

FROM ICON, THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

# Iconnect

## MAGAZINE

Spring 2024 Issue 6

### PLUS:

The urgency of Antarctic heritage preservation

Restoring Mackintosh gates to former glory

Dismantling and treating a Grade II listed mural

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# WELCOME



...whatever the object, wherever the location and whomever the conservator-restorer, there are certain constants

level of intervention is appropriate? How can an object be conserved in a way that honours the intentions of the creator? How do we make an object meaningful and encourage public engagement and access while protecting objects at the same time? How can we ensure that our practices evolve and change to reflect what matters both now and in the future? How can we demonstrate to government and other stakeholders that cultural heritage really makes a difference to local communities and our sense of wellbeing and isn't just a 'nice to have'?

As you read the articles in this issue of *Iconnect* magazine, you'll find that a number of our contributors have shared their thoughts on these topics and no doubt we'll be hearing much more at Icon24 in July, where more than 40 speakers will be sharing their valuable experiences and insights. On behalf of everyone at Icon, we look forward to seeing you there.

Karen

Karen Young, Editor

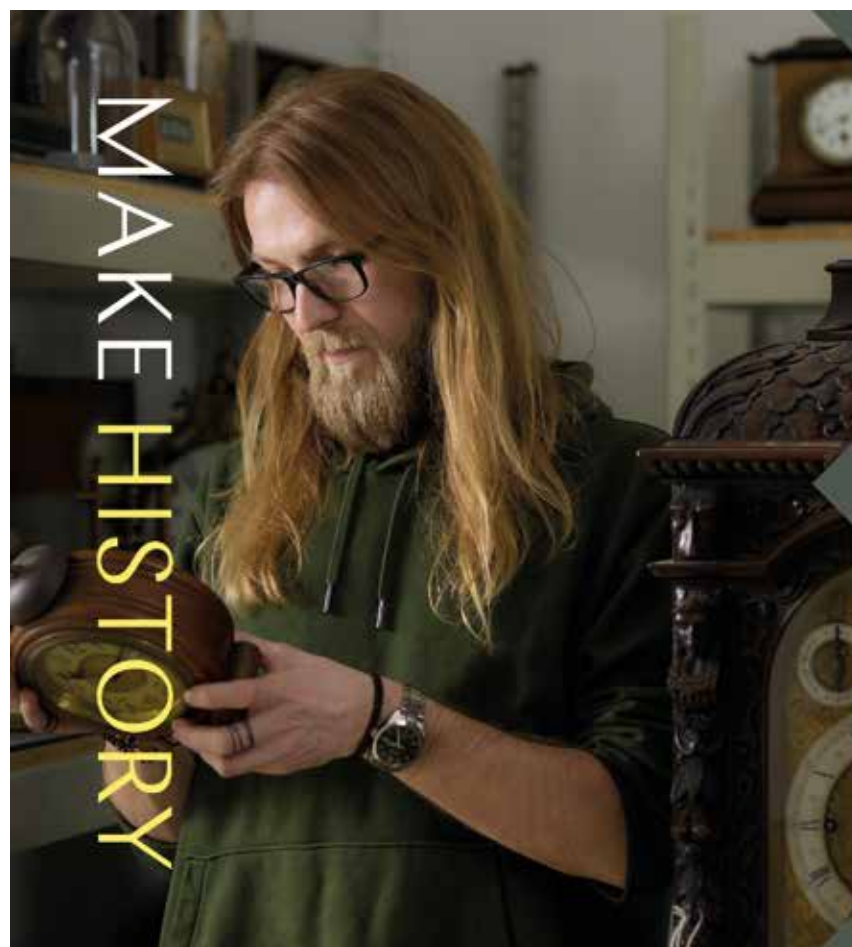
### *Iconnect* – a portmanteau

**Icon** – noun;  
Icon, the Institute of Conservation – a charitable company working to safeguard cultural heritage and the professional membership body for the conservation profession

**Connect** – verb;  
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## THE VITAL ROLE OF CONSERVATOR-RESTORERS

We are finally leaving behind the wet winter and can start to look forward to longer days, brighter weather and the busy year ahead for the conservation profession and wider heritage sector.

The Icon team is busy finalising the programme for Icon24: Conservation for Change, including confirming final contributors

Investment in museums and cultural services is vital to ensure sustained connectivity with heritage, culture and identity

and the exciting social programme. We are also looking forward to delivering the Marsh Conservation Awards at Icon24, which will be a highlight of Tuesday evening's reception. This year sees the launch of three new Marsh awards that will recognise an environmental or sustainability focus in conservation, an outstanding student conservator and innovation in conservation practice. Find more information on our website and, if these awards sound like you or someone you work with, please do enter.

Following a recent visit to meet the teams working at Cardiff University's MSc in Conservation Practice and Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, I have been reflecting on the vital role conservator-restorers play in not only caring for collections and conserving important artefacts, but in advising senior colleagues to ensure historic objects are accessible for diverse audiences across wide geographical areas. This is why the Welsh Government's cuts to cultural funding present such a challenge for the country's national institutions and for audiences across Wales as well as much further afield. Investment in museums and cultural services is vital to ensure sustained connectivity with heritage, culture and identity – something that is regularly championed by Jane Henderson ACR FIIC SFHEA (see page 22).

Finally, the Icon team has seen a number of exciting changes. We've welcomed three new team members – Isobelle White, Business & Projects Officer, Amy Neal, Marketing & Membership Manager, and Marta Naumova, Communications & Events Officer (we'll introduce them in the next issue). Please also join us as we wish our outgoing Skills Officer Chloe Gerrard every success in her new role with St Mungo's.

Thank you for all you do as Icon members, volunteers and ambassadors. I look forward to seeing you at a conservation event very soon!

*Emma.*

**Emma Jhita, Chief Executive Officer**



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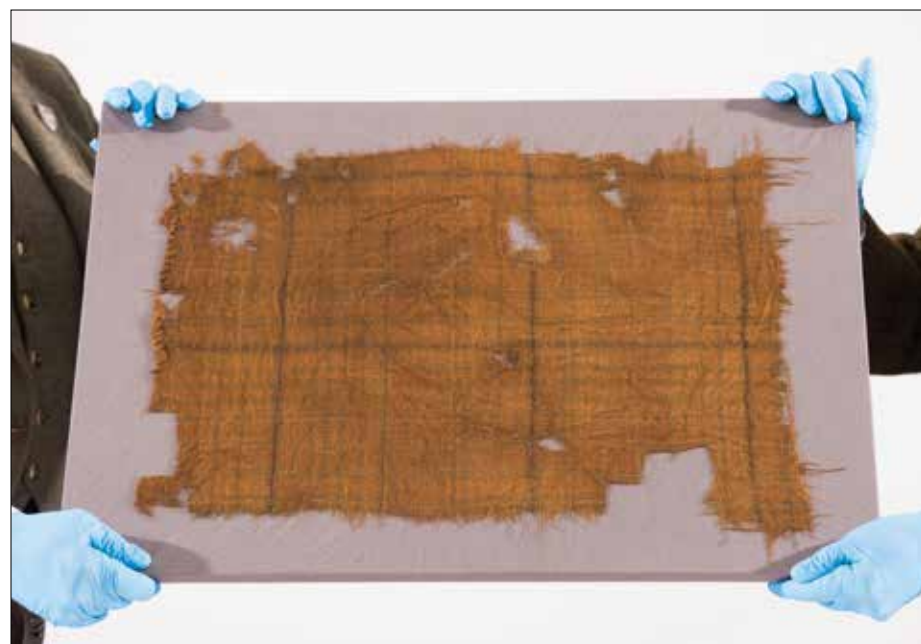


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**Above:** Glen Affric can be dated to circa 1500-1600 AD, making it the oldest known surviving specimen of true tartan in Scotland

**Left:** John McLeish (pictured left) and Peter MacDonald (right) of The Scottish Tartans Authority, and V&A Dundee curator James Wylie with the Glen Affric tartan

## THE STORY OF THE OLDEST TARTAN CONTINUES...

**N**amed after the glen where it was found buried in peat, the Glen Affric tartan is believed to be the oldest known surviving specimen of true tartan in Scotland, dating to circa 1500-1600 AD.

It was donated to the Scottish Tartans Society (now The Scottish Tartans Authority/STA) after it was discovered during forestry work in Glen Affric, west of Inverness, in the mid-1980s.

Very little was known about the piece of cloth until recently, when curators from V&A Dundee were putting together their Tartan exhibition (April 2023-January 2024) and approached the STA for any examples of 'proto

tartans' held in their archives. While Peter MacDonald, Head of Research and Collections at the STA, had long believed that the fragment could be a rare surviving example of a pre-1700 tartan in Scotland, the V&A's request triggered the STA to commission dye analysis and radiocarbon testing of the woollen textile to help determine its age before loan.

Using high resolution digital microscopy, scientists from National Museums Scotland visually identified four colours: green and brown, and possibly red and yellow. Further dye analysis confirmed the use of indigo/woad in the green but proved

inconclusive for the other colours. However, as no artificial or semi-synthetic dyestuffs were found, this suggested the tartan was made pre-1750s.

Further testing at the SUERC Radiocarbon Laboratory in East Kilbride helped to identify a date range between 1500-1655, with the most probable period being between 1500-1600.

Once the research had been completed, Tuula Pardoe ACR at the Scottish Conservation Studio was tasked with relaxing and remounting the piece of tartan, as it had previously been loosely stitched to a white cotton backing, probably while under the care of the Scottish Tartans Society. "I have worked with a range of tartan material over my career as an accredited textile conservator in Scotland," Tuula told *Iconnect* magazine. "It was a privilege to improve the mounting of the Glen Affric tartan, knowing that it will be safe when future researchers come to study it."

Not surprisingly, there was a surge of media interest in both the UK and overseas when the Glen Affric tartan and its true age was revealed prior to V&A's exhibition. "It was one of the major draws to the exhibition, with visitors even asking front of house staff where it was located on occasion," James Wylie, co-curator of V&A's Tartan exhibition, told *Iconnect* magazine. "The major interest, especially from North America, spurred on a reconstruction of the pattern by House of Edgar, under the guidance of Peter MacDonald."

Who the Glen Affric tartan may have been originally worn or used by remains a mystery, but as James highlighted, the story isn't over yet. "Future strontium isotope analysis should be able to reveal where the sheep originated, so we will be able to focus on where the tartan's wool was produced."

**Sources:** James Wylie, V&A Dundee, *The Guardian*, Tuula Pardoe ACR

Scan the QR code for a detailed article by Peter MacDonald about the Glen Affric tartan



## ICON CONSERVATOR PART OF AWARD-WINNING TEAM

**T**he Georgian Group's Architectural Awards celebrate exemplary conservation in the UK and provide an opportunity to recognise those who have shown vision and commitment in restoring Georgian buildings and landscapes. The 2023 Award for the Restoration of a Georgian Interior was presented to the Sir John Soane Museum for the representation of the Drawing Office. Helen Hughes ACR FIIC, an experienced architectural paint researcher, played a pivotal role in the project.

Sir John Soane (1753-1837) bequeathed his house and collections to the nation on the proviso that they should be maintained exactly as he had left them at the time of his death. Sadly, his wishes were not respected and significant alterations were made. It has been the mission of the museum over the last 30 years to return the interiors to how Sir John Soane had left them. The museum received the 2023 Award for its latest step in this quest – the reinstatement of the Drawing Office.

This innovative space, created by Soane in 1821, runs along the back

of the museum at No 13 Lincoln's Inns Fields. Supported by slender iron columns, the Drawing Office appears to float above Soane's classical collections on the ground floor. The original drawing tables are illuminated by two long skylights.

Helen's brief was to determine the colour of the walls at the time of Soane's death in 1837. Over the past 15 years, working in close collaboration with Helen Dorey MBE, Deputy Director and Inspector at the museum, and Lyall Thow of Julian Harrap Architects, the Soane's conservation architect, Helen had researched other major interiors within the museum and so came to the project with an understanding of its complex decorative evolution.

During the late 19th century many areas of the museum, including the Drawing Office, were painted green which was retained until the post-WWII renovations. Helen was able to determine that the office had originally been painted in a cedar colour. But the decoration evolved and Soane had eventually painted the room in a light stone colour, his decorators using a mixture of lead white, yellow ochre and umber.

The existing light grey applied in the 1970s was a cold mismatch. The true colour was carefully determined and Soane's 1837 scheme recreated, but as Helen commented: "My research is not just about providing colours. It explains John Soane's process of continuous experimentation and helps communicate this to scholars and visitors to the museum."

The project also addressed structural problems such as leaking skylights and involved carefully removing, cleaning and reinstalling over 200 architectural casts which hang on the walls, using their original fixings. The public will be able to explore the Drawing Office from May 2024.

**Source:** Helen Hughes ACR FIIC



**Top:** Helen Hughes ACR FIIC sitting in the recently restored Drawing Office of Sir John Soane

**Above:** A cross-section of a paint sample x200 showing all the decorations applied to the walls of Soane's Drawing Office

## 2024 MARSH CONSERVATION AWARDS NOW OPEN

The Marsh Conservation Awards are returning to Icon for a second year after an exciting launch at the Members' Meeting in 2023.

Promoting the wider recognition of conservation and the value it brings to society, the Awards celebrate the sector and its positive impact on cultural heritage and communities.

This year, three new categories will be open to nominations. Awards for sustainability and innovation will highlight those in the profession championing advances in practice, research and training, while an award for student conservators will celebrate the next generation.

Nominations are open until 2 June and the Award Ceremony will be held during the evening reception at the Icon24 Conference (see page 17).

For more information and to enter, visit [www.icon.org.uk](http://www.icon.org.uk)





# RARE WATERCOLOUR FROM *THE JUNGLE BOOK* GOES ON DISPLAY AT RUDYARD KIPLING'S FAMILY HOME

NATIONAL TRUST, JAMES DOBSON



**Above:** A watercolour by Edward Julius Detmold (1883-1957) for *The Jungle Book* has gone on display at Bateman's Private Estate

A rare watercolour painting from *The Jungle Book* is now on display at Rudyard Kipling's family home, 130 years after the story was published.

The National Trust recently acquired one of the watercolours that originally brought the story to life, which can now be viewed

at the author's 17th-century home, Bateman's in Burwash, East Sussex.

*The Return of the Buffalo Herd*, dated 1901, is one of just four illustrations known to have survived from the original set of 16 painted by the Detmold brothers.

Art and Paper Conservator, Louise Drover ACR, cleaned the painting and created an exact replica of the frame that is believed to have been used when the painting was first exhibited in London.

Louise commented: "I've been lucky in my 30-year career to work on many beautiful and unique watercolours. It's been particularly exciting though to care for one of the original artworks created for such a famous, much-loved story."

**Source:** National Trust



## IMPROV

**Preservation Technician Siân Blake talks about using nylon monofilament fibre as a replacement for metal wire**

During my placement at the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth, I conserved a ship model where the ends of the metal wires holding the sails in place were embrittled and corroded. The ends of the wires needed replacing and I came across a blog post mentioning nylon fibre used to successfully restore broken strings.

