence in our future in conservation. In twelve months I had become acutely aware of the value of skilled workers in preserving our heritage and the significance of sharing knowledge of the ways in which this can be achieved.

CONCLUSION

Coming from a sculpture background and with no previous experience in conservation, it was important for me to take every opportunity to gain an insight into the field. This was made possible through the support of Icon, HLF and the British Museum, and the many courses, lectures and visits I was able to participate in. The emphasis for me was the transferral of sculptural skills into a conservation setting; this has allowed me to further develop my sculptural practice in moulding and casting to a museum standard and gain a new confidence in handling objects – I now hope to continue with this specialism at a professional level. Although my official internship with the museum has now come to an end, I believe the support from Icon has and will continue and the benefits of undertaking the training scheme will stay with me throughout every step of my career.

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news from the groups

ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

Events

The committee is working on the two day meeting 'From Context Sheets to Display Cases'. This is the joint Archaeology and Scotland group event to be held on 25 & 26 June in Glasgow. The archaeology group AGM will be held on the 25th. Keep an eye on the archaeology group webpage for further details and booking information.

New addition to archaeology group webpage

One of the roles of the committee is to represent the interests of our members and the profession. As part of this we participate in consultations informing national guidelines, standards and strategies relevant to archaeological conservation. You can now find our responses to these via the archaeology group webpage.

Membership survey

As an archaeology group member you should soon be receiving a request to complete an online questionnaire. The committee wants to make sure it is representing your interests and delivering a programme of events that meets your needs. We want to know about you and your requirements for keeping your knowledge and skills current and we would like to build a better understanding of how the profession is faring in changing times.

Lastly, don't forget to tick Archaeology as your choice on your membership renewal form, thanks from the committee!

Karla Graham

CERAMICS AND GLASS GROUP

Liverpool 2012

Book NOW for the next CGG conference

Don't forget to book your place at this year's AGM and two day conference in Liverpool. The dates for your diary are Friday 15–Saturday 16 June 2012.

The programme is packed full of talks from speakers gathered from across the country. Topics include the application of 3D laser scanning in conservation, use of scanning electron microscopy to discover more about glazing methods in ceramics, new conservation techniques for archaeological glass and the results of a search for products to replace Nitromors. Special visits have also been arranged to the new Museum of Liverpool. Finally, there will be a special poster session showcasing work undertaken by current conservation students.

Not to be missed is the conference dinner in a stunning Liverpool setting as well as the pre-conference drinks reception.

Full details and the booking form can be found on the CGG page on the Icon website or contact Nancy Sharpe sharpe.restoration@fsmail.net or Rachel Sharples Rachel.Sharples@gmail.com.

Booking closes on May 25.

Cost: Member £150, Student £75, Non-member £200

Cost (with conference dinner): Member £168, Student £93, Non-member £218

Book early to avoid disappointment!

Nigel Williams Prize

There is also still just time to send in your application for the Nigel Williams Prize! The award is given to the best conservation/restoration of an object or of a project in ceramic, glass or a related material, which has to have been completed within four years prior to each award year. The prize will be awarded during the two day conference in Liverpool.

First prize is £750 with two runners up receiving £150 each. The deadline for submissions is 31 March 2012. Please contact Ronald Pile for further information (ronaldpile37@btinternet.com).

Kathleen Swales

SCOTLAND GROUP

New look committee line-up

Following the Group's successful general meeting in January the new committee now looks as follows:

Chair:	Rob Thomson
Vice Chair:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Ruth Honeybone
Vice-Treasurer:	Vacant
Secretary:	Nicole Stahl
Events team:	Helen Creasy, Tizzy Hepher, Erica Kotze, Polly Smith, Suzanne Ross
Publicity and Publications:	Lynn Teggart, Pieta Greaves
Committee members:	Rob Lewis
Observers:	Carol Brown, Clare Meredith, Jim Tate, Craig Kennedy, Jacqueline Ridge
Trustee:	Gill Keay

Upcoming events

Technical visit to Stirling Castle

A visit to Stirling Castle with Historic Scotland Head of Collections will take place on Friday 4 May 2012 from 2–5pm. The visit costs £3 and numbers are limited to twenty people. Please contact Erica Kotze e.kotze@abdn.ac.uk to book a place, and to receive details of where to meet.

Historic Scotland's £12 million project to return Stirling Castle's royal palace to how it may have looked in the 1540s was completed in June 2011. Head of Collections, Richard Wellander, is delighted to offer a technical visit for the Icon Scotland Group to describe the conservation implications of refurbishing the palace block.

Graduate Voice

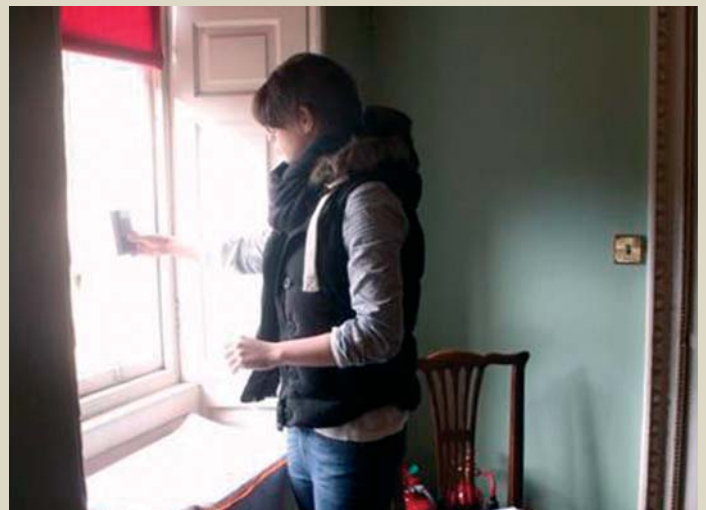
LIGHT MANAGEMENT AT THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND

by Anna Starkey

In September 2011 I began a twelve-month preventive conservation internship with the National Trust for Scotland. My placement, funded through the Bute Memorial Fund, covers many different elements of preventive conservation but one project is ongoing throughout the year: management of daylight within Trust properties. In the last few years the Trust has focused on improving current environmental monitoring systems and further developing its light management programme is the next phase. The Trust has over fifty properties displaying historic collections and managing light at these vastly different properties presents its own challenges.

