

## Time for collaboration

---

### Also in this issue

Celebrating a forty year career • A devotional textile • A new CIC

# CPD

# CAN BE SIMPLE.

Becoming and remaining a successful conservator requires knowledge and skills which develop over time. By identifying your strengths and weaknesses and creating your own personal and professional goals it is possible to plan a long and rewarding career in conservation. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an essential part of becoming and remaining Accredited.

**But CPD doesn't have to be complicated or difficult.**

**We've compiled some quick ideas for your CPD - whether you have 5 minutes, 1 hour or 1 day.**

*I've got...*

**5**

*min*

## 5 MINUTES

- Take a virtual coffee break and talk to another conservator about your work
- Join an Icon Group, Network or Icon's online Discord community
- Visit the Icon website to look up potential future CPD activities
- Register for an on-line event or course
- Search for any CPD grants available
- Share an idea or resource with a peer
- Identify a skill or competency you would like to develop
- Ask a colleague for feedback

**60**

*min*

## 1 HOUR

- Fill out your Upgraded Listing on the Conservation Register
- Read relevant articles, newsletters, books, websites
- Attend a webinar or virtual seminar
- Respond to a debate on social media
- Record and reflect on your CPD activities in your CPD learning log
- Carry out online research or study a relevant topic
- Consider writing an academic article
- Write an article for Icon's publications
- Research conferences to submit an abstract to
- Peer review an article or find a book to review
- Write a case study for the Icon website
- Chair an on-line team/committee meeting
- If you are an ACR, consider becoming an Icon mentor
- Listen to a TED Talk
- Practice your IT skills by taking software tutorials
- Teach a colleague something online

**8**

*HOURS*

## 1 DAY

- Participate in an online event or workshop such as the many Icon courses planned for the year
- Virtually shadow someone by sitting in on online meetings
- Take a stress management e-learning course
- Present or network at a conference, e.g. Icon's Twitter Conference
- Plan or run an online course or event
- Plan and pitch a research project
- Volunteer in a related field
- Learn a new craft for pleasure

The Institute of Conservation is a membership organisation and charity which brings together those with a passion for the care of cultural heritage. Icon raises awareness of the cultural, social and economic value of caring for heritage and champions high standards of conservation.

Find out more about CPD at:  
<https://icon.org.uk/training/continuing-professional-development>

APRIL 2021 Issue 93



## From the Editor

There is a lot packed into this issue, from the launch of a new Community Interest Company to the treatment of a large gilded Hindu textile, whilst the treatment of a clock brings together students of two separate specialisms: horological and furniture conservation. The second of our 'science bites' – a heritage science research summary – covers a new method to quantify cellulose acetate degradation in historic artefacts and we share in the Bodleian's celebration of their long-serving conservator Robert Minte ACR. And there is news: about Standards, about Icon's Groups, about the continuing impact of coronavirus and an archive on the move.

What links this seemingly disparate content is explored by our Chief Executive Sara Crofts in her column about our (in)visibility, namely, stories. In Icon News – and on all Icon's platforms - we celebrate our story tellers, the stories we have to tell, the way we discover and uncover them and how we preserve them for everyone as carefully and professionally as we can. So do consider giving your stories a wider audience and if you feel insecure in your writing skills, we'll help. What may seem routine and bog-standard to you is important and fascinating to the wider world. Give it a go!

## Lynette Gill



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Institute of Conservation  
106 -109 Saffron Hill  
London EC1N 8QS  
T +44(0)20 3142 6799

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

Chief Executive  
Sara Crofts  
sara.crofts@icon.org.uk

Conservation Register  
membership@icon.org.uk  
www.conservationregister.com

ISSN 1749-8988

### Icon News

Editor  
Lynette Gill  
news@icon.org.uk

Production designer  
Lee Holland  
leerh1974@gmail.com

Printers  
Calderstone Design & Print Limited  
www.calderstone.com

Advertising  
Display and Recruitment  
020 3142 6789  
Advertising@icon.org.uk



### 2 NEWS

From the Chief Executive, policy briefing, Groups news, European standards news

### 12 PEOPLE

### 14 MAN AND BOY AT THE BODELIAN

Celebrating the career of Robert Minte

### 19 AN IMPACT ON HERITAGE

A new Community Interest Company is born

### 21 ON THE MOVE

Lambeth Palace Library has a new home

### 22 HERITAGE SCIENCE BITES

New research quantifies cellulose acetate degradation

### 24 REVIEWS

*Insiders Outsiders*; an emerging professionals event; a knitted textiles conference

### 27 IN PRACTICE

Conserving a gilded Hindu textile

### 32 THE EMERGING CONSERVATOR

Furniture & horological conservation join forces



Cover photo  
Close-up during treatment of the movement of the George III longcase clock at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation © Ben Hall

Disclaimer:  
Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the editors and Icon Board of Trustees can accept no responsibility for the content expressed in Icon News; it is solely that of individual contributors

### Deadlines for adverts and editorial

For the August 2021 issue  
Tuesday 1 June

For the October 2021 issue  
Monday 2 August

Icon is registered as a Charity in England and Wales (Number 1108380) and in Scotland (Number SC039336) and is a Company Limited by Guarantee, (Number 05201058)



# professional update

## From the Chief Executive



### Sara Crofts draws lessons from Sutton Hoo

Everyone seems to be talking about Sutton Hoo at the moment. Or, more accurately, they actually are discussing *The Dig*, the major Netflix film about the dramatic discovery in 1939 of the Anglo-Saxon grave and artefacts in a Suffolk field, which was launched to widespread critical acclaim in January. For a while, the film was Netflix's 'most-watched' in the UK and, as a result, we are in the midst of a golden

moment for colleagues in the archaeology profession, and also for those who care for the objects recovered from archaeological excavations.