Nylon monofilament fibre, also referred



to as nylon sewing thread, is inert, robust, transparent, easy to cut from the spool and contains some stretch. You can buy it from most craft shops and online retailers in various colours, diameters and tensile strengths.

Japanese spider tissue was used to bridge the original wire with the nylon fibre. The fibre can also take acrylic paint which I applied before threading it through the original holes on the masts of the model and tying the sails back in place.



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY

**Above middle:** Japanese spider tissue was used to bridge the nylon monofilament fibre with the original metal wire

**Above right:** Threading painted nylon monofilament fibre through the sails of a merchantman ship model

**Right:** Nylon monofilament fibre stored on a plastic spool



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# FROZEN IN TIME



**Main:** Exterior view of the main hut at Detaille

**Below:** Sophie Rowe cataloguing artefacts in the sledge workshop at Detaille

**Bottom:** The Detaille Island team celebrating after setting up their field camp

Sophie Rowe ACR, Vice Chair of Icon's Board of Trustees, talks to *Iconnect* magazine about her recent trip to Detaille Island with the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust

Although it is more than 10,000 miles away from the UK and Ireland, Antarctica is steeped in British history – from famous expeditions led by Scott and Shackleton in the early 1900s, to secret naval operations during WWII and important scientific research and surveys that continue to take place on the continent today.

Some of the buildings and artefacts linked to these incredible events can still be found in Antarctica, exactly as they were left, and thanks to the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT), work is regularly being carried out to promote and preserve some of the Antarctic's rich past for future generations to enjoy.

## Getting a taste for the Antarctic

Sophie's passion for Antarctic heritage began in 2012, when she started working as a conservator at the Polar Museum in Cambridge. The museum forms part of the Scott Polar Research Institute, established in 1920 by the University of Cambridge, and is a centre of excellence in the study of the Arctic and Antarctic.

"The Polar Museum is home to an amazing collection from Robert Falcon Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition, along with lots of other fascinating objects from more recent Antarctic explorations," Sophie explains. "There's nothing like getting really familiar with artefacts to make you excited about the stories behind them,

and I think that's where it all started for me."

Sophie's job at the museum was sponsored by the UKAHT and, on occasion, it would come to her for advice on how to manage the six designated historic sites and monuments on the Antarctic Peninsula that have come into the charity's care since 1993.

It was in 2017, a year after UKAHT's conservation programme started to gain momentum, that Sophie first travelled to Antarctica. She was tasked with carrying out a full inventory and condition survey of the artefacts at a scientific base established on Horseshoe Island in 1955. She then returned in 2019, this time alongside another conservator, Lizzie Meek, to conduct the same tasks at Base A, Port Lockroy, on Goudier Island.

Lizzie works for the Antarctic Heritage Trust (AHT) in New Zealand and has been leading the artefact conservation programme for the expedition bases left by Borchgrevink, Shackleton and Scott. "She's enormously experienced,"

Sophie highlights, "and not just in the different types of objects you find in these huts, but also working in that sort of environment." Which is why Sophie was thrilled to be working alongside Lizzie again, on her latest trip to Detaille Island in 2023–24.

## Travelling to and from Detaille Island

Despite leaving in mid-December, Sophie and her six fellow team members didn't reach Detaille until early January. "Out of seven weeks away, only three were spent on the island – the rest of the time was spent travelling," Sophie explains. "We flew to Chile and then to the Falkland Islands, where the Royal Navy supported us in getting to Detaille by sea as we had 5.5 tonnes of stores to take with us. This included things such as roofing felt, wood and tools for building repairs, along with food, cooking gas and camping equipment, etc.

"On the way home, we left in a staggered formation, only this time we travelled to Argentina on cruise ships

whose tour operators are part of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)."

IAATO is a trade association founded to promote safe and environmentally responsible travel to the Antarctic, and its operators are very supportive of UKAHT's work. "They provide us with lifts, offer us showers and fresh food and water when they are in the area, and take our waste away," Sophie says. "Part of the reason they support us is because the museum, gift shop and Penguin Post Office at Port Lockroy is visited by about 18,000 people a year, with the majority arriving on cruise ships." In turn, much of the income generated from the shop and Post Office is used to support the charity's conservation work.

## The Detaille Island team

While Sophie and Lizzie were the only artefact conservators visiting Detaille Island in the 2023–24 summer field season, they were joined by five other team members, who each had a pivotal role to play.

"Ruth Mullett is Head of Buildings and Conservation at UKAHT, and

having her along was really helpful as it meant we could have some quite big strategic discussions about what we were doing," Sophie reflects. "We also had Lesley Johnston with us, who is an XR (Extended Reality) Producer. She was taking incredibly detailed photogrammetry shots of the inside of the hut, to create a virtual reality walk-through. Part of UKAHT's mission is to promote greater public engagement with Antarctic heritage and, as most people are not going to get to visit these amazing places, virtual reality is a way that they can get some sense of what the various huts look like.

"We had two heritage carpenters on the team, Graham Gillie and Dale Perrin, who were busy painting, fixing windows and replacing roofing felt over the whole of the emergency hut. The buildings are themselves artefacts and although they are, fundamentally, temporary structures, a primary focus for UKAHT has always been to keep the building fabric as whole and as close to authentic as possible. One broken window pane during the winter, when the island isn't manned,



© UKAHT/LIZZIE MECK



© UKAHT/GRAHAM GILLIE

## About Detaille Island Hut

Located in the Lallemand Fjord, off the Loubet Coast, Detaille Island Hut was established in 1956 as a British science base. It was used primarily for mapping, geology and meteorology, and to contribute to the science programmes of the International Geophysical Year in 1957 (UKAHT, 2024).

However, the hut had to be dramatically abandoned by its occupants just two years later, when unrelenting sea ice meant their annual supplies, including coal, couldn't be transported to the base safely. All of the men who were on site, along with their four teams of dogs, had to make an emergency escape across the sea ice in sledges, leaving behind a perfect time capsule.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Detaille Island Hut and the other buildings and monuments cared for by UKAHT, or visit [www.ukaht.org](http://www.ukaht.org)





The Antarctic can be a stunning place, particularly on a still, sunny day in the summer season, but it's also an incredibly hostile environment with hurricane-force winds, very low temperatures and ice storms

can have a devastating impact on the artefacts inside.

"Finally, we had Andrew Jones with us, who was our basecamp leader. He's a former Marine and was responsible for maintaining our communications and making sure we were safe at all times. The Antarctic is not the best place to be if something goes wrong, so you really want to prevent anything from happening in the first place. Even a small injury caused by manual handling – which we do an awful lot of when we're setting up camp – would be inconvenient back at home, but it can have a big impact on the whole team when you're in this sort of environment."

### Down to the detail

"For Lizzie and I, our remit was to identify, catalogue and condition survey as many artefacts in the hut as possible," Sophie comments. "We did a small amount of remedial conservation, but the bulk of the conservation work is yet to be done. Our aim this season was to gather as much data as possible and to establish which artefacts on Detaille need to be prioritised in the future."

When it was occupied in the 1950s, the hut was used both as a home and as a workstation, which is all reflected in the layout and artefacts. Sophie goes on to explain some of the rooms and their contents in more detail.

"There's a communal eating area and a really lovely, atmospheric kitchen, with a stove that is similar to an Aga, but fuelled by coal. The stove is connected to a meltwater tank which they would have filled with snow from outside to produce their water supply.



© UKAHT/LIZZIE MEEK

**Above:** Lizzie Meek tackling mould in the kitchen at Detaille Island Hut

**Right:** Sophie in the kitchen at Detaille Island Hut

**Below:** Rust and mould are affecting many of the food containers in the main hut



© UKAHT/LIZZIE MEEK

their sledges and other equipment.

"The hut also has rooms dedicated to certain tasks including a meteorological office, wired up to things such as a Stevenson screen and an anemometer tower outside, so they could read some of the instruments from inside. There are lots of tables, maps and reference books, all related to meteorology in this particular office, and there's also a smaller office in the hut that was used by the base leader, where various records were kept.

"One of my favourite rooms is

a designated radio room which has radio transmitters, headsets, a Morse key and all the different little things that they would have needed to communicate with the outside world, which was obviously hugely important.

"And there's a shed containing an Enfield diesel generator bolted to the ground, which would have been running all the time and was no doubt very noisy. The whole of the hut has electric plug sockets and lights, and they even had a washing



© UKAHT/LIZZIE MEEK

**Top:** The lounge inside the main hut at Detaille, where clothing can be found exactly as it had been left

**Above:** The radio room in the main hut at Detaille, one of Sophie's favourite rooms

machine and an iron, which Lizzie and I found hilarious!"

### Conservation challenges and priorities

Perhaps not surprisingly, it's environmental factors that present the biggest challenges when it comes to conserving the building and its artefacts.

"The Antarctic can be a stunning place, particularly on a still, sunny day in the summer season, but it's also an incredibly hostile environment with hurricane-force winds, very low temperatures and ice storms," Sophie says. "The artefacts in the hut are deteriorating fast. The humidity is incredibly high on Detaille – our loggers often indicate 85%, which would make most conservators gasp. Unfortunately, we just can't use the same controls we might use in a museum back home, such as dehumidifiers, because there's no

source of power and these sites are not manned for the most part. You have to do everything completely passively."

In terms of priorities, there are two that Sophie and Lizzie have placed at the very top of their list: rusty food tins and mould.

"There are easily 2,000 tins of food in the hut, with a large number stored in the attic, as these would have all been delivered in bulk once a year," Sophie explains. "A lot of the tins have corroded or burst and are leaking their contents. This is a real issue if it's anything sugary, such as marmalade or tinned fruit – and as for Golden Syrup, oh my word! You then get what looks like tar working its way down from the attic into the rooms below, which adds to our second-biggest challenge which is mould.

"In the Shackleton and Scott huts, which are looked after by the New Zealand AHT, they have discreetly opened the bottom of the food tins, emptied out the contents and put them back on the shelves. They've kept some of the contents, but they've discarded a lot, and we've recommended the same for the UKAHT sites. It's obviously interesting from a conservation ethics point of view, because we would often recommend doing as little as possible, but we can clearly see that it's only a matter of time before these tins create real problems for themselves and the artefacts around them, so – preventatively – we're looking to empty the more unstable tins. But that's going to be quite a big operation in its own right and will probably need to be tackled across several field seasons."

The other big issue affecting the building and artefacts is mould. "We did quite a bit to try to remediate mould growth, using hot water and then going over the area again with a solution of isopropyl alcohol and water to try to kill the spores," Sophie explains. "But it's the sort of thing you need to stay on top of and I think we will need to experiment with some alternatives. There are new techniques using UV lights that might be more useful in tackling the mould in the long term. Again, this is something that the NZ team are doing as well so we can learn from them."

© UKAHT/SOPHIE ROWE





**Above:** Sophie and the team set up and lived in a field camp for the three weeks that they were on the island

**Right:** The hut at Detaille Island, taken from the east



### Working in the cold

The ambient temperature was about 1°C while Sophie and the team were on Detaille Island, but for a large part of the time they had winds that took the temperature down to around -9 or -10. "Luckily, when you're in the hut, you don't feel the windchill factor. It stays at around the one-degree mark, but you do get very cold, because doing cataloguing and condition surveys is quite static work. I personally can't type wearing gloves, so after a couple of hours, I would need to jump around a bit to warm up!"

Sophie also highlights that, while it wasn't an issue on this trip, something worth bearing in mind for future conservation work is that a lot of materials behave differently in the cold. "For example, Paraloid B72 in acetone, which is used for an awful lot of things, won't go off properly in cold temperatures, so it might be necessary to find a way to warm everything up while doing the treatment, or alternatives might need to be considered."

On top of that, transporting certain materials, such as solvents, to and from Antarctica and deciding the right quantities needed can also be a challenge. "The Navy and cruise ships obviously need to have special measures in place for carrying

solvents," Sophie comments, "and you have to plan exactly how much you need, because if you run out, that's it – you're stuck! It's logistics such as this that are actually a big, big part of what makes working in Antarctica different from 'normal' conservation work."

### Living conditions and creature comforts

Sophie and the team set up and lived in a field camp for the three weeks that they were on the island. "We each had a small tent to sleep in, with a very toasty sleeping bag and sheepskins to keep us warm. There was also a much larger communal tent, where we would cook and eat, and it had our comms desk and we did some work in there, too. A generator was also set up just outside the larger tent, which we would use to charge up our equipment."

In terms of personal hygiene, each team member was rationed to five litres of water per day, which included drinking water as well as water for washing dishes. Sophie adds: "There's no flushing toilet or running water on the island, but I have to say, baby wipes are an amazing invention! You get pretty good at conserving what little water you have."

When asked if she missed anything from home, Sophie explained that, in July, they each sent themselves a

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



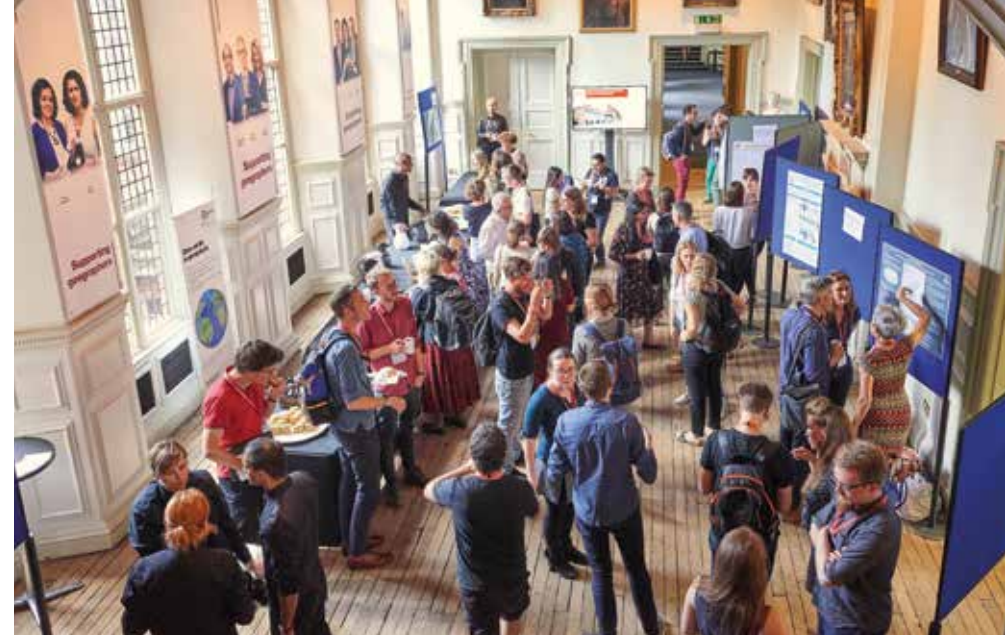
**Sophie Rowe ACR** is Vice Chair of Icon's Board of Trustees and the Head of Conservation at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. She has more than 25 years' experience as an organic artefact specialist, previously working at the British Museum, the National Museum of Denmark and for university museums including the Polar Museum, Cambridge, and the University of Cambridge Museums consortium. She holds a BA (Hons) from the University of Cambridge and a MSc (Distinction) in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums from University College London. Sophie has been a Museum Accreditation mentor for Arts Council England since 2018.

care package. "When I got to Detaille, it meant I had a box waiting for me with some chocolates inside and some books. I actually didn't have time to do much reading, but it was nice to have these things and particularly because we were there for Christmas."