In the first quarter of my internship I concentrated on collating in one accessible place all information currently held on light management at Trust properties. This enabled me to see that more detailed information was needed to properly understand the issues and in the second quarter I have been to properties across Scotland gathering information with the Trust's regionally-based conservators. There are a number of challenges inherent in gathering light information as light is a fleeting and subjective factor to measure – spot readings taken at properties only give a snapshot of the light levels on that day, and long term light data is not always available. Whilst at properties I have been measuring visible and ultraviolet light levels, looking at control measures such as blinds, curtains and shutters and checking that ultraviolet film is effective, and I will continue throughout the year to visit as many properties as possible. With the support of my

Checking that UV absorbing film is working



© National Trust for Scotland

The centrepiece of the project is the refurbishment of six splendid royal apartments in the palace built by James V within the castle walls. They have been returned to how they might have looked in the 1540s when they were home to Mary of Guise and her infant daughter Mary Queen of Scots. When visitors enter the palace they step back into the world of the Scottish Renaissance royal court, surrounded by beautiful decorations, crafts, works of art and furniture. Costumed interpreters take on the roles of everyone from servants and bodyguards, to court officials and noblemen. Visitors can now experience what a royal palace looked like when it was new, and also glimpse the lives of the people who lived and worked there.

The visit will focus on several aspects and be followed by the opportunity to wander through the new displays or visit the Unicorn Café.

- The original 16th century carved wooden Stirling Heads
- Tapestries commissioned for the Stirling Palace project
- The exhibition on the castle's history

Abbotsford

A visit is being planned in September to Abbotsford, the home of Walter Scott, in the Scottish Borders. The property is currently undergoing a complete renovation and the collection has been decanted to a nearby store. The visit will be led by the Project Conservator. We hope to see the store, the new visitor centre, the gardens, and the house itself while the renovations are underway. A date and booking details will be available soon.

TEXTILE GROUP

The annual Spring Forum takes place on 16 April 2012 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. This year's topic is 'Taking the Rough with the Smooth: issues and solutions for decorated surfaces' and the papers range from the treatment of a Japanese 'living doll' to modern acrylic painted banners and the use of digital technology in relation to textile sample books. Please see the website for the full programme and booking information, and get signed up.

The Back to Basics series continues on 10–11 May 2012 with the second of the very popular 'Taking Patterns from Historic Costume' course. This will again be delivered by Janet Wood but hosted in the Textile Conservation labs of the National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh. Details for this, and all other events, are on the website.



Helping with a practical training session on daylight at Collections Care Workshops



Light damaged photograph

supervisor, Mel Houston, I plan to use the second half of my internship to look at accessible ways of interpreting the information and making it useful and usable for the Trust properties.

One of the key aims of this project is to raise the awareness of Trust property staff and volunteers about the irreversible damage caused by daylight. As a step towards this, the Collections Conservation Service team made daylight management and control the theme of their annual

Stewart the Workshop Technician putting together dosimeters



Daylight presentation at the recent Collections Care Workshops

Collections Care Workshops. These Workshops ran throughout February and engaged over one hundred and fifty members of staff and volunteers. My role was to help my supervisor present a session on daylight, explaining the risk light poses to collections and looking at basic ways we can mitigate that risk. The Workshops are the flagship training event for the Trust's conservator team and proved to be a great opportunity to communicate the message about the damaging effects of light to a wide range of staff. An initiative presented at the Workshops was the introduction of blue wool dosimeters to properties; these are used to monitor light levels and we hope to also use them as a tool to help staff explain light damage to visitors. The Trust has not used this method of light monitoring before so this was the perfect opportunity to introduce a large number of staff and volunteers to the idea, before we pilot the dosimeters at a selection of properties early in the summer.

I am now seven months into my internship and have learnt a huge amount about the complexities of managing light in historic properties as well as the wider day-to-day responsibilities of a preventive conservator. I am gaining a wide range of professional experience, monitoring light levels, interpreting data, helping to train staff and looking at how to document and use this information. I look forward to the next five months in which I hope to build on my current work and make the most of the exciting opportunities the Trust has to offer.

Dosimeter at a NTS property



reviews

BOOK

PREPARING COLLECTIONS FOR DIGITIZATION

Anna E. Bülow and Jess Ahmon (with contributions from Ross Spencer)

Facet publishing in association with the National Archives, London 2011
ISBN 978-185604-711-1 pbk 174 pages

It was in 1990 that I first came across the idea of owning a computer when a college lecturer mentioned that there were grants available to support students purchasing a pc. 'A computer' I wondered, 'what would I do with one of those'; I already owned an electric typewriter with built-in tippex, what more could one need. A fellow student from New Zealand said that her mother had one and she used it for her Christmas card list. 'Well, suppose that might be useful'.

Apart from demonstrating my personal lack of foresight this anecdote may help to demonstrate how much has changed over the last twenty years. The explosion of activity around knowledge communication via the internet hit the heritage sector hard and fast and while most organisations have successfully embraced the new technology to further access in a variety of ways, as much as available funding has allowed, there have been some challenges along the way. The early excitement and enthusiasm to open up collections online has settled down to a more routine acceptance that this is part of life and has to be built into the strategy and future development of heritage organisations. Digitization is no longer interesting; it is important and will be for some time to come but is not in itself innovative.

This book *Preparing Collections for Digitization* comes, therefore, at an opportune time, when digitization is entering a more mature phase and when organisations may be able to take their time to plan and conduct scanning projects with rather more consideration and deliberation. It provides a considerable amount of practical information to inform both managers and conservators involved in digitization. There are useful sections on working with suppliers, developing technical specifications, examples of digitization strategies, selection of material, equipment and establishing an effective workflow.