Interest in Sutton Hoo and its story has surged due to the popularity of the film, with #SuttonHoo trending on Twitter at one stage. *The Guardian*<sup>1</sup> reported that traffic to the British Museum's webpages featuring the Sutton Hoo treasures had tripled. A blog about the discovery, written by Sue Brunning, curator of the early medieval collection at the British Museum 'crashed' under the weight of interest. And her (excellent) video about the Sutton Hoo helmet and its reconstruction from many fragments had been viewed 650,000 times in the three weeks since the mid-January launch of the film.

*The most recent reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo helmet was carried out by conservator Nigel Williams of the British Museum. In the words of Rupert Bruce-Mitford,<sup>2</sup> who oversaw the work, the challenge faced by Williams was 'a jigsaw puzzle without any sort of picture on the lid of the box'.*

*Our Icon Ceramics & Glass Group now awards a biennial prize in honour of Nigel Williams, recognising his significant contribution to the conservation profession.*

Sue Brunning, who also advised the actors and filmmakers working on the production, commented in *The Guardian* article: 'I knew the film would be popular among fellow archaeologists and people interested in period dramas and that sort of thing, but it seems to have transcended those usual audiences and really touched a nerve with people.'<sup>3</sup>

As someone who 'dabbled' (with apologies to members of the Icon Archaeology Group!) in archaeology in my student days, I am delighted to see the story about the discovery of Sutton Hoo hitting the headlines. At a time when cuts to university funding threaten the viability of archaeology courses in higher education it is important to encourage wider public enthusiasm for the discipline. It is also heartening to see that there is a genuine public appetite to learn

about processes of excavation, conservation and display. This confirms what we all know: history matters. People do care about their past, and they care about ensuring that it is properly looked after. This is the perfect opportunity to champion the work of conservators and the value that they bring to society.

So how do we, as the conservation profession, make effective use of this moment in the spotlight?

First, we need more conservators to emerge from behind the scenes and take their place on the public stage or, more probably, in front of the video camera. And I would dearly like to ban the oft-used phrase 'behind closed doors'. While I understand the marketing lure of offering exclusive access to places that are normally off-limits to the public, and I accept that this works well in terms of selling studio tours in larger institutions, I worry that it reinforces the damaging impression that conservators' work should be seen (once complete) but not heard (about).

Amazing outcomes are achieved in your conservation studios, but the public only gets a rare glimpse into this fascinating world. So, I personally would be keen for more visitors to museums and galleries to be able to see the ongoing work of conservators and to understand the importance of the role you play.

The National Trust's Conservation Studio<sup>4</sup> at Knole, supported by capital funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, is a notable example of course, and has offered an insight into the breadth of the conservation profession to many visitors to the stately home. The People's History Museum<sup>5</sup> in Manchester also has a window in gallery two that allows visitors to see conservation in action.

And our Professional Development team grasped the opportunity to showcase conservation studios as part of last year's Heritage Open Days through our Virtual Open Studios event.<sup>6</sup> But I am sure that there is much more that we could collectively do to bring conservation more fully into the limelight – and your ideas are welcome. Please share your thoughts with us.

Interestingly, the broader theme of visibility and profile-raising has cropped up in several other conversations recently. Staff and trustees are starting to think about the big ideas that will shape the next Icon Strategy (2022-2027) and key ideas emerging from the early discussions have included the issue of visibility.

A common thread is the desire to refocus on our aim for conservation and the conservation professions to be properly valued, both in terms of genuine recognition of the importance of the work that you do, but also in terms of achieving levels of pay that acknowledge the skills and expertise of professional conservators and heritage scientists.

But for clients, decision-makers and the public to value us, we first of all need to make sure that they know that we exist. We have made good progress on this front over the last few years, but I would renew my plea for all Icon members to be vocal champions and advocates for conservation and for our profession.

Stories are the means through which we can engage new audiences and encourage more people to take an interest in

what we do. And having attended many captivating Group and Network events where members talk with passion and conviction about their projects, I know with certainty that conservators are fantastic storytellers.

But, more often than not, we share our stories with our colleagues when we should be sharing them with the public. Happily, the new Icon website is a versatile platform, offering many opportunities for members to contribute articles and videos showcasing conservators and heritage scientists at work. Please let us have your ideas for new and engaging content and we will gladly help you craft a good result.