"Otherwise, it's such a short burst of intense work, and doing something so special, that I don't find I really have time to miss things. I can also talk to my family on the satellite phone and the link is incredible, so it's not quite as isolated as you might think."

### Future trips to Antarctica

When asked if she'll be returning to Antarctica in the future, Sophie immediately responds: "I would go there in a shot, but I do have a day job, so the stars really have to align for me. Being able to work there has been the most astonishing privilege – I just absolutely love it. But there will be more programmes and more field seasons, and I anticipate that there will be some opportunities for other conservators to go there in the future, so watch this space."



**Left:** Icon24 is being held at the Royal Geographical Society this July



# ICON24 CONFERENCE CONSERVATION FOR CHANGE

The conservation community comes together in July to explore how we can employ change for the better

A conservator's role can often be about employing techniques to prevent, halt or even reverse the effects of transformative change. But change in the world of conservation can also be actively encouraged and embraced for positive effect. It can mean changing practice to ensure standards of excellence are maintained and also developed, changing the way we access and engage with heritage, all the way through to actively changing lives.

Through two thought-provoking days on 2-3 July, Icon is bringing the conservation community together at the Royal Geographical Society in London, to explore how the conservation profession can employ change for the better.

### What you can expect

● **More than 40 diverse speakers** from across the globe exploring change in all its guises. From Nadine

Thiel of Stadt Koln discussing the vital role conservators have played in recovering from the devastating Cologne floods in 2021, to Kerith Schrager and Kate Fugett who will discuss conservation as a force for good in community engagement and healing, with their work at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York.

● **Audience engaging panel discussions**, giving delegates the chance to debate how conservators can be active agents in tackling the climate crisis and how we ensure support for the next generation of conservators.

● **Exclusive British Film Institute (BFI) screenings**, bringing the opportunity to enjoy some

restored film treasures from the BFI National Archive.

● **Marsh Conservation Awards** – the second annual awards ceremony recognising the best of the profession with six awards celebrating excellence in conservation.



### Book your place at Icon24 on 2-3 July

Join us at Icon24 which promises to be a key change-making event for conservators from all backgrounds, levels of experience and specialisms. Delegates have the opportunity to pay their fees in instalments by Direct Debit for greater payment flexibility.

#### In-person Conference Ticket

Icon Member: £365  
Student Member: £180  
Non-Member: £465

#### Online Conference Ticket

Icon Member: £125  
Student Member: £80  
Non-Member: £170

Book now at [www.icon.org.uk](http://www.icon.org.uk) or by scanning the QR code



● **A summer reception** in the gardens of the Royal Geographical Society, featuring a talk from Sophie Rowe ACR who will share more information about her recent conservation trip to Antarctica and, of course, the chance to network and socialise.

### Beyond the conference

Icon's Groups are running a number of exclusive events throughout the rest of 2024 for conference delegates, giving the opportunity to attend specialist talks and workshops and visit conservation studios across the UK.





Above: Tracing the tesserae at one of the cut line positions

# RESTORING EQUALITY AND HARMONY

**Adrian Attwood ACR**, Executive Director of DBR Conservation Limited, talks about dismantling and conserving a Grade II mural that forms part of London's social heritage



Above: The top section of the mosaic mural in situ, before being dismantled

In October 2022, DBR Conservation Limited was urgently approached by Haringey Council to carry out an initial site visit and report on the feasibility of removing the recently Grade II-listed Equality-Harmony mural attached to Tangmere House, a brutalist building on Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham, that was soon to be demolished.

This work would support the Council in submitting a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application for recording and dismantling the mural for the December Planning Committee to obtain consent for its removal and to allow the ongoing demolition of Tangmere House to continue.

## About the mural

The Equality-Harmony mosaic mural, produced by Turkish artist Gülsün Erbil, had been listed as a Grade II building by Historic England on 5 October 2022, with the support of The Twentieth Century Society.

The mural was created by Erbil in 1986–87, following the Broadwater Farm riot on 6 October 1985. The riot was sparked by growing tension between black communities and the London Metropolitan Police and, more specifically, the death of Cynthia Jarret during a police raid of her home on

the Tottenham estate the day before. Metropolitan Police Constable Keith Blakelock was also killed as a result of these events.

A redevelopment of the estate by Haringey Council had initially pulled the future of the mural into question. However the Council went on to fully support the 2022 decision to give the mural a Grade II listing, recognising its social and historical value in line with Historic England: 'Through its depictions of cultural and community life on the estate, the mural celebrates the grassroots activism which helped shape it and counters a narrative of disaffection associated with the estate.' (Historic England).

While Erbil was responsible for the overall design, the mural was very much a collaborative art project involving members of her local community. A resident of the Broadwater Farm Estate herself at the time, Erbil set up a workshop in an empty unit in Tangmere House where she taught other residents different aspects of the Byzantine mosaic technique, using irregularly shaped, hand-cut glass tesserae. Schoolchildren and young people in particular were encouraged to take part in creating sections of the mural.

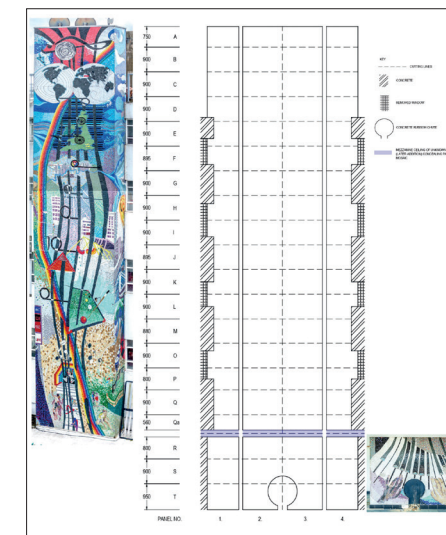
As outlined in an article published by The Twentieth Century Society ([c20society.org.uk](https://www.c20society.org.uk)): 'The imagery of the mural celebrates the universal values of peace, equality, harmony and community, linked by a rainbow and a musical stave running the full height of the work. The motifs narrate a geographic transition from global to local, starting with the two hemispheres at the top of the composition, followed by the map of the UK, the river Thames and London skyline, and finally to the buildings of the estate, its people and the activities they enjoyed.'

Commenting on her vision for the mosaic, Erbil told DBR: 'This representation of nature and abstract figures throughout suggests a world where everything is functional, harmonious, free and equal. This vision – of love, peace, harmony and equality among all races – resonates as the mural's underlying anthem, leading us toward change.'

## Initial assessment

The aim of DBR's initial onsite assessment, from the mezzanine level and at intermediate floor levels, was to identify a solution to the recording and careful removal of the mosaic artwork in a way that would not compromise the historic fabric or its structural integrity.

The mosaic had been applied by Erbil and her supporters to a pre-existing, reinforced concrete rubbish chute that ran down the outside face of Tangmere House. The individual tesserae were glued to the concrete with cementitious grout and it soon became apparent that the tesserae could not be individually removed intact, nor could they be removed in sheets safely from the concrete substructure.



Above: A diagram that maps out the cut lines for dismantling the mural



Above: Tracing of the tesserae at one of the cut line positions

As a solution, DBR's conservation team considered a more radical approach of slicing the whole 20m-high x 5m-wide concrete shaft into 21 sections, each weighing 2.5 tonnes, and craning these to the ground for salvage and conservation. From our initial inspections, we found natural margins created by the artist that provided suitable cut line positions that would minimise disruption to the mosaic during the cutting process.

With the recording, protection and cutting methodology established in principle, Haringey Council was able to submit an LBC application for careful dismantling of the mural. Following detailed discussions with the Conservation Officer, LBC was granted for both the dismantling and conservation of the mural with Discharge Conditions attached.

## Recording and protection

With the demolition of the Tangmere House building at a standstill, time was of the essence to erect a suitable scaffold structure to provide access to the mural and to carry out a detailed condition survey and 'cut line' report, along with initial treatment proposals. Working alongside demolition contractor Hughes and Salvidge, we carried out a detailed photographic record of the mural which was mapped to a specific grid established in accordance with the 'cut line' drawing. The horizontal cut lines were set out with laser levels and chalk lines and followed, as closely as possible, the artist's margins in approximately 900mm-high sections of concrete. At the cut line positions, DBR's conservation team traced the tesserae to provide a basis for accurate reconstruction at these concrete/mural separation points.

A colour chart was made and a code created for each type of tesserae, which in turn were marked up onto the tracing paper. The result was a perfect copy of each individual tesserae – its shape, colour and exact position on the proposed cut line.

Following the condition survey, the mural was dry cleaned using soft-bristle brushes to remove consistent and inconsistent general particles



and salt deposits on the surface of the tesserae. The entire mosaic surface was then wet cleaned using soft-bristle brushes and a mix of Vulpex detergent and water (1:15). Finally, the surface was re-rinsed with clean water and dried using microfibre cloths to prevent watermarks.

Inspired by the mosaic protection process commonly used on salvaged Roman mosaics, a three-layered protective 'safety' blanket was applied to each section. The first protective blanket consisted of at least two to three crisscrossed layers of cotton gauze, applied with the aid of a mix of Starch glue and Vinavil glue (20%) diluted in water, while ensuring that every layer was perfectly adhered to the surface.

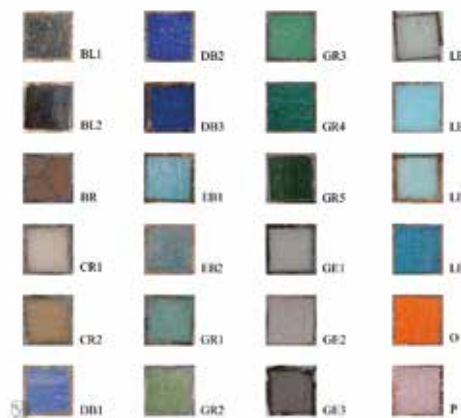
A homogeneous layer of silicon rubber with thixotropic additive was then applied with a brush to create elasticity and a soft cushioning layer.

Rubber keys were then applied on top of the silicon rubber (in a staggered fashion, so that they would protrude sufficiently), to support the final hard-shell covering. A minimum of four layers of Quadaxial fibreglass (soaked in Jesmonite AC100, which is a weather resistant resin, with the addition of a thixotropic) were then applied to provide further stability and resilience using the 'sandwich system' and to act as a protective 'jacket' to the mural during the dismantling process.

Combined, these three protective layers would absorb any vibration or shock to the mosaic during the cutting and lifting process, and also serve as a safety blanket, to hold any mosaic pieces in place in case they became dislodged. The blanket left one horizontal strip of mosaic exposed per section, to act as a precise guide for the diamond cutting blade that sliced through the structure, separating the mural sections.

### Dismantling

The cutting process for the 21 mosaic sections was a triumph of collaboration between DBR and Hughes and Salvidge. Large diamond cutting wheels mounted on tracks were used to carefully wet cut each section of the concrete shaft. This started with a smaller blade for pilot cuts at each corner, then a larger blade



**Left:** A colour chart was made and a code created for each tesserae type

**Left below:** A three-layered protective 'safety' blanket was applied to each section

**Below:** A diamond cutter being used to cut the mosaic into sections



was used to cut through the mass of concrete. Before final cuts were made, the concrete sections were attached to a mobile crane which provided the necessary tension to ensure no wayward movement during cutting. Once all lines were cleanly cut for each segment, the crane lifted these to ground level, where DBR's team of conservators and a forklift guided these to the on-site conservation workshop, specially constructed to DBR's specifications.

The process of dismantling had to be coordinated with the ongoing demolition of the building structure and the link walkways, requiring careful consideration for health and safety and structural stability.

### Conservation

Within the workshop, DBR conservators are currently in the process of removing the protective blanket, painstaking documentation, gentle cleaning and delicate conservation work to the mural sections.

Each section is being meticulously cleaned with deionised water and light conservation-grade detergent and hand brushing. For any missing or



damaged glass tesserae, new ones will be sourced, probably from Italy, based on original colours identified during the survey period and in accordance with the established colour chart. Any replacements will be carefully recorded in the treatment report, so that the exact location of the new tesserae can be identified, both now and in the future.

Once conservation has been completed on each of the 21 sections (by summer 2024), these will be carefully reinstated in a new position on the estate, but the precise location is still being considered. However, we don't anticipate the mosaic being reinstalled until 2025. The process will require significant engineering input to establish a suitable support/restraint structure. The seamless joining of the separate sections of the mural will also require careful reconstruction of the tesserae along the cut lines in accordance with the detailed templating and tracing undertaken by the conservation team.

Scan the QR code to watch an *ITV News* item that features the mural and members of the DBR team involved in the conservation of this important piece of working-class history



## Inspired by the mosaic protection process commonly used on salvaged Roman mosaics, a three-layered protective 'safety' blanket was applied to each section

DBR has been honoured to be involved in this project to rescue and conserve such an important landmark of London's social heritage. We're proud to have a longstanding association with Historic England and to play our part in protecting Britain's historic buildings, monuments and objects of significance. The Equality-Harmony mosaic mural is representative of the Broadwater

community that helped create it. The object is a testament to the social justice campaign that followed the 1985 riots and is an important symbol of community spirit. It is only right that it is properly conserved and re-presented in the place it was born.

A final word from Gülsün Erbil herself, quoted on The Twentieth Century Society's website: "I started with nothing I ended up being [recognised by] Historic England. I am very very happy and proud. It was a big sacrifice and I was patient enough. ART is a savior and also the doctor is this world. I would like to advice all the young generations to create...All the good messages can come to the world through creations. My message is PEACE & LOVE and EQUALITY. There is an English saying "If the dreams come true, there are no more dreams" But I believe we can create new dreams..." [sic]

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Adrian Attwood ACR** has over 30 years' experience on Grade listed buildings, monuments and objects of significance and is Executive Director of DBR Conservation Limited/DBR (London) Limited. He is responsible for the company's projects at the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Palace of Westminster. Adrian has lectured widely in the UK and Europe on the repair and cleaning of historic masonry fabric and has a keen interest in the conservation of mosaic, terracotta and concrete surfaces.

**Left above:** A section of the mosaic in DBR's workshop, prior to protective blanket removal

**Left:** Mosaic sections in the workshop, ready for conservation



## Q | When did you first become interested in conservation?

When I was maybe eight or nine, I saw a TV show where they were unwrapping a mummy in a museum and I announced to everyone that this is what I wanted to do. I had no idea what 'this' was at the time, but I never changed my mind. At high school I chose subject options that I thought might be useful but it wasn't until I saw a careers advisor from Dundee City Council that I realised I was looking for a life in conservation. I went straight on to do an undergraduate degree at Cardiff University, aged 17.