But it is in the sections on surveying, removal of fastenings, dealing with folded items and the preparation of damaged documents that the book comes into its own. These chapters include forty excellent images which are

used to illustrate the risks and associated solutions for the preparation of items for scanning. They describe common problems that an archive is likely to encounter; pasted inserts, volumes with fold out sheets, bundles of folded papers and tightly bound volumes obscuring text in the gutter. The suggested solutions are grounded in the experience of digitization projects carried out at the National Archives and provide practical and succinct advice on options to overcome the numerous difficulties which archive papers and bound volumes present during scanning.

It is hoped that this advice may also help conservators work with managers to develop a pro-active 'can-do' approach to digitization projects. It can be shown that careful planning via surveying and treatment estimates can help a project achieve its overall aims by identifying potential difficulties which are likely to slow down the scanning operation. Whilst there may be costs associated with any conservation preparation this publication also shows the potential for savings; thus ensuring that an operation is financially viable for all concerned.

The book describes the types of treatment appropriate for stabilisation prior to scanning; treatments more minimal even than 'minimal intervention'. It could be argued that this is another type of work in itself, possibly more closely aligned to preventative than remedial conservation.

It is hoped that, if it is not already there, this book will soon be on the shelves of all those concerned with the planning and preparation of archive collections for digitization and that it will prove to be a seminal text used by conservators, collections care and digitization managers for many years to come.

Helen Lindsay, ACR

CONFERENCES

CONSERVATION: RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Conservation Matters in Wales
Cynon Valley Museum and Gallery
December 7 2011

Chaired by *Clare Stoughton-Harris* and supported by *Cymal*, *Conservation Matters in Wales – Conservation: Research and Innovation*, showcased Welsh conservators 'getting stuck in' to local and national conservation issues, in the context of the most challenging economic climate for several generations.

Throughout the day we were able to engage with a broad range of research including historic wrought iron surface preparation (*Nicola Emmerson*: Cardiff University), the impact of conservation research (*David Watkinson*: Cardiff University), subtle

environmental targets (*Robert Pearce*: AC-NMW) and collections management and development policy (*Sarah Paul*: Cymal). The conservation, restoration and replication of social historical (*Phil Tuck*: AC-NMW) and maritime collections (*Gareth El Tawab*: Swansea Museum) and its impact on interpretation and community engagement was also prominent. This demonstrated that innovation stretches beyond the laboratory and into installations and communities.

Completed and newly formed projects in archives development (*Charlotte Hodgson*: Glamorgan Archives) and a Welsh doll conservation (*Jennifer Barsby*: St Fagans-NMW) were also actively shared providing a stimulating contrast between past achievement and future potential. The day was rounded off by an exploration of the potential of computed radiography and its application in archaeological conservation (*Mary Davis*: AC-NMW).

The event was fantastically hosted by Cynon Valley Museum and Gallery providing, as always, the perfect environment for professional exchange and academic debate.

This one day conference demonstrated that research and innovation inside and outside of the laboratory is being driven locally and nationally by committed museum professionals in Wales (and beyond). We look forward to the next instalment of this biannual conference series on June 14 at St Fagan's: National History Museum, Cardiff.

Charlotte Lester

Engineering for Life
Sheffield Hallam University

'THE GHOSTS OF CONSERVATION PAST' 2011 Icon Archaeology Group & Ceramics and Glass Group Meeting and Christmas party

London December 2011

The Archaeology Group's Christmas meeting is a long standing tradition and although it is but a preamble to the party, these meetings are usually very informative and interesting. This one was certainly one of the good ones. This year, the AG was joined by members of the Ceramics and Glass Group (CGG). This provided a great opportunity for some cross-over discussions and mutual exchange of techniques and materials.

The first session, chaired by Kathleen Swales (Chair CGG) started with a talk by **Rachel Swift** (British Museum), 'I faked a fake and I like it: elements of a Ming dynasty flask'. The flask is part of the Percival David collection of Chinese porcelain and stoneware recently redisplayed at the BM. Retreating the flask, Rachel found a Western 'interpretation' of the traditional Japanese and Chinese repair method of creating gilded lacquer fills on pots. This one had been done in plaster and acrylic gold paint (and came as a complete surprise to the curator!). Rachel, did,



Jim Spriggs and Graham Morgan relax at the post-conference party

however recreate the fill (using epoxy resin and gold leaf) in order to retain the look of the artefact. She also confessed to enjoying the guilty frisson of perpetuating the 'fake'.

The second talk, 'R.I.P. – the use of AJK dough on a 26th Dynasty wooden coffin', was given by **Kate Fulcher** (UCL student and intern at the Ashmolean Museum). AJK dough (also known as BJK dough) was developed in the late 1950s as a gap-filling material for ceramic, to avoid the dustiness of plaster, and was routinely used until the 1980s. Kate had discovered this material used in a wooden Egyptian coffin. AJK dough is made of Alvar 770 or Butvar B98 (a polyvinyl acetate), jute or paper dust, and kaolin mixed with solvents to make a putty. It is quite laborious to make and requires prolonged kneading, but is light and flexible and in the right context is a valuable conservation tool. It also has the double advantage of long term stability and reversibility. In the discussion that followed, it was clear that the old guard still considered AJK a useful material, especially for filling large losses in ceramics. But none of the younger conservators had ever made or used it and were less convinced.

Next, **Carmen Vida** (UCL student) related the results of a condition survey of limestone stelae in her talk, 'Back to the future: the retreatability of ancient Egyptian limestone stelae at the Petrie Museum'. She found that much of the damage to these stelae was a

(From left) Hazel Gardiner, Liz Pye, Duygu Camurcuoglu and Jim Spriggs share merriment