And, in terms of feeding into the development of the next Icon Strategy, we will be creating opportunities to gather ideas and input from members over the coming months, but I would be glad to hear from you individually if you have a suggestion to make. We recently asked Icon's Board of Trustees to complete the following sentences:

- By 2030 the conservation profession will be....
- By 2030 Icon will be...

If you have answers to these questions, then please share them. Email your statements (be bold! think big!) to me via [feedback@icon.org.uk](mailto:feedback@icon.org.uk).

- 1 [www.theguardian.com/science/2021/feb/05/out-of-the-dark-ages-netflix-film-the-dig-ignites-ballyhoo-about-sutton-hoo](http://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/feb/05/out-of-the-dark-ages-netflix-film-the-dig-ignites-ballyhoo-about-sutton-hoo) Accessed 21.02.2021
- 2 Bruce-Mitford, Rupert (Autumn 1972). *The Sutton Hoo Helmet: A New Reconstruction*. The British Museum Quarterly. British Museum. XXXVI (3-4): 120-130. JSTOR 4423116
- 3 [www.theguardian.com/science/2021/feb/05/out-of-the-dark-ages-netflix-film-the-dig-ignites-ballyhoo-about-sutton-hoo](http://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/feb/05/out-of-the-dark-ages-netflix-film-the-dig-ignites-ballyhoo-about-sutton-hoo) Accessed 21.02.2021
- 4 [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole/features/the-knole-conservation-studio](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole/features/the-knole-conservation-studio) Accessed 21.02.2021
- 5 <https://phm.org.uk/the-conservation-studio/> Accessed 21.02.2021
- 6 <https://icon.org.uk/accreditation/20th-anniversary-of-icon-accreditation/virtual-open-studios.html>

## POLICY BRIEF

### The continued impact of Coronavirus

We published our first Coronavirus Impact report in April 2020. The report illuminated a worrying situation for conservation professionals, with 90% of respondents reporting serious economic consequences arising from lockdown restrictions.

As most of the UK returned to a state of lockdown in November 2020, we launched a second survey to gather further information on how the pandemic was affecting conservators. In order to capture concerns unique to employers and employees, we ran the survey as two separate questionnaires with questions tailored to both groups. We heard from 121 respondents in total, evenly spread between the surveys, representing all UK nations and conservation specialisms.

The study confirmed many of the anecdotes and experiences we'd been hearing from our members and partners throughout the year. The ongoing Coronavirus crisis was continuing to challenge the conservation sector and the people who work in the field in a serious way.

Some of the key findings from our research include:

- The pandemic has severely affected the revenue and operations of conservation businesses. Almost half of business owners reported their revenue had decreased by more than 50% compared to normal expectations for the time of year and a quarter estimated they only had up to three months of viable operational revenue.
- The crisis has also had a considerable impact on the work of employed conservators. Nearly 90% are working at reduced levels compared to before the outbreak, with a

quarter expecting a reduction in their income in 2021.

- Redundancies were more common amongst larger organisations. Only 6% of micro and small business owners had made employees redundant but a third of employed conservators had experienced redundancies within their organisations.
- The outbreak has led to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity amongst conservators. However, employed conservators feel more secure and stable than business owners and the self-employed.
- Loss of income, isolation and job insecurity resulting from the pandemic is affecting the mental health of conservators.

However, there were some positives amongst the data too. Nearly 90% of respondents to the employee survey indicated they were planning to stay within conservation work. Similarly, only 4% of business owners and self-employed workers who took the survey suggested they were planning a move away from the sector, indicating a persistent dedication and commitment to the field. This was in positive contrast to research carried out by Museums Freelance Network in November 2020, which showed that a quarter of museum professionals were planning to look for work outside of the sector.

The results of Icon's research provide vital data about the impact of the pandemic on the conservation profession. Icon will use them to provide evidence for policy briefings, develop effective response strategies and coordinate support for conservators and the wider heritage sector. We will naturally carry on supporting conservators through projects already in the pipeline, including the development of new resources, provision of funding, workforce research and advocacy.



# CORONAVIRUS & CONSERVATION IMPACT STUDY

Feb 2021

## Summary Report

I am grateful to all members who took part in the research or have shared case studies with us through other means.

**Anni Mantyniemi**

Policy and Communications Manager

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### Archaeology Group

The Archaeology Group was delighted with the response to our virtual tour and lecture on the Museum of London Docklands new exhibition *The Havering Hoard: A Bronze Age Mystery* held on 12 February 2021. This online event included a video tour of the gallery, a short talk on the micro-excavation and conservation of the hoard by Pieta Greaves ACR, as well as a discussion of the exhibition and installation process by Kate Sumnall and Luisa Duarte. The event was very well received with over 150 attendees. We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who joined in, our wonderful guest speakers and Archaeology Group committee member Luisa Duarte who organised the event.

Work on *First Aid for Finds* continues following very useful feedback from the group of reviewers on the new format and text for one section. The next review stage on all the text is planned for summer 2021. We are working with RESCUE, our co-publishers, who will be coordinating the work to prepare the final manuscript for publication now planned for 2022.