## Q | Tell us about your career history...

After graduating, I accepted a series of short-term contracts working with collections in Wales which led to a job in Amgueddfa Cymru Museum Wales. I then took up the position of Conservator for the Council of Museums in Wales, where I was responsible for conserving objects across 87 museums. I realised pretty quickly that I couldn't do that on my own, so I started to learn how to train and influence others. It made me realise early on in my career that enabling and helping volunteers and staff to do what they want to do is important, because they're likely to do it anyway. If you're working with a heritage railway museum, for example, you're not talking to them about wrapping things



**Above:** Cardiff University student, Emily Franks, explains her proposals for a tricky conservation project (2021)

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

up or using oxygen-free environments – you're talking to them about how to keep their trains going, alongside informed conservation advice, because it's their main source of income.

Over time, my role and job title changed to Conservation Advisor and then Conservation Manager, until the Care of Collections Masters opened

up at Cardiff University. It was a great opportunity for me to go back and study something that was more focused on what I was doing.

After that, I worked for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, before getting my first teaching role at Cardiff University. I've now been there 21 years.

**Jane Henderson ACR** talks about teaching at Cardiff University, issues surrounding access and public engagement, and the importance of advocacy

# CHALLENGE OR BE CHALLENGED



**Left:** *Three Obliques (Walk In)*

**Below:** Jane cleaning an early Christian monument in the basement of Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales c.1991

SWAN SO FINE/CREATIVE COMMONS

thing, but I worry that the culture that they experience at school and university is different from the culture in many workplaces, and I'm not sure they're geared up for that. I think our current generation of graduates will change their workplaces for the better but for now, there is still quite a gap.

## Q | You stated in a recent Museum Association podcast that you are obsessed with Barbara Hepworth's *Three Obliques (Walk In)* sculpture in Cardiff. Why?

It's an incredible bronze sculpture that sits in the middle of Cardiff and gets completely ignored.

Hepworth was well ahead of other artists who became famous for creating sculptures with holes in them, but these are normally set in the countryside. When you look through the holes of Hepworth's sculpture in Cardiff, you look at a blank wall or a road. I think this is interesting because it was a commissioned piece, so Hepworth knew where it was going to go and what people would see.

What's even more interesting is that although it's called *Walk In*, it's sat on a brick plinth, so you can't walk into it. And because the market value of Hepworth's sculptures has increased, if you do try to engage with it, security will come and tell you off.

I understand that when you have a valuable cultural asset you need to protect it, but lots of things about this sculpture – like its name and different surface textures and patinas – tells us that Hepworth intended the piece to be interactive. But we now have a situation where, first the sculpture was ignored, and now it's being protected to the point that public engagement is being prevented.

That leads us to the question, what is conservation? Is it about an object not changing or decaying? Is it people interacting with it in the way the artist intended? If no one is loving it or hating it or engaging with it, then what have we kept it for?

If access to culture and heritage is not equally distributed now, then having more unequal access in the future isn't what I want or what I'm here for. I want more people connecting to culture and

## Q | What do you enjoy the most about teaching at Cardiff University?

The students. They are always challenging me, always pushing back. I show them a paper and they rip it apart. I teach them how to conserve something and they want to do it differently. But it's good – they are there to have ideas and to question things. And like my earlier job with the 80+ museums, it means I don't get to settle on opinions, even if I do just want to get old and grumpy!

## Q | What do you feel are the biggest challenges today's graduates are likely to face?

You still have the precarious work situation and because a lot of the jobs are contract based, it can also mean moving around a lot. That's really challenging if you want to settle and have kids or if you are caring for someone.

I also think students have been increasingly supported, throughout their education, to be more expressive of their needs. This is definitely a good



LOUISE WINDO



**Middle:** Jane and former Icon Chair, Siobhan Stevenson ACR, as students in the mid-1980s

**Above:** Jane receiving the Plowden Medal in 2021 for significant contributions to the advancement of the conservation profession

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heritage because that's what keeps it. Unless we move with and respond to what matters to people, I don't know how we maintain the relevance of our cultural heritage, which is why I have never sat comfortably with a 'frozen in time' perspective of conservation.

### Q | Is allowing the public to touch an object a slippery slope?

No. It's only a slippery slope if your conservation ethos is 'do not touch,' which leaves you nowhere to go when you're trying to make objects meaningful to people.

That said, not everyone has to touch something to have a meaningful experience. I genuinely don't have to touch a self-portrait by Picasso to enjoy it. If I was visually impaired, a 3D rendition of the portrait or an audio or other sensory experience might be helpful. By discussing what it is that people would value when engaging with an object, the conservation team can create an experience that is meaningful but also mitigates unnecessary damage.

### Q | What's the key to effective advocacy and why is it so important?

My first experience of advocacy work was with curators in Wales which was always about finding a common goal. For example, there should be no conflict or compromise for either party when it comes to conservation and access. If you just assume that this is the default position, then you'll find a solution. You simply need to ask, what is it that we both want to achieve? It might be keeping the organisation afloat. It might be providing an authentic heritage train experience. It might be getting an object to a smaller museum that doesn't have all of the things a larger museum would normally have in place for loans, but because it's incredibly important for the local community to have access to that object, then you make it happen.

However, at the moment, I think we need to do more advocacy work with the public and politicians. We are seeing a crisis in cultural heritage funding, certainly here in Wales. We need to find a way of explaining to a

**Above:** Jane talking at an ARA conference in 2013



politician who is facing a doctors' strike why access to culture and heritage matters and that it's not a luxury. For example, what are we doing to show that heritage is one of the main informal sources of education? In a society that acknowledges that healthcare systems are under extreme pressure, how do we show that what we do helps to support mental health and wellbeing? How do we connect the dots and demonstrate that as cultural heritage

professionals we are helping to address those core societal needs? We need to lay claim to what we are doing and we need to do it now in order to survive.

### Q | Tell us a little bit about the talk you and Tze Ching Wong (Hazel) will be giving at Icon24...

It centres around some work that Hazel had been doing in terms of creating different outcomes for conservation using 3D imaging.

### Q | How can we create a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the sector?

**So much comes down to money and privilege. For example, if someone appears unreliable because they have kids and rely on public transport so they're occasionally late, they might be considered less eligible for a placement compared to someone who doesn't have dependents and can just jump in a car. This is a societal problem, but we need to think about how we can address it, whether it's acknowledging our position of privilege at the end of a research paper or making sure we don't ask for volunteers if we can't fund their transport or out-of-pocket expenses.**

**In terms of systemic discrimination – is there a way we can challenge this in our conservation practice? Is our scalpel, swabbing, reframing or rewashing related to discrimination? Are our objects and our treatments neutral? I think that's something that should be explored.**

**Right:** Jane providing IPM training at Yangon Museum in 2021, organised by the British Council

Hazel had been presented with the conservation of a pair of Chinese shoes designed for bound feet and the question she asked me was, who am I to decide what happens to these? And that's a very good question, especially when there are a lot of uncomfortable aspects surrounding trying to make objects like these less damaged and, essentially, beautifying them. So, we started to talk about how you can engage a wider audience in that decision-making process. At the time, Hazel was helping to run a 3D exhibition at a local arts centre, so we discussed the possibility of using 3D as a democratising force in conservation decisions.

The talk is less about the technical side of 3D and more about the opportunity to help people understand the questions we face as conservators including, 'who am I to decide?'

### Q | What is the sector addressing well and not so well?

Conservation is a really open and lively profession and I think we do really well embracing change and new ideas and cultures.

My counter to that is that within conservation, we're perhaps a little too nice and we could be a bit more robust in our discussions. I've been to talks where I've asked one of the speakers a question and six people have come up to me afterwards and said, Oh God, I'm so glad you asked that. I don't think it's healthy for us if we feel uncomfortable about exploring different issues affecting our work, or if we feel threatened by that.

### Q | Tell us a little bit about Jane, outside of work...

Apparently, I'm a soccer mum! I have two boys who love football so I'm now a season ticket holder for Cardiff City where we regularly lose matches in the rain. And I've got tickets for Taylor Swift – does that count?



**Middle:** Jane is a strong supporter of advocacy in the sector. Here she can be seen speaking at a picket line about the value of heritage (2023)

**Bottom:** Jane campaigning to keep the Museum of Cardiff open in 2023

### ABOUT JANE...



**Jane Henderson ACR FIIC SFHEA** is a Professor of Conservation and the Secretary General of the International Institute for Conservation. She teaches on Cardiff University's BSc in Conservation and MSc in Care of Collections and in Conservation Practice. Jane serves on the editorial panel of the *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, and is acting President of the Welsh Federation of Museum and Art Galleries. She chairs the British Standards Institute B/560 group concerned with the conservation of tangible cultural heritage and acts as a UK expert on the CEN TC 346 WG11 which has looked at standards for the conservation process, procurement, terminology and principles of documentation. In 2021 Jane received the Royal Warrant Holders Association's Plowden Medal for significant contributions to the advancement of the conservation profession. She still regularly goes to sleep at night worrying that she has not done enough.



Below: Protestors inflate a giant blimp depicting US President Donald Trump as an orange baby, during a demonstration against Trump's visit to the UK in Parliament Square in London on 13 July 2018. The blimp makes a second appearance, at the same location and for the same purpose, in June 2019



Above: The Trump blimp being test-inflated



MUSEUM OF LONDON, JOHN CHASE

Three committee members from the Modern Materials Network highlight some of the challenges when working with contemporary objects and materials

# CONSERVING TODAY FOR TOMORROW

## Trump inflatable: the great unknowns

**Jannicke Langfeldt ACR, Conservation Manager (Objects), Museum of London**

I find our collection of ephemera and modern materials with a limited life expectancy at the Museum of London fascinating. In the collection we hold protest material from many different demonstrations, ranging from the Suffragettes and Stanley Green (Protein Man) to Extinction Rebellion. The objects come in all

shapes and sizes including placards, painted and sewn banners, umbrellas and costumes, to name a few. Therefore, when the inflatable version of Donald Trump was flown during protests in Parliament Square in 2019, the Museum of London decided to collect it as a continuation of their protest collection.

I was a little daunted when I found out that we were acquiring the six-metre tall, PVC, helium-filled, angry-looking version of Trump. However, I thought it should not be excluded from the collection because of complex display needs or the material it is made from. Our collections will be much poorer if we only collect objects that we know from experience will last. Part of the conservator's role is to communicate to the curators and collections managers the challenges that result from acquiring modern objects, making sure the expectations about how long these will last are realistic and offering solutions for storage and display.

The Trump blimp is made from 0.18mm Poly (vinyl chloride) PVC, which was heat-welded and surface printed. In the museum world we are not unfamiliar with this material as it has been used extensively since the 1930s. It is a material I have previously seen leaking plasticiser, shrinking and also losing flexibility and strength.

After discussing the possibility that the lifespan of the blimp may be shorter than for other more traditional museum objects with the curator, we started to investigate storage methods for PVC with scientists from University College London. One of the things they had found to decrease the leaking of plasticiser was reducing airflow over the surface. We decided to focus on

this aspect during storage and packed it tightly in a well-sealed box that will keep it safe until it is displayed.

For any future display of the inflatable, we needed to make sure it would hold air. Because of its size and the equipment needed to test this, we worked with a company specialising in inflatables. We were pleased to see that the blimp had no holes and no visible deterioration. We made note of the attachment points and discussed with the specialists how it could be displayed inside.

When the blimp was flown in Parliament Square it was filled with helium. As helium is an asphyxiant we would not be able to use this inside. It is also a finite natural resource. The most sensible option for inflating the blimp is therefore to use air, suspending it from the top rather than tethering it from below. On display it may need to be reinflated frequently, as we're not sure how much leakage will occur through the fabric of the blimp or how temperature changes in the ambient air will affect it.

Many aspects of display, storage and lifespan of this large PVC inflatable are unknown but I am hoping that we will have a chance to learn from it when we put it on temporary display (details yet to be confirmed). It will be interesting to see how the material behaves long term and if the sealed storage box prevents the migration of plasticiser in the PVC.



With thanks to Jannicke Langfeldt ACR, Conservation Manager (Objects), Museum of London.

Formerly, she worked at the Science Museum which was where her interest in modern materials started. Jannicke has been co-chair of the Icon Modern Materials Network since it started. She also loves sailing and swimming.

Scan the QR code to read more about the Trump blimp





## A lightbulb moment

### Carla Flack ACR, Sculpture and Installation Conservator, Tate

As a Contemporary Art Conservator I often come across materials and technologies that pose conservation challenges due to their fleeting lifespan. One example of this is lightbulbs which have been preoccupying my professional life for the past few years as I prepared and maintained artworks for a touring

exhibition visiting seven international venues. The exhibition included light works by the renowned artists Bruce Nauman, Dan Flavin, David Batchelor, Peter Sedgley, Olafur Eliasson and Liliane Lijn. Each work was unique but with one defining thing in common, light, and all provided by lightbulbs – incandescent, LED, halogen or, for my focus here, fluorescents.

One of the most famous light works in the exhibition was Dan Flavin's

Below: Dan Flavin's light work installation, 'monument' for V. Tatlin (1966-69)



NORHIRO UENO

'monument' for V. Tatlin (1966-69) which consists of seven fluorescent bulbs plus fittings. Like all of Flavin's sculptures, this work was made using prefabricated fluorescent tubes. He described it as a 'monument' partly as a joke, aware of the disparity between its modest materials and the traditional grandeur of monumental sculpture ([www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)).

When approaching light works, the initial question posed is what is the artist's intention with the work and how does the light play a part? For the Flavin, one of the important factors is that the work was prefabricated and easy to come by at the time. Then there are the practical questions such as what is the technology, for example, what bulbs, ballasts and starters are required and what is the voltage/wattage/draw?

Specifically 'monument' uses T12 fluorescents of 2ft, 4ft, 6ft and 8ft length. The UK government announced a ban on the manufacture of fluorescent bulbs from 2023 meaning these were increasingly difficult to acquire in the UK and not available in the countries the tour was visiting. So for a seven-venue tour, how do we provide the required spare bulbs that are quickly becoming obsolete and how do we deal with obsolescence in the long term? There are several options:

**Stockpile bulbs:** This takes up valuable storage space and runs the risk of damage while in storage or disassociation from the artwork.

**Updating the bulb technology:** This is a solution in some instances. However, the artist needs to be consulted and

Each work was unique but with one defining thing in common, light, and all provided by lightbulbs – incandescent, LED, halogen or, for my focus here, fluorescents



Above: Various modern paints forming part of Tate's Conservation and Heritage Science Archive

worked with as the 'quality' of the light is often a part of, if not the main expression of, the work. Sometimes LEDs don't provide the same tone/colour, temperature or feeling provided by the original. In some cases, to change the bulb type also requires reworking the artwork. As a conservator it is important to weigh up the gain of making the artwork longer lasting against changing the work.

**Commission bespoke bulbs to match the originals:** By working with specialists it is possible to make bulbs that will work in the same way as the original. On the plus side this retains the intention of the artwork however, it is a high-cost solution, particularly for works that require regular bulb changes throughout display.

**Finally, make an exhibition copy:** This involves remaking a work with new technology that appears as the original while the original remains unchanged. However, ensuring the authenticity and artist's intention are retained means this is a long and resource-heavy process.

Every case is different and each option is appropriate in different situations. With 'monument' for V.