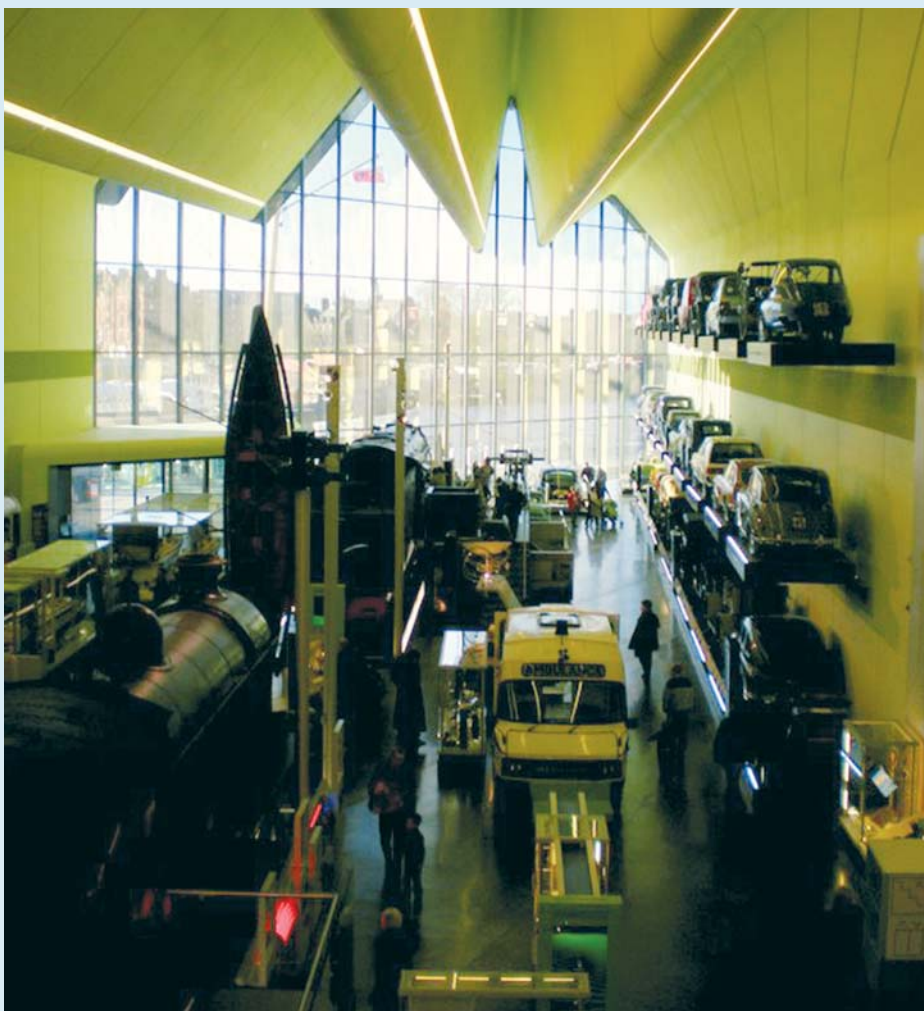


result of past conservation treatments; darkened and glossy surfaces, dirt trapped by consolidants and overcleaning being the major types of unwanted change. Not all materials evident on the stelae were recorded, but records from the 1950s show that the aging of consolidants and coatings like polyvinyl acetate and celluloid has been responsible for the damage. She concluded that past treatments were, for the most part, effective in preserving the stone for over forty years and had been the most appropriate that were available at the time; the problem is not failure but treatment aging. Carmen reflected that conservation is a continuum; objects are rarely treated only once, so that past, present and future interventions are interlinked. The concept of 'retreatability', first proposed by Appelbaum in 1987 as an alternative to 'reversibility', implies, in practical terms, that we consider the possibility that our treatment will have negative results and that the object may be retreated in the future.

Conservation techniques utilising electricity have been used at least since the 1950s. Today, they seem to be regarded with suspicion and few younger conservators would know how to go about rigging up the equipment and carrying out these treatments. This made **Graham Morgan's** talk, 'Electro-conservation, nasty shocks or pleasant surprises?', invaluable. The basic set-up includes a glass or plastic container for the aqueous electrolyte solution, a power source connected to anodes made of the same metal as the treated object and to the object itself. Electrolytic reduction is used to convert iron corrosion products to powder, which is then brushed off. It is still used occasionally for very large iron artefacts with sound metal cores, such as cannon. The problem of this method is that corrosion is removed down to solid metal, leading to the loss of the original surface. Consolidative reduction is carried out in much the same way, but using a much smaller current, so that rather than being converted to a powder, the reduced metal stays in situ. This method is particularly useful for lead and silver objects as it sharpens surface detail such as inscriptions and makes the metal less brittle so it can be reshaped. Lastly, Graham discussed electrophoresis, a process by which soluble ions can be removed by applying a voltage to the solution without connecting the object to the electrodes. This can be used with any material, not just metals, as long as the object will withstand the soak. The solution has to be changed regularly as the ions are extracted. We ought to familiarise ourselves with these methods so that we are, at the very least, able to recognise them. And though they may seem a bit old fashioned even to the not-so-young conservator, we should not close our minds to their use.

The second session was chaired by Graham Morgan and included two talks. **Jim Spriggs** talked about 'Waterlogged leather treatments at YAT – the good, the bad and the ugly!' In the 1970s large scale excavations in York brought to light rich finds particularly from the Viking and medieval periods. The waterlogged conditions of the sites meant that large quantities of wood and leather had been preserved. They now needed to be studied and for that they had to survive their change of environment. Jim described the different treatments that were experimented with at the time. These fell into two categories; solvent based and water based. The solvent dehydration techniques included Pliantine and Bavon ASAK/ABP. Both were applied in white spirits and followed acetone dehydration. While the Pliantine resulted in stiff, shiny and congealed leather, the Bavon resulted in soft leather, but brought about some shrinkage. The first water based method experimented with was Bavon ASAK/520S in water, which resulted in a sticky, oily surface that never seemed to dry. The next was poly-ethylene glycol (PEG) in heated water. This resulted in considerable shrinkage. Lastly, accelerated freeze-drying was employed, following treatment with PEG or glycerol. This resulted in a soft leather and very little shrinkage and has been commonly used ever since. Time has shown this method to have long term stability as well, but Jim would still consider a solvent-based treatment with Bavon ASAK/ABP for leather/metal composites.