We are looking forward to hosting more events in the upcoming year including another Twitter Conference in May. We are always looking for ideas for future events and workshops and would love to hear your suggestions. Please contact us using our Group email address: [archgroup.icon@gmail.com](mailto:archgroup.icon@gmail.com) if you have any suggestions. A full review of our Emerging Professionals Zoom Webinar which was held in December 2020 can be found in the reviews section of this issue.

Please watch Iconnect, Twitter (@ICONArchaeology) and the Icon website for further announcements. We always love to hear about your archaeological conservation projects big or small; please tag us and #FindsFriday in your posts and follow us on Twitter to see what everyone else is up to!

**Charlotte Wilkinson**

Icon AG Communications Rep

### Ceramics and Glass Group

#### Call for papers

Icon's Ceramics and Glass Group (CGG) and the Stained Glass Group (SGG) are hosting a joint conference to be held on 16 & 17 October 2021. Papers on any aspect of ceramics, glass or stained glass conservation will be considered. Submissions on relevant scientific and historic research are also encouraged, as well as case studies which explore conservation treatments. We would also welcome student papers and posters.

Abstracts should be a maximum of 250 words accompanied by an image and should be submitted to [IconBath2021@gmail.com](mailto:IconBath2021@gmail.com) by 1 May 2021. Please specify if it is for the CGG or SGG committee.

We intend to hold the conference at Bath Guildhall, although we have an online Covid-19 contingency plan. A survey to assess the enthusiasm for live and online events will be circulated in May.

Bath is a beautiful city with excellent local stained glass, as well as many museum highlights, such as the East Asian Art Museum, Victoria Art Gallery, Holburne Museum, Fashion Museum, Assembly Rooms and Roman Baths. We aim to organise tours, visits and talks in some of these locations.



### Call for nominations: Group Chair

The Institute of Conservation's Ceramics and Glass Group is currently inviting new and existing members to join the committee. Can you help us engage the wider conservation community? Contribute to sharing knowledge and experiences? Are you motivated by the opportunity to create specialist professional development opportunities? If so, we would love to hear from you! We are recruiting for the post of Chair. If you have experience relevant to the role, or are interested in professional development, then don't be afraid to get in touch to find out more (cggicon@gmail.com). This is a great opportunity to join a friendly and dynamic community of students and conservators working with ceramics and glass.

### Events

In 2019 we successfully hosted a joint conference between Icon's Ceramics and Glass Group, ICOM-CC's Glass and Ceramics working group and the Conservation Department at the British Museum. Looking to future events, as well as the joint conference with the Stained Glass Group in October (see above), we are also hosting a two-day workshop on Stain Reduction in Ceramics lead by Lauren Fair.

We look forward to welcoming new starters to our online meetings for a chat and to answer any questions you may have. Please note you will have to join Icon to be voted in as a committee member, which is done annually at the CGG AGM.

### Marisa Kalvins

Publications Editor  
Icon Ceramics and Glass Group

### Heritage Science Group

#### HSG's 'Science Bites'

The first Science Bite was published in Issue 91 Of Icon News and featured Fabiana Portoni's research summary 'Insect invaders and toxic fumes: Measuring toxic gas emissions from museum objects'. Please find the second heritage science research summary in this issue by Simoní Da Ros and Katherine Curran from UCL's Institute for Sustainable Heritage: 'Quantifying degradation in cellulose acetate-based historic artefacts: a new approach using <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy'.

HSG welcomes contributions from Icon members to publish summaries of your articles with scientific content, with the

## C'ART - ART TRANSPORT LTD

C'ART



### Transport

Art gallery & museum transport in temperature controlled air-ride vehicles. GIS compliant



### Shipping

International freight & shipping



### Case Making & Packing

Bespoke case & plinth construction to any specification



### Storage

Secure government indemnity approved climate controlled storage



### Technical Services

Works of art installed by fully trained experienced technicians



### Public Sculpture Installation

Hiab and crane services



01902 791797



info@cart.uk.com



www.cart.uk.com

aim of disseminating Heritage Science, give visibility to your research projects and connect with other conservation professionals. The summaries should be up to 1000 words, and you may also include two or three images or diagrams that will help get the message across clearly. They should be written in a simple and engaging language, in the spirit of Heritage Bites ([heritagebites.org](http://heritagebites.org)) Please send your summaries to [lucia.pereirapardo@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:lucia.pereirapardo@nationalarchives.gov.uk) and include your name, affiliation, email and details of the full publication.

### **Heritage Research Hub**

The Heritage Research Hub is a platform on and for the cultural heritage research community, created and managed by the Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage (JPI-CH). The hub aims to:

- provide information about the JPI CH and its activities.
- create an online location where everyone who works in or with cultural heritage-related research can share and search for different contents, including news, events, funding and training opportunities or open vacancies.
- inform about the cultural heritage research framework by introducing the heritage research policies, the various stakeholders involved or research projects.
- collect and display online resources on and for heritage research.

Find out more here: [www.heritageresearch-hub.eu](http://www.heritageresearch-hub.eu)

### **Social Media**

The Icon HSG's twitter account experiences a regular increase in followers; we have 1500 already. Please follow us and help with spreading the word!