Tatlin, to change the technology would lose the prefabricated element of the original which is an important consideration. For the moment, to ensure the work remains displayable for this tour, I decided to approximate how many bulbs would be needed and acquired them in advance. These were packed in their own transit case and followed the work around the world. This is obviously a short-term solution and the question of obsolescence remains for preserving the future of the work.

With thanks to **Carla Flack ACR, Sculpture and Installation Conservator, Tate**. Clara gained an MA from the University of Lincoln in the Conservation of Historic Objects in 2008. She has worked privately and for various UK institutions and has been with the Sculpture and Installation Conservation department at Tate since 2012. Clara is a founding member of the Icon Modern Materials Network.

Scan the QR code to learn more about 'monument' for V. Tatlin



## Modern paint challenges

### Morana Novak, Researcher in Conservation Science, Tate

The 20th century brought major developments to the field of modern paints, which have been extensively used as household paints. However, artist-grade paint products have also been available on the market. Modern paints offered innovative ways of artistic expression which were not possible with traditional media such as oils. They also came in a diverse array of formulations, each with unique properties and applications.

Most modern paints are based on synthetic (polymer) binders, namely acrylics, alkyds, poly (vinyl acetate) and nitrocellulose, as well as paints made from modern oils. Modern paints provided several advantages over traditional paints, such as higher resistance to weathering, improved flexibility, elimination of organic solvents (for some paints) and faster drying. Many of the famous 20th-century artists were using modern paint in their artistic work including Pablo Picasso, Helen Frankenthaler, David Hockney, Jackson Pollock, Bridget Riley and Andy Warhol.

Even though modern paints have





**Above:** A Nanorestore Gel® Peggy 6 sheet, produced by CSGI for cleaning works of art

revolutionised the artistic world, they present a conservation challenge due to the limited knowledge of paints' complex chemical composition, ageing behaviour and the effect of conservation treatments, such as cleaning, on these paints. As museums hold an ever-increasing number of artworks made using modern paints, these topics have been a key area of scientific and conservation research in the last few decades.

Modern paints consist of mixtures of binders, colourants and additives. They are mostly available as waterborne paints (emulsions), in which the polymer is mixed with water and stabilised with various additives, which also helps to modify the paint properties. However, because of this chemical complexity, modern paints undergo degradation processes that can lead to aesthetic changes in paintings, such as colour and gloss shifts, surface changes due to additive migration and cracking of paint layers.

One of the main conservation issues is the susceptibility of modern paints to environmental factors, such as light, temperature and humidity fluctuations. Synthetic binders used in modern paints are composed of polymer chains which can break when exposed to ultraviolet light, leading to paint embrittlement and colour

**One of the main conservation issues is the susceptibility of modern paints to environmental factors, such as light, temperature and humidity fluctuations**

changes. Furthermore, humidity and temperature fluctuations can cause mechanical damage to the paint, contributing to the appearance of craquelures. Light and environmental fluctuations can also lead to the migration of paint additives which leaves the painting surface tacky and prone to dirt buildup.

In addition to environmental factors, finding appropriate conservation treatments for modern paints has proven to be challenging. As many modern and contemporary paintings have been in the Tate collections for several decades, they are in a stage

where many require cleaning owing to accumulated dirt. Modern paintings are often unvarnished, causing a significant amount of dirt to build up on the paint surface.

A further challenge is that they are sometimes made of a mixture of different paints, all of which show different material properties and degradation characteristics. The inherent sensitivity of modern emulsion paints to solvents, as well as potential changes in surface colour, gloss and texture due to the cleaning process, are factors that need to be addressed before cleaning commences. Therefore, conservators often test different cleaning options on paint test specimens which have similar chemical compositions and properties to the artwork. This practice allows us to assess the compatibility of cleaning agents with the paint surface, ensuring that any treatment applied is both effective and safe.

Cleaning tools vary and can include both dry and wet methods. Dry methods involve the use of sponges and erasers. A variety of aqueous systems, such as buffered water or water mixed with surfactants/cleaning agents, are available for wet methods. Organic solvents such as hydrocarbons and alcohols are also commonly used. In the last decade, there has been an increase in the use of gel systems for cleaning solvent-sensitive modern paints (see picture above). These gels are advantageous as they confine the cleaning liquid in their structure and therefore provide a more controlled delivery of cleaning liquids to the painted surface.



**With thanks to Morana Novak, Researcher in Conservation Science, Tate. Morana gained her PhD in heritage science at University College London and is working as a postdoctoral researcher at Tate. She is also a committee member of the Icon Heritage Science Group and Modern Materials Network.**



**Patrick White**, Policy and Programmes Director, outlines Icon's plans to identify skills at risk across the heritage sector and prevent these from being lost forever

## IDENTIFYING AND PROTECTING SKILLS AT RISK

Icon's membership represents professionals working across more than 150 areas of conservation practice. This includes specialisms practised by hundreds of professionals where well-established training programmes exist, such as book and paper or paintings conservation.

However, it also includes skills that are held by just a handful of individuals, such as those who can conserve gold leaf on medieval manuscripts. We also have to accept we simply don't know whether some skills are at risk because we lack the data to make a proper valid assessment.

Inaction in this area could lead to the loss of skills that have taken years to develop and could ultimately limit our ability to care for collections. We must not let this happen.

A similar list already exists for craft skills; the biennial Red List of Endangered Crafts prepared by Heritage Crafts has helped to shine a light on the skills that are considered 'endangered' or 'critically endangered' in the UK. Stained glass window making appeared for the first time in 2023 and this certainly worked to galvanise all parts of the sector into action.

Icon is committed to developing a similar list for the conservation profession. This will give us much-needed data that will enable us to work with funders and stakeholders to ensure funding and training opportunities are developed to prevent these skills from being lost forever.

All parts of the heritage sector face similar challenges. For example, within the archaeology sector we know that there are concerns around the small number of dendrochronologists and the resultant negative impact this will have on archaeological services.

As such, we wish to work with partners across the UK to develop a



**Above:** The small number of dendrochronologists, who help determine the age of a wood sample, may impact archaeological services in the future

consistent approach that can be used by all parts of the heritage sector.

We already have strong interest from the national heritage bodies across the UK as well as from allied organisations including the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and the National Heritage Science Forum.

The plan, as it stands, is to amend the existing Heritage Labour Market Intelligence Toolkit which Icon developed in partnership with CIfA and Historic England (who also funded the work) to come up with a common approach to identifying skills at risk across the heritage sector.

This work will also consider relative demand for these skills within the workforce so that efforts to fill these can be maximised.

For example, if a skill is in high demand but sits with just one person,

then time is critical and efforts will be focused on documentation and knowledge transfer. Conversely, if the skill is at less significant a risk, time can be dedicated to developing a formal training programme which can have a longer-term positive impact in moving the skill from the 'endangered' list.

Once completed, Icon will be seeking the support of our specialist groups and wider membership to implement the research and to gather this invaluable information so that we can continue to protect and preserve the huge range of incredibly important skills and knowledge that exist across all parts of the conservation profession.



# MACKINTOSH MASTERPIECE

**Alexander Coode ACR** on his conservation of two sets of gates created by renowned Scottish architect and designer, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, located at the Hill House, Scotland



**Above and right:** The two sets of gates in position after conservation



ALL IMAGES ALEXANDER COODE ACR

**T**he Hill House in Helensburgh, Scotland, is cared for by National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and is widely considered to be one of the best examples of Scottish domestic architecture.

It was commissioned in 1902 by Walter Blackie, a wealthy publisher based in Glasgow, and designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his wife, Margaret MacDonald. As well as creating the house and its magnificent gates, the couple were also responsible for the furniture, textiles and decorative features that can still be enjoyed when

visiting the property today.

NTS initially approached me to tender for conserving the two matching sets of front gates to the house, based on a non-specialist contactor brief. After discussion with NTS following the initial enquiry in November 2021, we split the project into two phases. The first phase would cover the preparation of a report to include a detailed investigation, a condition assessment and a treatment proposal, including a detailed specification. The second phase would then focus on any conservation work required.

As the gates are an original part of an



iconic Category A listed building and therefore considered to be of 'national or international architectural or historic importance', it meant that the highest conservation standards would need to be maintained throughout the project.

## Report findings

Phase one of the project was completed in September 2022 and revealed multiple issues. These included vehicle damage that had caused deformation and fractures to one of the frames, some profoundly inappropriate attempts at repairs and, most destructive of all, substantial corrosion issues due to a widespread failure of the coatings. This corrosion had resulted in numerous failures and some loss of details.

As is often the case, the corrosion was most destructive to the smaller elements of the ironwork, which was compounded by the design in these areas, creating access challenges for the maintenance of coatings. The lock boxes were also corroded, no longer functioning and the keys lost.

Both sets of gates also overlapped at the top, preventing them from closing, which could only be caused either by movement in the piers or by poor historic installation. This was cause for concern because correcting the issue is often invasive to either the gates or the piers, each of equal significance in this instance.

A paint analysis commissioned by NTS from Crick-Smith in 2020 also revealed some inconsistency in the coatings applied to the top set of gates and the lower ones. The top set of gates had early coatings that were



**Far left:** A photo from a German architectural magazine c.1905 showing the upper gates on the far left

**Left:** Corrosion had resulted in multiple failures and was most destructive to the smaller elements of the ironwork



**Above:** Details of construction and stamps revealed during conservation can give clues to provenance – here we can see a 'Milnwood' stamp, a local iron and steelworks

entirely missing from the lower set, while the lower set had three later coatings that were missing from the top set. This was the first indication of many more anomalies to come.

## Conservation begins

At the start of 2023, NTS commissioned phase two of the project which involved taking the gates to our workshop and conserving them in line with the specification.

Although many of the coatings had failed down to the metal (which was corroding), NTS elected to save what was possible of any well-adhered coatings. This was achieved by using a ThermoTech® high pressure steam cleaning machine. The combination of heat and pressure removed the loose and failed coatings while retaining the sound material. It also removed the accretion of organic growth and any dirt and oils that would have made a suboptimal substrate for our coatings.

The machine is particularly good at removing modern coatings and less good with traditional oil-based coatings, which was ideal. I am unaware of any other process that can do this, as other paint removal techniques lack the fine control and are basically too good at their primary function.

However, the process was not without its challenges; it was January and freezing, which is not an ideal time of year or weather condition to be using a steam cleaner which tended to coat the surrounding areas in ice, including me.

While the conservation process is often the best time to closely evaluate an object, this is particularly true with architectural ironwork, where the object is usually coated and is unlikely to undergo comprehensive treatment for another 100 years. Details of construction and stamps that can give clues to provenance are uncovered, possibly for the first time since original manufacturing. An understanding of the craft is particularly useful when interpreting marks and construction techniques, as well as deciding whether, where and how to intervene.

## Further assessment

Having cleaned the gates, a thorough recorded assessment took place that revealed curious differences between the two sets. It became obvious that the top set had had every detail inside the frame historically cut out and gas welded back into place. They also had markedly more corrosion.

There were also differences in size and construction, with copper rivets





**Above:** The outer frames all contained a distinctive and unusual fire weld

**Above right:** Some of the recent repairs were very crude

**Right middle:** The top inner strap had been riveted on with the petal stalks already fixed on at the base

used in the bottom set and iron in the top set of gates.

Part of phase one involved researching provenance which had revealed two quotes; one from George Adam (Mackintosh's usual supplier) and the apparent winning tender from Bryden & Middleton, for half the price. I had a sneaking suspicion that they may have actually made one set of gates each.

Having said that, all of the outer frames, while different sizes, contain a distinctive and unusual fire weld joining the backstile to the bottom rail. This would be unlikely if they were made in different forges. The anomalies of manufacture and coatings could have all resulted from works done after their initial installation, but the much better-preserved lower set, lacking the distinctive base coat present on the upper set, is counterintuitive to the upper gates having had invasive historic alterations that were totally lacking in the lower set.

What was clear is that all of the internal details of both upper gates had been expertly dismantled and then refitted using gas welding.

More recently they were impacted, bent and broken, then bodged roughly



**Above:** Some elements were entirely missing from the gates, such as this petal

back together. The more recent repairs were so crude that there was no conflict over not retaining them as part of the gates' history.

Multiple breaks to the frontstile and palings had been stainless steel welded without straightening it first, leaving the whole frame out of alignment.

### Tackling the welds

My first objective was to remove these welds and bring this gate back to true. The stainless steel welds were removed and replaced with mild steel to avoid the potential for galvanic corrosion.

The old gas welds to the upper set of gates were very much part of the history

of the gates and presented no structural issues, so were retained. It was more nuanced to conserve the fine clusters of the small round section that make up the upper central infill of all the gates, which had been the areas most affected by corrosion. There were multiple cases where the bases of the outer ring of small, round section petal-headed details had wasted away, leaving them only attached at the top strap. Some were missing entirely. The loss of the material at the bases presented an interesting problem, with the flanged fixing to the lower horizontal strap unable to pass through the upper internal strap.

This meant that the top inner strap must have been riveted on with the petal stalks already fixed on at the base. Restoring wasted lower fixings like-for-like would have required unriveting the entire top inner strap which would have been unacceptably invasive.

After weighing up the various options, I decided to electrically weld the extended bases inside the lower horizontal. This made them visually indistinguishable from surviving examples from the outside, but identifiable repairs for future conservation. There was also a historic precedent where a few of them had been gas welded in the same place in the past. It was a good example of trying to balance competing conservation ideals: use of historic techniques, aesthetic considerations, practical considerations, and minimal and identifiable interventions. Truly reversible interventions in architectural ironwork are often hard to achieve when structural and corrosion considerations need to be taken into account.

My rationale for restoring the missing petals and corroded teardrop details was based on these being the focus of the gates' design and integral to Mackintosh's vision for the property. Their continued loss would be an aesthetic loss to the whole.

This is particularly important considering the gates are the first thing that visitors encounter on arrival, arguably even more so while the house's exterior remains covered by a protective frame.



### Finishing touches

The gates were hand painted with a zinc-based primer on the exposed metal and oil/alkyd coatings overall. This was chosen to be compatible with the surviving coatings and to simplify maintenance. Most water-based coatings do not bond well with an oil-based substrate and will fail prematurely.

It is worth mentioning that at this point, I deviated in places from my original specification. The point where architectural ironwork has been cleaned and intervention is yet to start should always be seen as an opportunity to reassess and, if necessary, revisit the specification and any contingency included in the quote. The accumulation of coatings and corrosion often obscures the full extent of damage and the details of fixings. The selection of conservation treatments should be treated as dynamic, at least until this point. Too rigid an initial specification that is not open for review can lead to either suboptimal treatments or issues just being ignored.

On completion the gates were initially put into storage at the beautiful Culzean Castle while work went on to the perimeter wall at the Hill House, which included the piers on which the gates hang.