The last talk of the day came from Professor **Liz Pye**. Entitled, 'Teaching conservation – upwards and onwards', Liz described the changes in the way conservation has been taught over her career at the Institute of Archaeology. Considering the way conservation was taught in the 1970s, Liz highlighted the very interventive approach and reliance on chemical treatments, little health and safety and lack of practice in museum environment issues. There was little collaboration with archaeologists (lone Gedye, who founded the conservation course at the Institute, apparently took a dim view of her students consorting with archaeologists. She did however, believe that her students could do anything in the field of conservation.). These days, the teaching programme that went from a two-year diploma in the 1970s to a BSc and is now MA and MSc, is broader. It includes archaeological, ethnographic and social history artefacts. Research, collaboration and communication are encouraged and preventive conservation is highly developed. There is also a strong focus on values assigned to objects, views of interest groups and how these affect conservation choices. Lastly Liz talked about new challenges in preparing future generations of conservators; the increased importance of communication



View from the balcony, showing the range of objects and the building's structure

outside the profession, dealing with complex materials and the storage of large volumes of material, dealing with the demands for access through handling and the need for business training. Liz's talk was followed by a lively discussion, including some reminiscences from former Institute students, comparing changes in the curriculum over the years.

The afternoon was a good mix of the voice of experience and the earnest investigations of young conservators - both equally enthusiastic! The inter-generational exchange made the conference enjoyable and quite an important professional event. The traditional pre-Christmas bash followed seamlessly in the same vein of friendly collegiality.

Irit Narkiss Manchester University Museum

VISITS

THE RIVERSIDE MUSEUM

Icon Scotland Group visit
Glasgow, December 2011

The Riverside Museum, the new Museum of Transport for Glasgow, opened in June 2011 after relocating to Zaha Hadid's custom designed building on the banks of the River Clyde. With over 3,000 objects on display, ranging from huge locomotives to lace bonnets, Riverside encompasses highlights from the old Museum of Transport alongside unseen objects and new displays. The use of new technology and interactive exhibits helps make Riverside an interesting and pleasurable experience.

The visit attracted thirty Icon SG members. It combined a presentation by three of the leading conservators on the project, followed by a tour of the galleries and stores. Andrew Howe, Jacek Wiklo and Maggie Dobbie each offered different viewpoints on their involvement in the conservation and preservation of the many objects on display. As textile conservation students at the University of Glasgow, we gained an insight into the conservation and display of objects that are so different from any artefacts we have encountered on our course. It was interesting and surprising to learn of the similarities that can occur when conserving a 1960s classic car or a cocktail dress.

Conservators have been included in the Riverside Museum project since the beginning. **Andrew Howe**, Transport and Technology Conservator, explained how this collaboration with the architects enabled features such as the large windows at each end of the building to be possible while retaining the preservation of the objects. It was inspiring to discover how the displays were designed to suit their position in proximity to the windows and varying light levels, while still keeping the unique architecture. This involvement allowed the conservators to assess every object, testing the display possibilities each could structurally handle before a display was specifically designed. To learn how the conservators and architects worked together as the project progressed was exciting and encouraging.

In the second part of the talk, Transport and



1939 flying suit which belonged to George Pinkerton (a Glaswegian born pilot and dirt-track racer) mounted on a 1929 'Douglas Dirt-track Special' bike. This object is on loan to the Museum.

Technology Conservator **Jacek Wiklo** focused on the relocation and conservation of the South African Locomotive that is now displayed in front of the rear window and is a new highlight for the Museum's visitors. As the largest object within the Glasgow Museum's collection, its installation proved to be a challenging yet satisfying process in which the conservators played a key role. Ideas regarding conservation and restoration were also discussed, including the polishing of objects and replacement of locomotives' copper pipes. The involvement of conservators has now altered the way these objects are preserved with minimal intervention, while still trying to maintain the object's role within the collection. It was extremely interesting to learn that many of the transportation objects (which entered the museum in working order) are still functional and that the engines are routinely turned over to maintain their performance.

The displays at Riverside are perhaps the most interesting part of the museum. The ways in which the building and displays are designed make it possible for a larger number of objects to be accessible to the public while providing a well organised layout. Having cars on walls and bicycles hanging from the ceiling creates intriguing displays, while still ensuring the safety of the objects. It was great to learn how these displays were accomplished, in particular the role of the cherry picker used in the mounting of cars to the walls.

The creativity of the displays encourages visitors to interact with the objects and gain an understanding of their history. Using objects from different eras to tell a story can give the public a greater insight into life during those time periods while showcasing the variety of the Glasgow Museum's collections. The combination of garments alongside, or within, the transportation helps to highlight why the designs were popular in each era.

The presentation by Textile Conservator **Maggie Dobbie** was very informative. The invisible custom made mannequins



Reflection of The Tall Ship in the Riverside Museum rear window

displaying a range of costumes were very effective, making the focus on the costume and emphasising its design, construction and function. The dirt-track rider was the most difficult, and highly successful. To make a mannequin that can ride a motorbike without actually touching it is truly amazing. We gained an appreciation for the relationship between textiles and transportation from the range of clothing worn for particular modes of transport to the textiles used for interiors of the cars, trams and trains.

From our afternoon visit we were introduced to the comprehensive design processes involved in a custom built museum and gained an understanding of the conservation and installation of the objects on display. The tour of the galleries and stores gave us a closer look at the equipment used and space needed for moving and housing such a range of objects. Riverside not only offers an insight into the history of transport and Glaswegian life but also combines new approaches to museum displays with state of the art technology creating a captivating space, full of surprises. We all thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Riverside Museum and would like to say thank you to Jacek Wiklo, Maggie Dobbie and Andrew Howe for an interesting and inspiring afternoon.

The First Year Textile Conservation Students, University of Glasgow

NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND Icon Scotland Group Edinburgh January 2012

About fifty members of the Icon Scotland Group assembled together for their Group meeting, which took place in the grand surroundings of the recently re-opened National Museum of Scotland where attendees were afforded a specially organised presentation and guided tour laid on by their hosts.

In the small amount of time I have been attending such events, the atmosphere was typically informal and friendly. Arriving at the museum just after closing provided the event with a feeling of kudos as befits such an estimable Icon group!

The first part of the evening was given over to a series of presentations by a cross section of the museum's Conservation and Analytical Research Department. The various speakers reported on some of the highlights and challenges faced by their department in what proved to be a monumental task in getting thousands of objects assessed, de-installed, conserved, and re-installed into the newly refurbished museum building; not to mention incorporating a move of the Conservation Labs in the process.