### **Events**

The online Intermediate Microsoft Excel training with Andie Mills last autumn was very well received and, due to popular demand, we plan to run it again this spring. Further training opportunities (colour science, computing for cultural heritage research, HS students networking event...) are planned through 2021 in an online format. Please watch for more information on these events on the Icon-HSG website page and the Icon Events Schedule.

### **Keeping in touch**

Finally, keep an eye out for our notices in Iconnect, on our webpage, and on Twitter (@ICONSci) and get in touch via our Group email address ([iconhsg@gmail.com](mailto:iconhsg@gmail.com)) if you would like to become more involved in the Group's activities.

**Lucia Pereira-Pardo**

HSG Committee Communications Officer

### **Modern Materials Network**

During the latest lockdown, the MMN committee members have taken pause to reflect on what the Network has achieved since it was set up in 2018 and to look forward to what we hope to achieve in the future.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved with each of our events which include our inaugural meeting at

Blythe House, London (February 2019); our breakout Group sessions at the at the Icon Conference in Belfast in 2019; our hugely enjoyable and informative symposium 'Challenges of the Modern Object' (October 2019) and in particular the unexpected but wonderful Icon MMN: Conservation at Home talks last year. Not to mention the ongoing work on the website in articles, blogs and on social media.

At this moment we would like to reach out to Network members to find out what you would like to see from us in the future, both long- and short-term. Are there particular workshops you would like us to arrange or a particular theme for a conference you have been thinking about? Are there places you would like to visit that we could organise (when we are allowed to again)? In particular, we are looking for places to visit outside of London; for example, we were planning a trip to MoDiP (the Museum of Design in Plastics) in Bournemouth last year, which we sadly had to postpone.

Any ideas, big or small, are welcome.

You can email us or tweet us using the hashtag #nomaterial-toomodern. Email and twitter handle are below.

Email: [iconmodernmaterials@gmail.com](mailto:iconmodernmaterials@gmail.com)

Website: <https://icon.org.uk/groups/modern-materials-network>

Twitter: @iconMMN

We look forward to hearing from you

**Icon Modern Materials Network Committee**

### **Furniture & Wooden Objects Group**

The Group wish to thank Michelle Kirk for all her hard work as Chair and welcome Anthony Beech to the role.

Do check our Group page of the Icon website for future events, including a programme of online lectures which the committee are developing.

### **Paintings Group**

The Paintings Group are continuing their series of online talks in 2021. On 22 April we will hear from Olympia Diamond who will be talking about her treatment of a contemporary painting by Darren Almond using agarose gel.

On 17 February, in our first talk of the year, we had a fantastic talk from Alison Langley, Katrina Rush and Julie Simek, conservators from the Art Institute of Chicago. They shared the experience of traveling to Mozambique to prepare ten paintings by Malangatana Valente Ngwenya (1936–2011) for loan, as well as examining, treating, and framing these bold and impactful paintings in Chicago.

Later in the year we hope to hear from Elizabeth Wigfield, also from the AIC, on her conservation treatment of two Del Sarto portraits. We look forward to welcoming many Icon members as well as other interested people to our online talks.

The postprints from Icon's Paintings Group conference 'Wet Paint - Interactions between Water and Paintings', held in



Edinburgh on 12 October 2018, are still available for purchase at the reduced price of £17.20 (including postage within the UK). Payment by BACS and cheques will be accepted. Please email Julia Jablonska at [icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com](mailto:icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com) to place an order.

#### Icon Paintings Group Committee

[icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com](mailto:icon.paintingsgroup@googlemail.com)

@IconPaintings - twitter

@iconpaintingsgroup – Instagram

### Textile Group

#### Latest News

The Icon Textile Group are continuing to add to their already successful and well attended online offerings in 2021. Please see our section of the Icon website for more details. The Group also welcome feedback and suggestions from members for new event ideas.

In February we were treated to an online talk presented by Ksynia Marko ACR and Glyn Charnock of the National Carpet Cleaners Association on the topic of cleaning methodologies applied to two historic carpets at Felbrigg Hall (National Trust) in Norfolk. Many of our members logged on for the

event, however, if you missed this please see the Textile Group section of the Icon website for details on how to watch the recording of this event. The talk was followed by a (safe) social gathering at 'The Needle & Thread', the committee's virtual pub!

#### Events

Emerging Professionals Event – *Emerging Professionals: Making a Career in Conservation*: due to the ongoing uncertainty and limitations that Covid has brought about, the committee had to make the hard decision late last year to postpone this event until 2022. Not to be defeated by the pesky virus the Group then decided to offer some of the planned speakers a chance to talk about their experiences as an emerging professional, and to network during this challenging time...yes you guessed it, via Zoom! Many thanks to all those who attended the online event held over two evenings in March and to Kelly Grimshaw for pulling it all together.