The reinstallation was not without challenges. As mentioned at the start, the gates overlapped at the tops and I had established that, even though the gates have very little lateral support, they were still true and had not sagged. Therefore any adjustment to correct

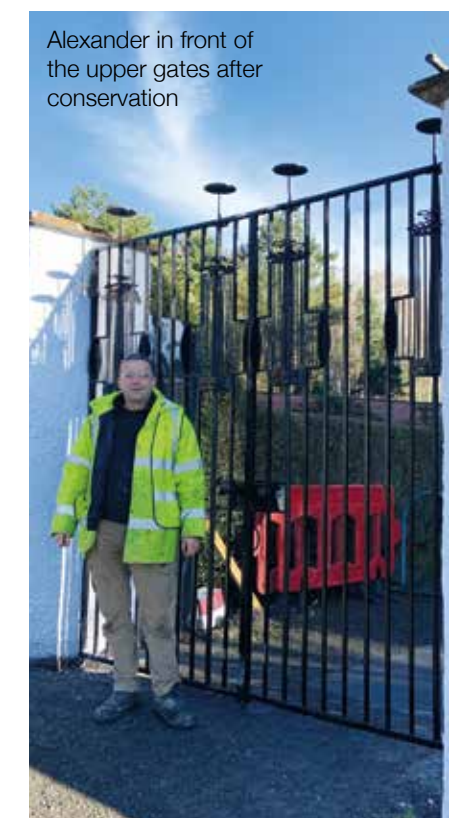


**Left:** The corroded teardrop section held over the introduced material

**Above:** The gate section containing the corroded teardrops

this was going to have to be in the bearings set into the piers. Knowing this, when the plaster was removed and replaced on the piers, a bare minimum amount of new plaster was laid to leave the maximum possible room for adjusting the bearings.

Having established on initial inspection that the lower hinges had sections historically welded on to make them longer, I suspected the gates had switched position in the past. The larger set appeared to be in the smaller gap leaving little room for adjustment. However, it would



Alexander in front of the upper gates after conservation

have been too invasive to alter the straps and bearings to correct this and with just enough room, and some input from a mason who was retained for the installation, the bearings were taken back enough for the gates to align well. There was not enough of the bearing to drill a hole to hold the strap and so I had to weld it on – not ideal but it was that or move the pier which simply wasn't an option.

In this and all projects, it is crucial to establish and maintain a close relationship with the client and all relevant stakeholders, particularly when variations, complications and the unexpected occur. NTS have been excellent partners in this regard and it really felt like we were working towards the same goal.

### Acknowledgements

This project was partially funded by a grant from the The Ironmongers' Company. To find out more about the National Trust for Scotland's pioneering project to restore the Hill House, scan the QR Code.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Alexander Coode ACR AWCB** is the owner of Coode Conservation (coodeconservation.co.uk). He ran a traditional blacksmithing business before turning to conservation after completing a National Heritage Ironwork Group Bursary Programme and taking on progressively larger and higher-profile projects. As well as completing conservation commissions, Alex has been a guest lecturer at West Dean College for nine years, is a long-standing member of the Icon Metals Group Committee and Church Building Council's Sculpture and Furnishing Committee.



**M**y passion for conservation began while studying my BA in History and Politics at Lancaster University. In my third year I completed a history special subject module titled *The Politics of Memory: The Contested Past in Museums, Monuments and Minds*. This sparked my interest in the heritage sector and gave me a greater understanding of the importance of conserving objects to preserve the past of people, groups and cultures. I also became interested in how conservation decisions can impact visitor perceptions and, consequently, collective memory. I found this especially significant in today's 'post-truth' era where misinformation has such prevalence.

**After completing my degree I worked within various Lancaster-based museums.** This gave me a wider appreciation for the value of objects, socially and culturally, hence the importance of conserving these. In addition, I completed various short introductory courses and training sessions on collections care and conservation. I have always had a desire to work with my hands alongside an interest in science, art and history, so conservation seemed like the perfect career path for me.

**I recently completed my MA in the Conservation of Archaeological and Museum Objects at Durham University.** I completed this part time over three years as this enabled me to work alongside my studies to afford the tuition fees. The barrier faced by many working-class students when pursuing a career in conservation is something I am passionate about raising awareness of.

I really enjoyed the course as it gave me the opportunity to learn about and work on such a wide variety of objects and materials.

**I spent the third year of my Masters completing a 10-month placement at Lancashire Conservation Studios.** This was an amazing experience which



INES MADRUGA

## MEET ANNA CROWTHER

Anna Crowther talks about her route into conservation, researching EPS foam and work since completing her Masters



enabled me to work on a huge variety of objects with conservators from various disciplines including paintings, natural history and objects. I therefore learnt about new materials and developed new practical skills, such as cleaning and varnish removal of paintings and re-hairing techniques for taxidermy specimens. These experiences highlighted to me the huge importance and benefits of inter-disciplinary collaboration within conservation.

**Early on in my placement I also developed an interest in the conservation of modern materials.**

I was required to devise a treatment proposal for dinosaur maquettes made from expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam. EPS foam is a ubiquitous modern material found within cultural heritage collections.

However, after conducting research I found adhesives for EPS foam are currently unmapped within conservation literature. This became my final year research project which



I have always had a desire to work with my hands alongside an interest in science, art and history, so conservation seemed like the perfect career path for me



**Far left and left inset:** Cleaning and varnish removal of the decorative painted ceiling and walls in the Council Chambers at Rochdale Town Hall

**Above left:** Anna conducting pest monitoring at Lancaster Maritime Museum

**Left:** Covering a boat in Tyvek plastic sheeting as a preventive conservation measure prior to building work at the museum

**Below:** Anna inserting a support layer to a taxidermy corgi specimen from Lancashire County Museums Service to enable fragmented, detached skin to be re-adhered



involved conducting a preliminary survey followed by properties testing to fill this gap in the conservation literature, enabling conservators to make informed treatment decisions when dealing with EPS foam objects in the future. The successful completion of this research sparked a newfound passion for scientific research. I hope to publish my findings and gain the opportunity to conduct further research into the conservation of plastics in the future. This is an area I believe requires increased attention as the prevalence and variety of plastics

means they are found in nearly all museum collections and with ever-growing presence.

**Since completing my Masters I have been working as a Casual Conservation Officer** with Lancashire Conservation Studios at Rochdale Town Hall.

This has predominantly involved working alongside paintings conservators on the cleaning and varnish removal of the painted ceilings of the Council Chambers and Mayors' Parlour in the Town Hall.

I have loved working on this project and the opportunity to once again work alongside a great team of conservators who have so much invaluable experience to learn from. It was also my first experience working on a construction site rather than in a studio or lab-based setting which has given me a very useful insight into the differences and challenges this presents.

I am also working at Lancaster City Museums again which has allowed me to gain further experience on preventive conservation projects, including updating their Integrated Pest Management System and completing basic collections care cleaning activities.

**I have also worked as a Social Media Officer on the Icon Emerging Professionals Network Committee**

for the past two years. I am really passionate about this role and the opportunity it provides to promote public outreach within conservation and the work of emerging professionals in the field. If you are interested in hearing more about this, please follow our social media @icon\_emerging\_professionals and share your work with us!

**Looking ahead, I would especially like to gain further experience working on natural history objects** as this was an area I really enjoyed during my placement. As I have only just graduated, I am still very early in my conservation career, but I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds!



# REPLICATING RIBBONS



Textile Conservator, **Aisling Macken**, explains how she used facsimiles to protect WWI medal ribbons on display at the National Maritime Museum

that these war medals hang from is the focus of this article.

At the NMM we aim to rotate our textile objects every two years, however the curators were very keen to keep the medals in Forgotten Fighters on display due to the incredible personal stories attached to these. Given the risk of textile elements becoming faded with continual exposure to light, a decision needed to be made about how to best protect the ribbons. Ideally I wanted to do this without separating them from the medals, as this raises ethical issues surrounding the removal of original stitching and additional storage space would also be required for the ribbons. Having previously faced the issue of original medal ribbons being on continual display during the four years I have been at the NMM, luckily I had some idea of where to begin with creating facsimiles.

## The ribbons

There are a total of 78 medals on display in Forgotten Fighters, awarded to 17 individuals of different ranks within the Royal Navy. All of these



**Above left:** Medal awarded to Lieutenant-Commander Max Kennedy Horton, before treatment

**Above:** After treatment, showing the printed facsimile around the attached bars



**Left:** Medals awarded to Commander Claude Congreve Dobson, before treatment

**Middle:** After treatment

**Bottom:** Medals awarded to Commander Dobson installed in the gallery

medals are attached to their original silk ribbons. War and Naval medal ribbons are made from rep woven silk, with a dense horizontal ribbed texture. Ribbons vary in colour and design depending on the specific award and can be a solid colour, have stripes of varying widths, or stripes of colour that blend into each other.

Medals belonging to the same individual have had their ribbons sewn together and swing mounted on a brooch bar. These groupings range from two to seven medals, with a further six single medals that are not sewn to any others. The majority of the groupings are mounted with the ribbons side by side, however five groupings have been mounted with the ribbons overlapping each other.

There are two ways that the ribbons are attached to the medals: either on a suspender bar, where the ribbon is completely flat, or on a suspender ring, where the ribbon is gathered through a metal loop on the top of the medal. Several of the ribbons have an oak leaf stitched to the surface, which signifies a mention of the individual in dispatches by a superior officer, or a bar, signifying a second award. The medals are displayed hanging on frosted glass mounts inside four-sided display cases, meaning they are visible from all sides.

In the past I have covered original ribbons with reproduction ribbons which can be purchased from various online retailers. These ribbons have been successfully used at the NMM to cover single medal ribbons, however they become very bulky once you start to fold, gather or layer them.

Given that many of the ribbons in Forgotten Fighters are layered on top of each other, it became clear that layering ribbons of the same thickness would create an excessive amount of bulk and would be very difficult to thread through the suspender rings or behind



ALL PHOTOS © NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, GREENWICH, COURTESY OF THE CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT AT ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH

**R**oyal Museums Greenwich (RMG) comprises the National Maritime Museum (NMM), the Queen's House, the Royal Observatory and *Cutty Sark*. Together these sites are dedicated to enriching people's understanding of the sea, the exploration of space and Britain's role in world history.

Forgotten Fighters is one of the permanent galleries at the National Maritime Museum. This gallery commemorates the naval battles and the people who fought during WWI through the display of associated ship models, weaponry, sailor's craftwork and medals awarded for exceptional service. The original coloured ribbons



any bars. It is also not always possible to find exact copies of original ribbons.

Another technique that has been previously used is to cover the original ribbon with an image of the ribbon printed onto acid-free paper. While I have had success using this technique with single ribbons, the paper did not have enough flexibility to wrap around multiple ribbons stitched together and the resulting look was extremely flat and rigid.

It quickly became apparent that we needed a printed fabric to allow for the flexibility to wrap multiple ribbons mounted together and by searching online, I learnt that it was possible to print on fabric using an inkjet printer. Considering the number of facsimiles needed it was decided that this printing method would be the most cost-effective, while allowing full control over the colours and scale of the images.

### The method

Facsimiles of the ribbons were printed onto white heavy taffeta Naples silk fabric purchased from Bennet Silks. After experimentation with different weights of silk habotai and cotton, this particular fabric was chosen as it was heavy enough for the images to be printed clearly and crisply, has a slight sheen, and although it is a plain-woven fabric, it has the look of a warp faced weave, echoing the texture of the original ribbons.

Images were printed using a Canon image RUNNER ADVANCE DX C5840i office printer. First, a test print of the coloured and black inks was printed onto the silk and Oddy tested to ensure that the ink would not damage the medals. The inks and fabric passed the Oddy test with no corrosion of the metal coupons.

High resolution images of the ribbons were Photoshopped to extend the edges, therefore ensuring that the original ribbon was fully covered in the printed facsimile. The colours of the ribbons were also altered in Photoshop to brighten and saturate them, as they tend to look slightly dull when printed on the silk.

Despite alterations in Photoshop, the colours were not exact matches to the originals. This was expected given the



**Top left:** Medals awarded to Captain Theobald John Claud Purcell-Buret, before treatment



**Below left:** An example of the brooch bar on which the medals have been swing mounted

**Below right:** The back of the ribbons, after treatment, covered in unprinted white silk



limited range of coloured inks in a standard office printer and was not considered a major issue, as the original ribbons are not visible once covered.

The silk fabric was scoured, ironed and attached to a piece of A4 paper with double-sided tape around the edges. Excess silk was trimmed from the edges. When printing, the paper needed to be fed into the printer through the side tray as feeding it through the drawers caused the printer to jam.

Each facsimile was cut out leaving



**Above:** After treatment

borders large enough to turn around the edges of the original ribbons. A piece of unprinted silk was used to cover the backs of the ribbons and was stitched to the printed facsimile using polyester thread, leaving the pin uncovered so the medals could hang on the mount.

The printed images adhered well to the silk fabric, but I found that they smudged with heavy abrasion. This would not be an issue once the medals are on display as they are completely stationary, however I was slightly concerned as the facsimiles would have to be handled when wrapping the ribbons and some of the gaps between the original ribbons and the bars were very tight.

I resolved this issue by painting a thin layer of Klucel G (5% in deionised water) onto the printed area that would sit under the bar and used strips of Melinex® to help feed the facsimile through these tighter areas. Facsimiles were fitted over attached oak leaves by cutting a slit in the printed silk, painting a thin layer of Klucel G around the edges to prevent fraying and then threading the oak leaf through the slit like a button.

Not all the groups of medals could be wrapped with a facsimile in one piece, particularly those groups where the medals overlap each other. The very close proximity of the suspender bars and rings made wrapping the ribbons difficult, even with such a flexible material. I overcame this challenge by printing these facsimiles in several pieces, which meant that the ribbons were not completely encased in the silk, but I did extend the edges of the ribbons in Photoshop to ensure that the originals were covered and protected from light exposure. Again, I coated the raw edges with Klucel G so that the silk would not fray.

### Reflections

This project was successful as the medal ribbons are now covered and protected from further light exposure with facsimiles that, under low-level gallery lighting, look convincing to the untrained eye. However, the project was not as quick and straightforward as I initially thought it would be.

## I would recommend this technique as a cost-effective process for creating facsimiles for a small number of medal ribbons

Printing onto the fabric was far more challenging than expected, as the fabric needed to be as flat as possible on the paper. This was difficult to achieve as pulled too tight, the fabric would cause the paper edges to curl and jam the printer and too loose, the fabric would wrinkle in the printer resulting in a distorted image. I found that the printer struggled with sheets of paper that weren't new, so any attempts to adjust or reuse the silk covered sheets generally caused the printer to jam.

This unfortunately meant that the project was slightly more resource heavy than I had hoped though, wherever possible, smaller remnants

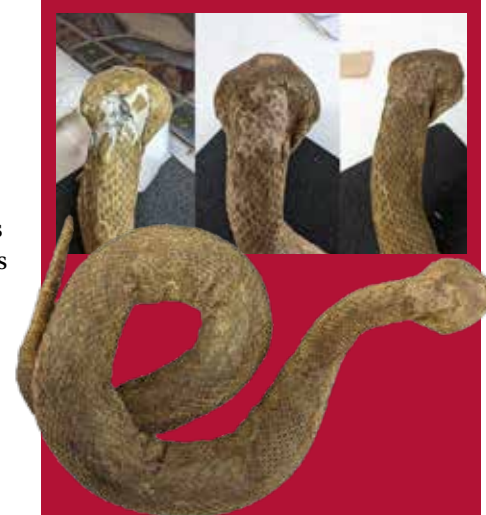
of silk were used to back the covered original ribbons.