First up was the head of the department **Jim Tate**, who welcomed everyone and gave a special thank you to Icon Scotland's outgoing Chair Linda Ramsay before proceeding to give a brief introduction to the scope and scale of the NMS refurbishment project.

Jim was followed by **Jill Plitnikas**, conservator in the Artefacts department. She explained how conservators were each assigned responsibility for individual galleries of the museum and being involved in every aspect of those galleries' completion. One of the galleries Jill was working on was 'Living Lands', and she presented to the group her treatment on the costume of a Native American Sioux Indian. Contending with glass disease, losses in the intricate quill work, ripped, faded and desiccated leather, Jill showed us how she made the object ready and presentable for public interpretation and exhibition. One particularly interesting and effective aspect of her treatment was to replace tiny losses in the quills of the jacket with Tyvek substitutes.

Next to present was **Lynn McClean**, head of section for Paper and Textiles who gave a fascinating talk on some of the innovative methods used in meeting a number of display and mounting challenges. We were told of the preparation of a suitable support structure for an underskirt which was two metres wide; due to its impressive weight and size the support called for a bespoke mounting strategy and was only able to be mounted in situ in the final display case. A laugh rippled through the audience when a photograph was projected showing how a modern mannequin was modified to suit and support the individual shape of this most curious dress. A particularly innovative solution to mounting a very problematic double sided poster involving a magnet and melinex sandwich was also shown and some of the audience were lucky enough to see this on display later on in the evening.

Another fascinating talk, this time from **Susy Kirk**, NMS's Analytical Scientist followed. We were introduced to some of the processes that her section is able to provide to the wider conservation team in diagnostic analysis. These methods were conveyed to the audience using an applied example. This was a collection of visually stunning scientific glass marine sea anemone models that,

owing in part to their delicacy, had proved difficult to analyse by traditional methods. Susy explained the results of her investigations using SEM, X Ray Fluorescence, and FTIR. For a topic that some people may not be completely familiar with, she managed to make the talk accessible, informative, and enjoyable.

As may well be assumed in a complete re-installation of a large collection, it was mounting issues that the next two talks primarily reported upon. **Stuart McDonald**, head of section for Engineering and Furniture Conservation spoke of some of the challenges he faced when installing larger objects in positions dreamt up by imaginative designers but not necessarily sympathetic with the object's physical demands. For example the impressive vertically attached Kay Autogyro adorning the menu wall. **Charles Stable**, another member of the Artefacts Conservation team, reported upon the moving of an ancient Assyrian stone relief. The relief had adorned the wall behind the main desk for many years and it was not until its removal that Charles and his colleagues were able to fully assess its condition. Being such a large and heavy object, it was surprising to find out that up until this point the stone had been attached to the wall with only minimal wiring. Throughout the treatment Charles discovered that the relief consisted of three large separated fragments and successfully devised a strategy of support and mounting that would involve the least amount of intervention. The armatures needed to be placed and attached according to the needs of an unexpectedly fragile object that in some places was only 6cm thick.

Three tours were then given by conservation staff, roughly divided between ethnographic artefacts, larger mechanical objects and paper and textiles. Participants were guided around the museum and heard further stories of the conservation challenges involved in refurbishment. Conservators stopped by objects that had provided them with particular challenges and were happy to answer the many questions posed by an enthused audience. Armed with the information we received earlier in the evening, the opportunity to view some of the previously discussed objects in their new display cases and glitzy environment brought home the immense amount of work that goes into completing a project of this scale and magnitude.

The echoing chimes of Eduard Bersudsky Millennium clock through the serenely empty gallery spaces signalled the end of the tours and the end of the evening's special events. So then to the Icon Scotland Group General meeting, and the refreshments that followed. With plenty to talk about and in good spirits, conversation amongst members old and new flowed, as did the great range of drinks and nibbles.

James Muldoon and **Georgina Von Hof**

in practice

BOTANICAL RESEARCH FOR AXMINSTER CARPETS

by Holly MacInnes-Hurd

I began my Heritage Lottery-funded Icon internship with The Tetley Workshop in April 2011 under the supervision of Heather Tetley, who has been practising carpet conservation for more than twenty five years. A wide range of rugs and carpets are treated within the practice both in situ and within the workshop, which is equipped to perform wet cleaning and stitching support treatments; however, Heather's particular passion lies with the story of British carpets.

Hampton Court Palace became the first house in Britain to be furnished with carpets on the floor in 1520, prior to which carpets were used to cover tables and other furniture. Although there were established carpet producers in Britain – such as those in Kidderminster producing perfunctory flat woven 'fote cloth' at the inexpensive end of the market, and those in Wilton using the skills and knowledge of Huguenot weavers settling in Britain to produce loop pile Brussels carpets – the most prestigious households were investing in 'Turkey' carpets, imported from the Middle East at great expense. Devonshire cloth-weaver Thomas Whitty (1713–1799) saw a gap in the market and sought to discover a means of producing 'Turkey-style' carpets economically, to provide a competitive alternative to importation.

Whitty turned his factory to carpet production in 1755 and proved to be a canny businessman – in a matter of a few short years he had monopolised the market for prestigious hand knotted carpets. His methods, however, were not entirely admirable: he fraudulently visited the factory of competitor, Peter Parisot, with the express intention of uncovering trade secrets and there discovered how the use of upright looms enabled them to produce seamless carpets. Using this information Whitty set up production, shrewdly employing his five young daughters as weavers as he was able to pay them

six times less than the average adult male's wage. Living in the rich wool-producing area of Devon, Whitty was able to source economical materials and experimented with knot size to ascertain the minimum knot count possible, whilst retaining reasonable image quality. In 1756 The Society for Promoting Arts and Sciences established a contest to encourage the British carpet manufacturing industry, having recognised its potential to bolster the economy and provide employment. Thanks largely to his ability to produce his carpets more cheaply than his competitors Whitty won this contest, buying publicity and patronage as a result. The town of Axminster in Devon is now synonymous with carpets thanks to Whitty's factory, and the Axminster brand continues to be held in high repute to this day.