Icon Textiles Group Spring Forum 2021 - *Textile Conservation: Out in the Open – The challenges of Displaying & Conserving Textiles on Open Display* – in collaboration with the Historic Interiors Group, presented via Zoom. This year's



## Call for Papers



### Ceramics, Glass and Stained Glass Conference Deadline 1st May 2021

*The Ceramics and Glass Group (CGG) and the Stained Glass Group (SGG) are delighted to announce a joint conference to be held on 16th and 17th October 2021. Papers on any aspect of ceramics, glass or stained glass conservation will be considered. Submissions on relevant scientific and historic research are also encouraged, as well as case studies which explore conservation treatments. We would also welcome student papers and posters.*



© Royal Albert Memorial Museum

*We intend to hold the conference at Bath Guildhall, although we have an online Covid-19 contingency plan. A survey to assess the enthusiasm for live and online events will be circulated in May.*

*Bath is a beautiful city with excellent local stained glass, as well as many museum highlights, such as the East Asian Art Museum, Victoria Art Gallery, Holburne Museum, Fashion Museum, Assembly Rooms and Roman Baths. We aim to organise tours, visits and talks in some of these locations.*

*Please send your abstracts to  
[IconBath2021@gmail.com](mailto:IconBath2021@gmail.com)*



© Vereinigte Domstifter, DE



spring forum is likely to have just been wrapped up, or in its final stages as you read this edition of *Icon News*. Many thanks to all of those who submitted papers and posters for the event. Those logging onto the event were treated to twenty papers covering a wide range of topics relating to collections presented on open display, with topics divided into four categories and held over four afternoons. Please stay tuned for a review of this event in the next edition of *Icon News*.

### In This Issue

Our very own dedicated and hardworking committee member Hannah Sutherland (also textile conservator at the V&A) has written a review of the 'Curators' Colloquium on Knitted Textiles'. Hannah is an accomplished home knitter herself, and was therefore, very much qualified to tune in, enjoy and then capture this event for all those who missed the online event which was held in late January.

### Keeping in touch with the Group

Due to publication deadlines, it is not always possible to mention all events so please check the *Icon* website, Facebook page, Twitter feed and *Iconnect* for details. If you have anything that you would like mentioned in our communications please contact the Textile Group's News Editor Terri.Dewhurst@nationaltrust.org.uk

### Writing for *Icon News*

If you would like to submit an article or review an event, details of how to write for *Icon News* can be found here: <https://icon.org.uk/what-is-conservation/writing-icon> or by contacting Terri Dewhurst on the email address above.

## EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

### Introduction

In *Icon News* issue 89, Helen Hughes ACR shared her experience of working on European Standards about Architectural Paint Research. This work was conducted by Working Group 13, which as Helen explained 'is a sub-group of the Technical Committee CEN/TC 346 which is overseeing the production of a raft of standards for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage'.

Two Working Groups whose current activities on archaeological standards may also be of interest to members are WG9 (waterlogged wood) and WG14 (monitoring of cultural deposits). Kirsty High, NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellow, University of York (WG9) and Jim Williams, Senior Science Advisor, Historic England (WG14) provide an update of progress on these two documents.

### Waterlogged wood

WG9 (waterlogged wood) published their first standard, entitled BS EN 16873:2016, *Conservation of cultural heritage. Guidelines for the management of waterlogged wood on archaeological terrestrial sites* in 2016.<sup>1</sup> Since then and following some personnel changes in the working group (including the start of Kirsty High's involvement), the focus



A Mesolithic bow photographed in situ at the site of Star Carr (North Yorkshire). Appropriate handling of such delicate objects both during- and post-excavation is informed by a robust condition assessment



has been on the development of a standard for the characterisation of waterlogged archaeological wood.

The tendency of waterlogged archaeological wood to rapidly decay once exposed means that it can be a challenging material to manage and preserve, and its highly heterogeneous nature makes it difficult to assess. As such, rapid and effective decision-making is critical on sites where significant amounts of it are found (as, for example, the Mesolithic bow illustrated). The two waterlogged wood standards therefore aim to help European archaeologists, conservators and curators reach these decisions and introduce a degree of consistency in the way they are made.

Developing the second standard on 'Characterisation' has involved experts from the UK, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, France, Germany and Greece. Characterisation of waterlogged archaeological wood is an important step both in deciding its archaeological value and in the development of an excavation and preservation strategy. Assessment can be approached in many ways and the differences in approach between projects undertaken in different countries can be striking. The development of this standard was therefore considered long overdue and much needed.

Covering both terrestrial and underwater sites, it outlines best practice for assessing the physical, chemical and biological properties of waterlogged archaeological wood using appropriate methods of assessment, ranging from field-based assessments to in-depth characterisation in the laboratory. The results of this assessment should then provide a basis from which appropriate actions (e.g. conservation, reburial, preservation in situ) can be decided.

### Monitoring cultural deposits

The work of WG14 started in 2017 when representatives from Standard Norway (SN) proposed a new standard on 'Cultural heritage — Requirements for environmental monitoring and investigation of cultural deposits'. This was agreed as a new work item and an initial text, based on an existing Norwegian Standard formed the starting point for group discussions. The first meeting took place in Oslo, and over the past three years experts from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, France and the UK have contributed to discussions on the draft text at meetings in Oslo, London and Paris.