Reflecting on the project after seeing the medals reinstalled in the gallery, I wish I had extended the printed silk to also cover the back of the ribbons instead of using white unprinted silk. I was so focused on the fronts of the ribbons, I didn't fully consider that seeing white silk on the back of the ribbons would easily identify them as facsimiles, even though they are obscured through the frosted glass. I did completely cover two of the single ribbons, which were some of the last that I worked on, and I feel that these are more successful in their overall look.

Despite the challenges, I would recommend this technique as a cost-effective process for creating facsimiles for a small number of medal ribbons. However, for larger projects I am now curious about the potential of iron-on transfers and whether these would provide an easier and slightly faster approach to this type of printed facsimile. I initially thought transfers might look too plastic or shiny, though I would now consider testing this method.

### Other applications

Aisling's colleague, Rachel Roberts, an Object Conservator at RMG, has used the same method with Japanese tissue paper to infill areas of loss on a taxidermy puff adder snake captured by the crew of HMS *Terrible*. Scan the QR code below to read her blog, *Preserving Hiss-story: conserving a taxidermy snake*.



**Above:** Rachel Roberts at RMG used the same method with Japanese tissue paper on a taxidermy snake



PHOTOS RACHEL ROBERTS, RMG

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Aisling Macken** is a Textile Conservator and joined RMG in 2019. She gained an MPhil in Textile Conservation from the University of Glasgow in 2017. After graduation, Aisling completed a one-year HLF-funded Icon internship at the Bowes Museum, followed by contracts at the University of Glasgow for *Situating Pacific Barkcloth in Time and Place*, the V&A, and the Imperial War Museum.



# NEWS FROM ICON'S GROUPS AND NETWORKS

## REFLECTING ON THE 'WEAVING WAVES' SYMPOSIUM AT THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM



The Weaving Waves: The History and Conservation of Maritime Tapestries

symposium held at the National Maritime Museum in January provided a rare exploration of maritime tapestry as a genre in the 16th and 17th centuries. It covered commissioning and designing a war scene, the costs of production and the consequences of late payment, through to the interpretation of the design by the weavers and the impact of those decisions on the long-term care of the tapestry.

By the end of the day, the 62-strong in-person audience, with more online, came to see that these tapestries were first and foremost political documents, full of action, from war correspondents capturing events first hand in boats sailing in the thick of the battle. With images of our current wars raging in

our heads, suddenly these battles felt much more real and immediate.

The talks were largely divided between curatorial research in the morning and conservation papers in the afternoon. Curators discussed the reasons for choosing to depict these battles and to use tapestry as the medium for this, not just in their papers but also in the excellent discussion sessions led by Helen Wyld and Ksynia Marko ACR, Chair of Icon Textiles Group. They concluded that there were three overriding reasons: tapestries continued to carry considerable status as an art form, commissioning them supported the tapestry industry in both England and Holland, and their scale and opulence reflected the battles' importance (and that of the commissioners).

The designers of all four sets of

tapestries – the Armada (1588), the Zeeland Tapestries (1593-1604), the Battle of Lowestoft (1665) and the Battle of Solebay (1672) – were all well-known Dutch marine artists, highly knowledgeable and skilled in illustrating ships and their manoeuvres. But it is in their translation by the weavers into the woven form that particularly astounds.

The Flemish weavers, in both Holland and England, were able to capture the smallest details. The use of silk and metal thread as well as wool further enhances their impact but also creates structural issues for conservators as the tapestries age. Papers from Alice Young and Zenzie Tinker ACR reflected on these dilemmas and offered solutions.

Attendees were encouraged by Koenraad Brosens to "look" closely and to "dance" in front of a tapestry, to make sure we didn't miss any detail. Certainly, conservators have the best seat but everyone should do this to ensure the artform is fully enjoyed and appreciated.

At the end of the symposium, a discussion on tapestry conservation, which requires specialist training, revealed that tapestry conservators are scarce. For such important objects to survive on display and be accessible, it is crucial to highlight this need and ensure training is available for any conservator interested in this medium.

**With thanks to Maria Jordan ACR, Trustee of Icon**



## PAINTINGS GROUP LEARNS NEW INFORMATION ABOUT VERMEER'S TECHNIQUES AT ONLINE EVENT



At a special online event held in November last year, the Rijksmuseum's technical research team shared their key findings from a comprehensive study of Vermeer's works that will span five years, from 2020-25.

Focusing on 37 paintings, the team's multifaceted approach, which incorporated non-invasive imaging techniques and micro-sample analysis, aimed to unveil the intricacies of Johannes Vermeer's painting techniques, canvas supports, compositional changes and pigment choices.

Ige Versylpe highlighted the importance of weave maps in grasping Vermeer's canvas supports. Computer-generated weave maps identified shared canvases in 34 paintings, aiding analysis of cusping patterns to distinguish Vermeer's individual canvas stretching from commercially prepared ones. This insight not only impacted dating but also enhanced understanding of relationships between his paintings.

Francesca Gabrielli's use of Reflectance Imaging Spectroscopy (RIS) illuminated Vermeer's masterpieces, uncovering



**Above:** *The Milkmaid* under the microscope

hidden details and layering in paintings such as *The Milkmaid*. RIS also offered chemical composition insights. Collaboration with the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister and MA-XRF outlined distinct stages in the development of *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*, showcasing Vermeer's quest for the perfect composition.

Anna Krekeler's exploration of Vermeer's compositional evolution, employing advanced imaging like RIS and MA-XRF, revealed intricate changes in works such as *The Little Street*. This collaborative effort

enriched comprehension of Vermeer's artistic choices and the evolution of his compositions.

Annelise van Loon's research delved into the technical aspects of Vermeer's palette, emphasising his use of blues and greens. Analysis of nine paintings highlighted trends in Vermeer's technique, showcasing the progression in his use of pigments, aiding in dating and attribution.

The collaborative effort by the Rijksmuseum's technical research team provided a profound comprehension of Vermeer's artistic career. Techniques such as weave maps, RIS and advanced imaging reshaped our understanding of Vermeer's canvas practices, unveiled hidden details and illuminated the evolution of his compositions and palette, enriching our ability to interpret and attribute his masterpieces.

• To read a more in-depth review by Katarina published on

Icon's website, please scan the QR code

**With thanks to Katarina Trajkovic**



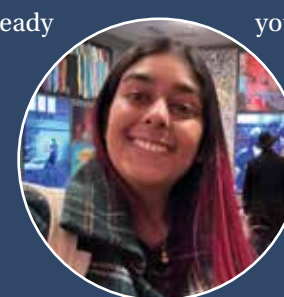
RIJKSMUSEUM, KELLY SCHENK

## EMERGING PROFESSIONALS NETWORK (EPN) DISCUSSES ITS INSPIRING CAREERS TALKS AND UPCOMING INCLUSIVE EVENTS



If you have not already attended one of EPN's Inspiring Careers talks, then you are warmly invited. This series aims to inspire our members by showcasing the diverse backgrounds and career paths of established conservators. Our speakers discuss their careers, how and why they entered conservation and their favourite projects as well as the challenges they've encountered. They also offer advice for emerging professionals. Check our events page on Icon's website and our social media for upcoming dates.

We would also like to introduce



you to EPN's Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Camella Ramjet (left). Camella has worked in the heritage sector since 2015 and has held various roles, from community partnerships to collection management. Camella currently works at UCL, the Royal Collection Trust and the British Museum.

She recently completed an internship in Preventive Conservation at English Heritage, after graduating with an MA in Principles of Conservation at UCL. Camella was elected student officer for UCL's disabled students as well as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

representative. Her research focuses on exploring decolonial routes to contemporary conservation.

Camella is currently busy planning a regular People of Colour, Meet and Greet event – a space open to those who are part of the POC (people of colour) community in conservation. She can be found at @CamellaCurates on X, or join her Facebook group, Conservation in Colour. The first event will be in August so keep an eye out for more details.

Finally, would you like to inspire emerging conservators by sharing your story? We would love to hear from you. Contact us through our social media or by email (iconEPN@gmail.com).

**With thanks to Carola Del Mese**



## BOOK AND PAPER GROUP MEMBERS ENJOY PRESENTATIONS AND HANDS-ON WORK AT BINDING SYMPOSIUM



In October, The National Archives, UK (TNA), held a one-day symposium, Filling in the Blanks: The Genesis of the English Stationery Binding, where regional and international conservators and historians came together to present on and discuss the evolution of late medieval English stationery binding.

From the evolution of roll to codex, to inspiration from 14th-century Italian book structures, the symposium provided participants the opportunity to view the stationery binding more holistically, from both a historical/contextual and materiality perspective.

Following the talks, those attending had the opportunity to construct their own 16th-century, limp parchment binding, complete with parchment tackets and additional sewn-in sections: a proper bookbinding introduction for the participating historians.

The symposium was the culmination of two years' worth of research, surveying and analysis, and was the perfect representation of a successful collaboration between multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional specialists.

Sarah Graham, Head of Conservation, Public Record Office of Northern



**Left:** Participants begin work on their books with Holly, one of the workshop instructors, on hand to assist

Ireland, attended the symposium and shared her thoughts on the day. "The symposium was a delight for the senses. We listened to presentations from inter-disciplinary speakers, saw examples of English stationery bindings from the TNA collections and gained an understanding on how the bindings were constructed in the practical afternoon session.

"I particularly enjoyed the discussion of how structures were formed and shaped through their daily use by government and business. For example, the clerk adding to rolls of parchment with simple, practical stitches and sections removed/added to Italian merchant ledgers, when and if needed.

"Detailed analysis by the

speakers regarding different formats of medieval record keeping demonstrated the informal behaviours of the people who created these documents. It was a great example of the rich understanding that comes from the collaboration between historians and conservators.

"In the practical session we made a model that highlighted many of the features found on a stationery binding. The materials, demonstrations and handout precisely captured the interesting structure of the tradesman's account book. An amazing way to finish the day!"

**With thanks to Katerina Williams, Workshop Instructor, and Sarah Graham**



**Left:** Objects made of plastic, such as Mrs Potato Head from the Museum of London's plastics identification collection, are becoming a bigger part of our cultural heritage

## MMN CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS NUMBER OF SPECIALISMS ENCOUNTERING PLASTIC



In December, the Modern Materials Network (MMN) had a half-day Christmas conference, with five talks. Dr Brenda Keenaghan, one of the most experienced conservation researchers in plastics, started by talking about using the MoDiP (Museum of Design in Plastics) travelling toolkit and the simplified flowchart she uses for identifying plastics.

This was followed by talks from conservators from the Imperial War Museum and Natural History

Museum about discovering objects that had deteriorated in storage. As there was little information available about these objects, some detective work was required alongside conservation.

British Museum conservators came next with a talk about storage. This included selecting materials for cool or freezing storage, something we'll undoubtedly see more of in the future as we look at the sustainability of storage choices in the long-term.

The National Archives provided an

overview of the modern materials found in their collection and the problems these present for long-term preservation, and the last talk of the day was by Isabella Rossi, about the treatment of wool to make it non-felting (superwash).

The talks were all excellent and interesting, and showcased the wide variety of conservation specialisms that are coming across modern materials. Any conservators not yet embracing these materials should probably do so sooner rather than later, as they are becoming a bigger part of our heritage realities.

Looking to the future, the Network is growing up to become a Group, with the committee still in the process of transforming and getting paperwork in order. We are planning our very first AGM so please keep an eye out for this and other forthcoming events in the spring/summer.

Finally, we were sad to see one of our founding members, Vanessa Applebaum ACR, leave the MMN committee in November. She has returned to the United States to become Director of Conservation at the Toledo Museum of Art and we wish her all the best.

**With thanks to Jannicke Langfeldt ACR**

## SCOTLAND GROUP REFLECTS ON THE 2023 ANNUAL PLENDERLEITH LECTURE



The Icon Scotland Group's 26th Annual Plenderleith Memorial

Lecture was held in November at Historic Environment Scotland's national centre for conservation, the Engine Shed in Stirling. The speaker was Professor Christina Young (right) from the University of Glasgow.

Christina began with an



introduction to the Kelvin Centre for Conservation and Cultural Heritage Research, which is the only provider of post-graduate conservation degrees in Scotland.

The centre's programmes are about the making, meaning and conservation of cultural heritage, and they include a Technical Art History MSc, a Textile Conservation MPhil, a Dress and

Textile Histories MLitt and short post-graduate courses in modern materials artefacts. The audience was particularly interested to hear the plans for the new Book and Paper Conservation MPhil which will begin in September 2025; students will specialise in either books and archival materials, or paper, and the paper specialism will have a particular focus on photographic media. The curriculum is being shaped with input from Jocelyn Cummings, who led the



**Above:** Technical Art History students at the Kelvin Centre

successful course at Camberwell.

Christina went on to consider what growth for conservation provision should look like: increased capacity

and posts is obviously crucial; more opportunities for training at entry level and continuing professional development are important; and the sector requires increased advocacy and agency. She referenced work that has been undertaken to understand the current situation, including the Icon Conservation Labour Market Intelligence report in June 2022. She also explained the factors hindering growth in conservation education, such as the costing of posts against student numbers.

In the latter part of the lecture, Christina outlined some of the

previous and current activities at the Kelvin Centre. These include research projects (often in collaboration with other organisations), public engagement initiatives and guest lecturing. She finished with some suggestions for how to diversify the student body and develop the research programme.

All in all, it was a passionate and inspiring lecture that raised awareness of the fantastic work taking place at the Kelvin Centre, and the crucial role it plays in delivering conservation education in a national and international context.

**With thanks to Isobel Griffin ACR**



# ICON'S PEOPLE

## Welcome, new members

We would like to wish a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in November and December 2023 and January 2024. We look forward to seeing you at an Icon event soon!

### Student

- Zoe Devin Bell
- Gaynor Brown
- Victoria Chalmers
- Sharon Fickeissen
- Emma Foster
- Sasha Galbraith
- Katherine Giordano
- Erin Grant
- Jonathan Hill
- Bryn Kelley
- Jesse Lundervold
- Alexandra Meek
- Kathryn Miller
- Reem Nader
- Joanne Rogers
- Erin Thompson
- Eloise Thorogood
- Daphne Wu
- Chia-Chen Monica Yen
- Soyeon Yun

### Mimi Deutsch

- Christine E McCarthy
- Anna Guy
- Elaine Hallett
- Cricket Harbeck
- Brooke Oakley
- Edward Sault

### Pathway

- Kieran Batchelor
- Angel Blanco-Lapaz
- Cailin Cser
- Richard Hillam
- Ada Kokot
- Alexandra Lawson
- Neha Shah

### Supporter

- Sara Crofts
- Margo Gavle-Prescott
- Cathy O'Donnell
- Gayle Ryon

### Associate

- Ralph Charlwood
- Essie Cox
- Charley-Lois Davis
- Genevieve DeMille Kiesel



Left: Maria Jordan ACR  
Right: David Orr ACR

## ICON WELCOMES NEW TRUSTEES

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to Icon's Board of Trustees, whose unstinting energy and support helps us to deliver Icon's strategic objectives, champion best practice in the sector, and represent the needs and interests of our members. In this issue, we introduce two new Trustees who joined us in 2023...