The Blue Drawing Room Axminster carpet from Dumfries House came to The Tetley Workshop in the winter of 2010 for conservation treatment. Dumfries House was built during the 1750s under the patronage of William Crichton-Dalrymple, 5th Earl of Dumfries and was the first major architectural project of Robert Adams before he left Britain on his Grand Tour; the build was estimated at a cost of £7979.11s.2d. Latterly the house had fallen into disuse and in 2007 was set to be sold and the collection auctioned separately before Prince Charles, recognising its importance as an exemplary specimen of Georgian style and craftsmanship, set about securing funding and planning the rescue of the property and collection. The carpet was originally bought in 1759 as one of a matching pair – records at Dumfries House suggest that Whitty sold the first carpet for £69 under the agreement that the second would be included at half price. This second carpet was intended for the dining room and thus there was a tendency to make it to a lesser quality in keeping with its utilitarian function; the first, however, shares the drawing room with a significant example of Thomas Chippendale's work, the renowned Rosewood Bookcase. Deeply piled and vibrant in colour, the Blue Drawing Room carpet would have been a luxurious and dramatic contrast to the surrounding white of the room. As the fortune of the house dwindled, however, so did that of the carpet and on arrival at the workshop it showed evidence of wear and light damage, particularly through the iron mordanted dark brown colour, in addition to being dull from accumulated dirt. For objects so large – measuring almost 6m x 10m – wet cleaning is a rare occurrence and it was breathtaking to watch the vivid hues of the exotic plants depicted emerge. For many years, the carpet was stored in the wine cellar, which may have helped to preserve these rich colours that are once again on display.

I was set the task of investigating the plants featured in the carpet – of which there are around thirty species – beginning with unmistakable examples such as American tigerlily, introduced to Britain in 1738 from America just twenty-one years before the carpet was made. Set against a geometric background familiar British natives such as bluebells, daffodils, poppies and honeysuckle pour from curling cornucopia alongside established migrants such as morning glory, which

A Stapelia (left) and a flame lily (right) appear in the carpet's design

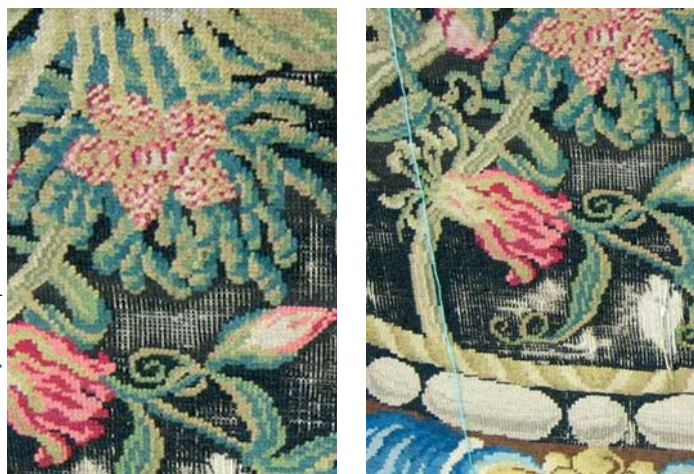




Photo: Alice Pollak

Holly at work on the carpet

was introduced from Mexico in 1621 and hollyhocks which arrived with the crusades from West Asia in 1260. As a novice to botany it was fascinating delving into the historical relevance of the plants we had come to know in the design, like that of the red and white zomerschoon tulip, which was a favourite during the Dutch 'tulip-mania' period in the seventeenth century.

Identification became more challenging as I researched less familiar specimens such as Mexican Aztec lily, (first identified in 1745), frangipani, (which featured in Carl Linnaeus' 1753 'Species Plantarum'), and Zimbabwe's national plant - the creeper flame lily, the curled climbing leaf tips of which are exquisitely drawn in the weaving of the carpet. However, whilst trawling images on-line for recognisable blooms, I encountered the illustrations of Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708–1770). German born Ehret was the most notable botanical illustrator of the mid 1700s, his work featuring in Carl Linnaeus' 1735 publication 'Systema Naturae' and 'Hortus Cliffortianus' in 1738. An icon of the Age of Enlightenment, Linnaeus headed scientific expeditions to discover new species of flora and fauna, and 'Systema Naturae' systematically categorised species using his method of binomial nomenclature based on reproductive organs that is still in use today. Ehret was also commissioned by Christoph Jakob Trew to illustrate for 'Plantae Selectae' (Nuremberg 1750–1773) and 'Hortus Nitidissimis' (1768–1786) and his prolific works can be seen today in the Natural History Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Many of the plants I had identified were the subject of Ehret's work and this discovery cast new light on my investigations

and led me to recognise a relationship between the plants depicted and the wider botanical discoveries of the era. On seeing his illustration of 'Stapelia', a flowering succulent so named by Linnaeus in 1737, I was overjoyed to recognise it as the peculiar plant featured in the central medallion of the carpet. Recognising species in the design and making sense of their forms in relation to the texture and idiosyncrasies of the actual plants dramatically shifted my perception of the fine artistry and the limitations of the weaving. Strikingly set against a black disc encircled with colourful rococo plumes, other exotic new discoveries feature alongside stapelia, including agapanthus from Africa, South American coral tree, tulip tree from the USA, and magnolia. Recently introduced from Bull Bay in Carolina in 1734, the blooms of this much loved harbinger of spring would have only just been beginning to flower in the most privileged gardens which boasted mature trees.

Most extraordinarily, two cacti are the prize of the design: Hildemanius, a tall flowering cactus which I had at first mistakenly imagined to be a daisy-like flower, and the crowning glory at the very centre – the large and poetic radial bloom of Night Blooming Cereus, which opens over just one night before closing again by morning. This plant was described by Linnaeus in 1753 and, although there are references to it growing at Hampton Court in the seventeenth century, this would have been the first time it would have been more widely seen and the romanticism of its behaviour must surely have captured the imagination of eighteenth-century enthusiasts.