One of the great challenges that WG14 had to face at the start was to decide whether the document would relate to all archaeological deposits or just terrestrial ones. As it was felt the general procedures were largely the same whatever the location, the standard applies to land-based, inter-tidal and underwater archaeology.

The other major challenge was to take a document produced for one country's specific circumstances and transform it into one that is applicable for all member countries. A careful balance also has to be trod when referring to other existing national guidance. For example, as one of the main authors of the Historic England guidance on Preserving Archaeological

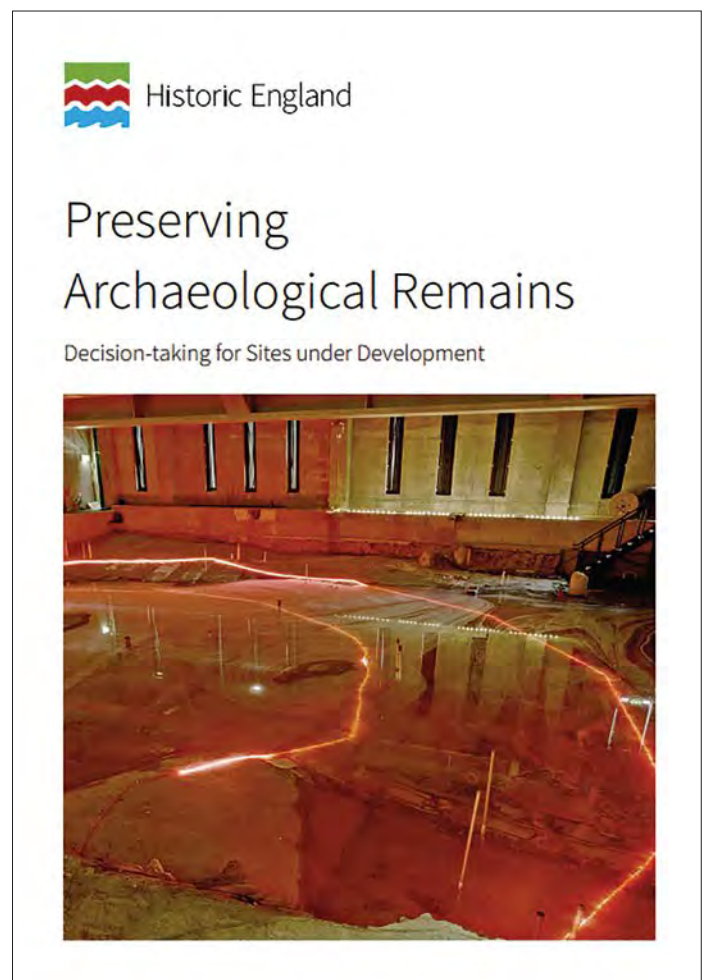
Remains,<sup>2</sup> Jim Williams had to be mindful of how much good practice from that document he suggested should be incorporated into the standard. Similarly, the work of WG9 has taken much inspiration from Historic England's guidance on the management of waterlogged archaeological wood<sup>3</sup> as well as similar guidance from other European countries.

Consensus in WG14 was reached by keeping much of the text of the Norwegian standard, but restructuring the process to more closely match the English guidance. This also involved revising the title which is now 'Conservation of cultural heritage — Investigation and monitoring of archaeological deposits for preservation in situ'.

### How to write European standards

The way in which the two working groups have approached these archaeological standards has been to provide a framework within which local experts can apply their own skills, rather than to dictate a single suite of precise methodologies.

Front cover of the Historic England guidance on *Preserving Archaeological Remains: Decision-taking for Sites under Development*





Although there is room for interpretation and adjustment based on the exact circumstances of the project, it is also important that the guidance is specific enough to ensure that approaches are useful, robust, and most importantly: standardised! The process of achieving this fine balance can be a long one, and WG9's standard on the characterisation of wood is still in progress, whilst WG14's is near completion.

During the writing of the WG14's standard, it was decided that the document would contain a short initial normative section, setting out the process for investigating and monitoring cultural deposits, and a more detailed set of informative appendices providing further technical information. This perhaps avoids the protracted discussions about what methods should or shouldn't be included in the standard, but does somewhat lengthen the document.

Developing the standard is an iterative process taking place over a series of one to two day meetings across Europe and requires consensus from each member of the committee. Whilst this can make for some heartfelt debates about the precise meaning of terminology and language, it results in something that 'works' across many different countries.

The language has to be precise and unambiguous, whilst leaving that all important room for interpretation by local expertise. One outcome of such compromise is that you don't always get to include precisely what you want in the document or you are sometimes left with elements that don't entirely represent the norm in your own country. The skill in working with your committee colleagues is in recognising which of these is a real concern that needs challenging and which you can ignore for the sake of committee harmony (and document progress!).

Another part of the process of pulling these documents together is often the development of a mirror committee within each member country, which scrutinises the text and bring in a wider range of views to the consultation process. For WG14 an UK mirror committee was drawn up including terrestrial and underwater archaeologists, heritage management specialists and archaeological conservators.