### Maria Jordan ACR

**Location:** Norfolk

**Work status:** Consultant

Maria has specialised in textile conservation and collections care in historic houses throughout her career. Following a career in finance, she gained her Postgraduate Diploma in Textiles Conservation at The Courtauld Institute of Art, joining Historic Royal Palaces in 2000. After 16 years, she took up the post of Studio Manager for the National Trust Textile Conservation Studio and subsequently was appointed the National Conservator for Textiles.

Maria was Accredited in 2007, has chaired the Icon Textile Group and is an Accreditation Assessor.

Commenting on her new role, Maria told *Iconnect* magazine: "I am delighted to have become a Trustee of Icon, having joined the organisation in 1997. I am looking forward to working with my fellow Trustees and promoting our profession. Being a Trustee is not only about supporting Icon in the current environment but also about looking to the future, analysing anticipated risks and planning for the unknown."

"For me, training and education are central to our profession. Icon plays a pivotal role through advocacy, internships and accreditation, ensuring our conservation work is highlighted and the benefits are understood. Internships have a central role to play as they are the invaluable link between training and work. Safeguarding training posts is therefore essential for succession planning and the long-term sustainability of the profession."

"As an Accreditation Assessor, I believe Icon's accreditation programme celebrates a conservator-restorer's honed skills after several years of work and gives potential client trust in the Conservation Register."



### David Orr ACR

**Location:** Northern Ireland

**Work status:** Employed

David is Castle and Collections Manager at Hillsborough Castle for Historic Royal Palaces. As an accredited conservator he has overseen the collections at the castle for more than eight years, building up experience that ranges from collections management and salvage to supervising on-site treatment projects.

After graduating from West Dean College, David set up a business in metalwork conservation in Northern Ireland, where he gained experience in restoring, maintaining and operating steam locomotives from a young age.

David is a keen advocate for conservation, being engaged and challenged on completing projects that will help to protect collections but also highlighting conservation as a discipline.

"Coming from Northern Ireland, in the past decade I have witnessed there is a growing interest in conservation as a discipline, which I feel others in the country should be encouraged to appreciate. Becoming a Trustee allows me to fulfil my passion for conservation and heritage, and to represent Northern Ireland's conservation scene on Icon's Board. I am looking forward to developing networks with fellow conservators and helping Icon move forward in promoting conservation and establishing itself further in NI."

## IN MEMORY OF DR JILLEEN NADOLNY (1964–2023)

In December 2023, friends and colleagues were shocked and saddened to learn of the untimely death of Dr Jilleen Marie Nadolny, less than a month after being diagnosed with advanced stomach cancer at the age of 59.

Her obituary in *Forbes* magazine (28 December 2023) by Alexandra Begman covers her very significant contributions to Technical Art History and her ability to combine knowledge from art history, science and conservation, as well as her role as a researcher, educator and linguist. Further obituaries in newsletters for the International Institute of Conservation (IIC) and the Art Technological Source Research Group (a working group of the International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation) by Dr Joyce Townsend ACR describe Jilleen's educational background and work history, and attest to her many accomplishments including her wide knowledge of Western art which spanned the mediaeval period through to contemporary works.

Despite the demands of her position as Director of the UK branch of Art Discovery, Jilleen found time to publish academic papers and most notably contributed three chapters to the highly authoritative *Conservation of Easel Paintings* (edited by Hill Stoner and Rushfield, 2012 and 2021).

Her expertise in historical research led to her being the principal author of Chapter 1 – Art Technological

Source Research [...] and the sole author of Chapter 21 – A History of Early Scientific Examination and Analysis of Painting Materials [...] as well as Chapter 34 – History of Visual Compensation for Paintings.

Jilleen's academic expertise, communication skills and natural poise meant that her lectures and presentations were well received and influential, not only within the disciplines of conservation-restoration and conservation science, but also in the field of art history, where she reached a wider community of curators, collectors and dealers.

Jilleen will be sadly missed, not only for her knowledge and scholarship, but also for her kindness, generosity and delightful sense of humour.

**With thanks to Dr Leslie Carlyle, Associate Professor (retired)**



Above: Dr Jilleen Nadolny on vacation in France, summer 2023



# A TRIBUTE TO RICHARD LITHGOW ACR FIIC

**Richard Lithgow, who died unexpectedly on 9 October 2023, was an Icon Accredited Conservator-Restorer and Fellow of the International Institute of Conservation, with over 40 years' experience conserving wall paintings and other painted surfaces of all periods and styles.**

With Mark Perry ACR, Richard was a founding director of the Perry Lithgow Partnership (PLP) established in 1983. He was also a Trustee of the Eve Baker Trust, maintaining the extensive archive of conservation work carried out by the Trust from the 1950s to the 1980s.

PLP has completed more than 200 conservation projects in cathedrals, churches and historic houses in all parts of the British Isles. These projects are a roll call for many of the most significant buildings in this country including Rochester and Chichester Cathedrals, St Alban's Abbey and Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, the Palace of Westminster, Kensington and Hampton Court Palaces and several Oxford Colleges.

A highlight is the major project to record and conserve the entire painted ceiling in the nave at Peterborough Cathedral between 1999 and 2005. Richard's drive and motivation came to the fore in grappling with the level of documentation required, which was both immense and unique in England at the time. Richard had to teach himself the necessary computer skills to master the technical challenges of, amongst many things, multi-layered graphics. The project also demonstrated the high level of Richard's practical conservation skills. His work on re-laying extensive flaking paint on the figure of St Peter was exemplary.

PLP's professional standing grew through such work and was recognised in 2010 with the Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation for their treatment of Sir James Thornhill's 18th-century staircase scheme at Hanbury Hall, Worcestershire. Richard's typically methodical and practical approach to the 'Death Reawakened' project to conserve the internationally significant late 15th/early



**Above:** Richard Lithgow

**Below:** Richard working on Peterborough Cathedral Nave ceiling, c.1999

16th-century wall paintings at the Guild Chapel in Stratford-upon-Avon, led to PLP winning the prestigious 2018 SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) John Betjeman Award.

Richard also used his business and conservation skills in support of the profession. For Icon, he joined the Stone and Wall Paintings Group in 2005, became Treasurer in 2006 and then took on the role of Co-Chair with David Odgers ACR for two years from 2010. During that time there were regular conferences including: Going Beneath

the Surface: Conservation of Architectural Plasterwork; Grouting; Graveyard Slot; and Problem Stones 2. The committee was very active, with everyone getting involved in conference organisation, thanks to his infectious enthusiasm. Richard was also a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Reader for Icon between January 2010 and April 2018. During this time, he read numerous CPD forms ensuring that the standards were applied fairly and that feedback was always constructive.

Richard supported students and young conservators with the placements offered and supervised by PLP and he continued to mentor them throughout their careers. Most recently PLP has provided a much-needed work opportunity at Boughton House for two Ukrainian conservators who have escaped the conflict back home.

Richard's knowledge, skills and interest will be sorely missed by the whole conservation community and not least by his business partner Mark Perry ACR and his wife Katy Lithgow ACR FIIC.

**With thanks to Samuel Whittaker ACR and Katy Lithgow ACR FIIC**

*A full obituary by Sarah Staniforth was published in the December-January issue of IIC News in Conservation. This shorter version emphasises Richard's contributions to Icon.*



## WHO GOT THE JOB?

In this regular feature, we look at someone who has successfully filled a work opportunity advertised through Icon

**Name:** Anna Gallwey

**Position:** Conservator, Library and Archive (one-year fixed term, full time)

**Employer:** Oxford Conservation Consortium (OCC)



### Tell us a little bit about your background...

I am an early career book conservator from Ireland with a background in fine art printmaking. I studied at West Dean College and graduated in 2022.

### What attracted you to this new role?

After graduating, I had the opportunity to take part in an Icon internship, where I spent three months at the Bodleian Libraries and three months at OCC. While I was at OCC, I loved working as part of a collaborative team and was able to gain experience on a wide variety of materials from the member colleges' collections. The combination of the team environment and the fascinating collections coming in and out of the workshop were key aspects that attracted me to this role.

### What does your job involve?

The OCC is a registered charity and has 16 members, all of which are



**Above and left:** Anna Gallwey working with 17th-century printed volumes at OCC

is a relatively modern binding for OCC, although certainly no less complex! The materials involved are particularly fragile and require an extremely light touch. I am also involved in several re-housing projects including the creation of bespoke boxes for parchment charters with large wax seals.

### What do you enjoy most about your new job?

I love that every day is different and that I am always learning from the team and other connections.

### What top tips would you give someone applying for a similar position?

I would recommend really being yourself and trusting that if it's meant to be, it will be! There will always be other opportunities so try not to be too hard on yourself if one doesn't work out.





# IN THE FRAME

**Jane Thompson-Webb ACR**, Conservation Team Leader at Birmingham Museums Trust, talks about conservation at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

## Please tell us a little bit about Birmingham Museums Trust...

The Trust cares for nearly one million objects across nine sites, with the bulk of the collection stored at the Museum Collection Centre (MCC). While we cover pretty much every type of collection imaginable, we're particularly well known for our pre-Raphaelite paintings and drawings and, of course, the Staffordshire Hoard.

The buildings also cover a range of time periods, from a medieval ruined manor house and Tudor yeoman farmer's house to a 20th-century warehouse store and a 21st-century science museum.

## What does your role as Conservation Team Leader involve?

Team Leader seems very grand as we're a small team made up of two object conservators, two preventive conservators (of which I'm one), a museum photographer, a collections and storage officer, and a site support officer for the MCC. In my role I also apportion jobs to the conservators; set the programme and manage the work of the other team members; lead on IPM and the emergency response plan; support the climate action plan; sit on a committee that discusses loan requests and potential acquisitions; contribute to the team that manages Birmingham's public art; and act as the conservation contact for exhibitions and projects.

## Who does your conservation work?

In the 1970s, when the conservation department was set up, there were 18 conservators covering all the material types in the collection. Today we have



**Top:** *The Star of Bethlehem* prior to being reglazed and conserved

**Middle:** Claire Ridley ACR working on the frame of *The Star of Bethlehem* in 2022

**Bottom:** Reinstallation of the artwork after being reglazed and conserved

just two generalist conservators who do the bulk of the work and if we need specialist conservation such as paintings, paper, furniture, frames and textiles, we call on conservators principally in the West Midlands. This cuts down on transport and means we have a group of conservators with whom we have a relationship. The Trust also has a policy to use conservators with ACR status unless none are available.

## Tell us about conservation work carried out by Claire Ridley ACR...

Claire was a member of the conservation department but since going self employed, she is now our go-to frames and decorative surfaces conservator.

The biggest project Claire has worked on for us is the frame for *The Star of Bethlehem* by Edward Burne-Jones which was received into the collection at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery in 1891. Its Victorian plate glass was highly reflective and also made the piece difficult to move, so it was reglazed with Tru Vue Optium Acrylic®. Claire increased the build up to accommodate the new non-reflective acrylic and carried out conservation on the frame and slip. This sounds very straightforward, but the frame measures an incredible 2.9 x 4.2 metres. Work that would normally take a few days took several weeks, as it needed to be completed on-site, with limited access to the museum due to essential building work taking place. Unfortunately, no-one can see it at the moment, but it should be revealed in all its glory in 2025, as part of a phased reopening.

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS TRUST

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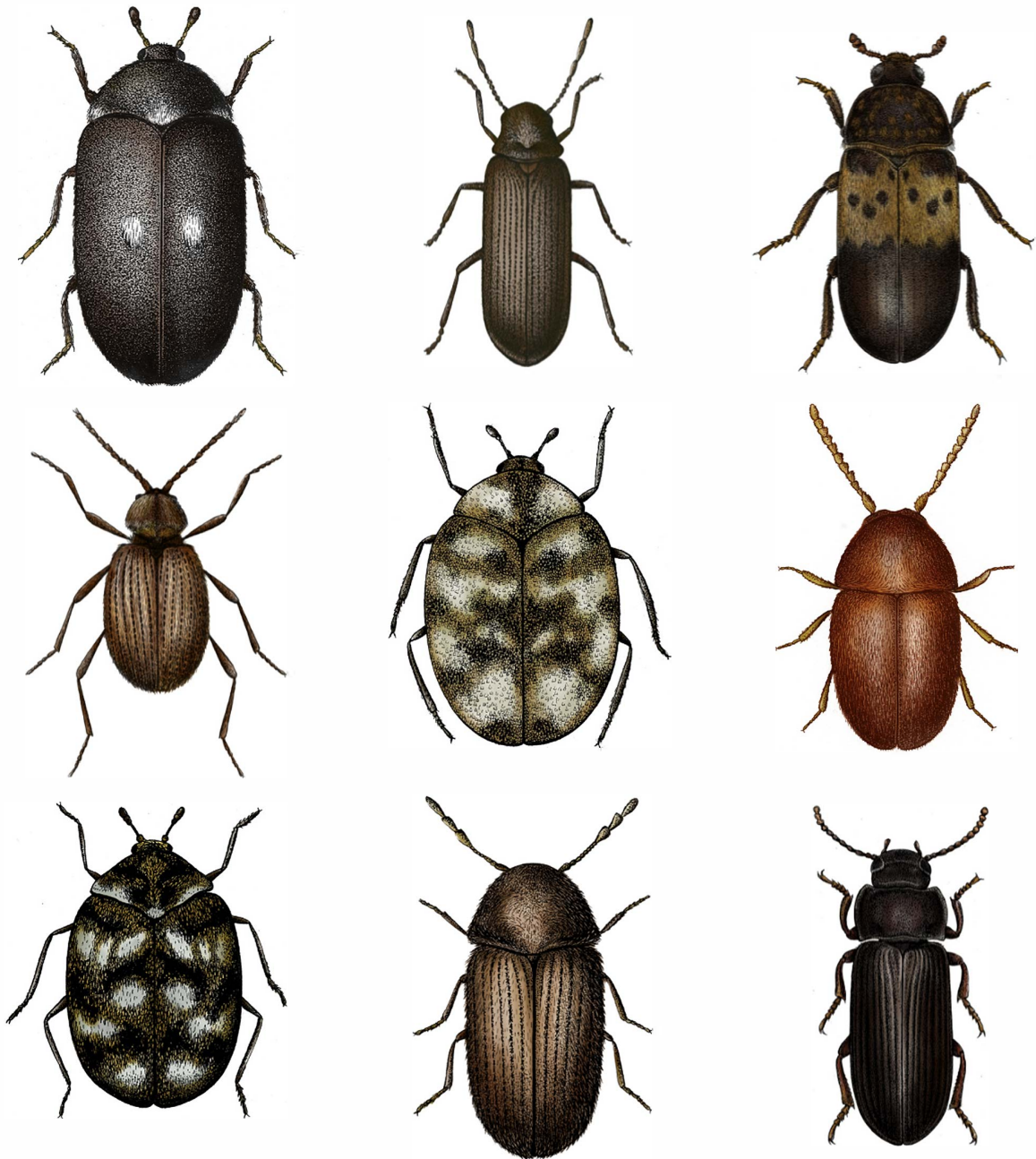
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