As many of these plants were entirely novel, I surmise that the



Ehret's botanical illustration of the Night Blooming Cereus and the woven carpet version

Ehret's illustration and the carpet version of the magnolia





Photo: The Tetley Workshop

The central medallion of the carpet

designer responsible for the cartoon of this carpet had not encountered them in life, but rather referred to Ehret's illustrations from one of these publications. There is little evidence that Crichton-Dalrymple had a particular interest in botany and with very little archive remaining from the Axminster factory due to a devastating fire in 1828, we can only speculate about who may have been responsible for this fascinating design. Thomas Whitty himself is known to have taken great pleasure in gardening and gathering wild flowers for dyes, and floral designs are a signature of the early Axminster carpets produced under his leadership. Robert Adams, architect of Dumfries House, later designed carpets to be manufactured at Axminster but this carpet pre-dates that era, and I am not aware of any floral carpet with quite such a scientific content as this one in other contemporary estates. The carpet is linked to the fashions and fascinations of the era and discovering these details about its design illuminates a whole new layer of its context and historical relevance, transforming this into an extraordinary contemporary document of eighteenth-century botanical discovery and the Age of Enlightenment.

And what of the second carpet in the bargain? The sister carpet to the Blue Drawing Room carpet is undergoing treatment at The Tetley Workshop this winter and will be reinstated into the dining room of Dumfries House in the spring. There are marked differences in the colours and quality of the materials used to make the second carpet, but the design is virtually identical and, helpfully, the differences in their colour scheme have contributed to differences in the deterioration of the two carpets. Being able to reference images of the previous carpet has proved invaluable in informing infill decisions in areas of loss. The team of conservators at The Tetley Workshop have the opportunity to revisit the plants they encountered a year ago with a greater

recognition of their identity and relevance and, thanks to NADFAS who are funding the remaining three months of my Icon internship, I will be joining them in this endeavour.

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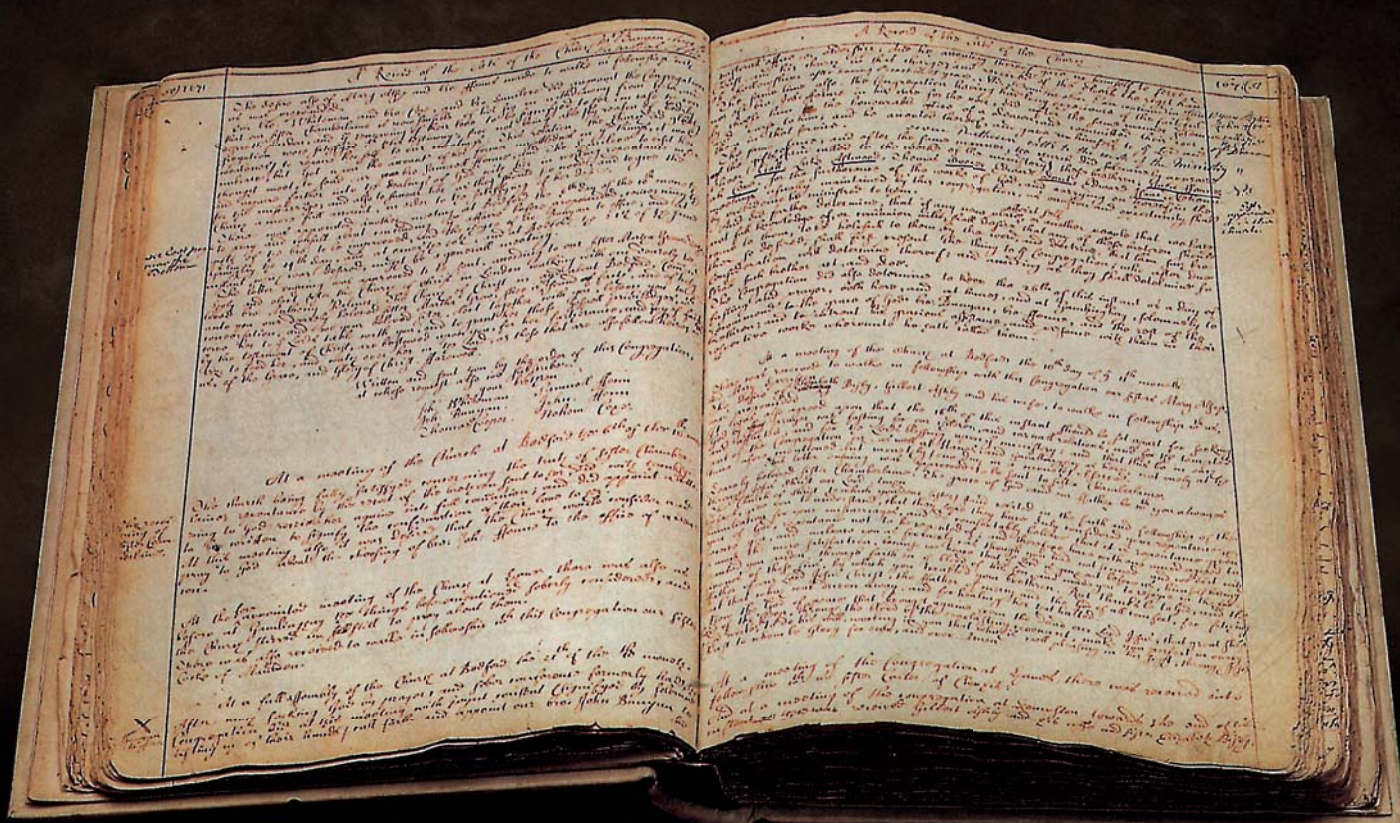
Permission to publish the images of the carpet has been kindly granted by Charlotte Rostek, Curator, The Great Steward of Scotland's Dumfries House Trust

www.tetleyworkshop.co.uk
www.dumfries-house.org.uk/tour/blue-drawing-room/
www.devonmuseums.net/Axminster-Museum/Devon-Museums/
www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/art-nature-imaging/collections/art-themes/northamerica/more/ehret_more_info.htm

The Night Blooming Cereus can be seen blooming in the following video <http://youtu.be/bz-dnW3dhPo>



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