### And the future?

What was interesting about the writing process for WG14 was the evolution of remote working through MS Teams over the last year or so. At our meetings in 2018 and 2019 we really struggled with the technology to find ways to include virtual attendees in physical meetings. We tried to use Skype but organisational firewalls or their IT rules seemed to get in the way.

Like the rest of the world, we did finally make the transition to a fully remote meeting in October 2020. If the process of sitting around a room in person, running through the document line-by-line was hard, spending a day doing it over Teams was perhaps an even greater challenge, particularly without the lure of a nice meal in a Parisian Bistro to energise you.

The last in-person meeting of WG9 was in March 2020; at that point, some of us had already been stopped from international travel by our institutions, so we were early adopters of

Zoom. The practicalities of collaborating over online software are something that we have collectively been forced to overcome, and perhaps now we are all more expert at it, international collaboration on things like these standards will become easier and more inclusive in the future.

Unfortunately, the difficulties faced by colleagues across Europe this past year on both a personal and professional level have nonetheless made it difficult for WG9 to reconvene, and our standard is yet to be circulated for review. However, for WG14, the hard work is over for now. The Enquiry draft text has been submitted to CEN for circulation to each member country and there will be a consultation period on the text between March and June this year. Any comments that are made at this time will then be discussed by the working group before a final text is submitted in May 2022 for formal voting and adoption as a European standard.

WG14 are unfortunately unlikely to meet again physically to discuss the document and share in celebrating the hard work we have put into it; as virtual meetings become more commonplace and easier to organise, perhaps there will be fewer working group meetings across Europe anyway and more of the day to day work will be done remotely.

That would be a shame, as one of the most interesting aspects of being involved in these standards working groups is the chance to build strong working and personal relationships with other like-minded committee members and in doing so, learn more about how cultural heritage practices vary in different countries.

The casual conversations that happen at coffee breaks and during evenings spent sampling the local beer and cuisine all feed into the finished document; losing those is to the detriment of the final output. Whilst online collaboration has its advantages, in part the success of our more recent virtual meetings was based on the foundations of trust, respect and understanding built in and around the time we spent together at our earlier meetings.

**1** BS EN 16873:2016. *Guidelines for the management of waterlogged archaeological wood on terrestrial sites of archaeological significance*

**2** Historic England, 2016. *Preserving Archaeological Remains: Decision-taking for Sites under Development* (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/preserving-archaeological-remains/>)

**3** Historic England, 2010. *Waterlogged Wood: Guidelines on the recording, sampling, conservation and curation of waterlogged wood* (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/waterlogged-wood/>)

## STANDARDS AND BREXIT

Now that the UK has left the EU people raise the question of the status of European Standards and their continued relationship to British Standards. In response to this question, a British Standards Institute (BSI) spokesperson commented:





Team work makes the dream work - Kirsty High and Jim Williams coring at the Sweet Track, an ancient trackway in Somerset, in advance of installation of monitoring equipment

'BSI's membership of European Standards Organisations CEN and CENELEC continues beyond the end of the EU exit transition period. The General Assemblies of CEN and CENELEC have set a timeframe to update the organizations' statutes in response to the UK's departure from the EU. This will run until the end of 2021, enabling the UK's continued influence over standards produced in CEN and CENELEC, providing stability and certainty for our stakeholders. BSI is confident its membership will continue beyond that time and we are working with the other CEN and CENELEC members to ensure the best outcome for the UK.

'Under the direction of UK stakeholders including government, BSI has for many years sought wherever possible to develop international standards first, with UK leadership or influence.

'Post-BREXIT, BSI will continue to promote and enable UK stakeholder leadership in international and European regional standardization. BSI will work to optimize the participation of UK stakeholders through BSI's membership of CEN, CENELEC and other international standards organisations such as ISO. 'The standards related to conservation of the tangible heritage which are within the remit of BSI Technical Committee B/560 and CEN/Technical Committee 346 and its Working Groups including WG9 and WG14 are all considered 'voluntary' in that they are not directly in support of national regulations. As such they will continue to be developed with UK input and will continue to be available and relevant to conservation practitioners in the UK as well as across the European Union.'



## Appointments



**Louisa Burden**, MA ACR FIIC, is joining the British Museum as Head of Conservation in mid-April. She is moving from the Science Museum Group (SMG) where she has been Group Head of Conservation and Collections Care for over eleven years. She led the planning and delivery of the conservation components of major gallery re-development across SMG including the award-winning Mathematics, Science City 1550 – 1800, and Medicine Galleries at the Science Museum. Louisa had a major role in the development of the conservation elements for the move out of the Blythe House collection store to a new building near Swindon.

Prior to working at SMG, Louisa worked as a conservator in Wiltshire County Council's conservation service. Wiltshire museums have a wide range of collections including two Designated archaeological collections based at Salisbury and Devizes. She also ran a commercial team providing conservation services to archaeology companies and museums.

Louisa trained at Lincoln specialising in ceramics and social history conservation and then completed a Historic Scotland internship at the University of Aberdeen's Marischal College focusing on archaeology and world cultures.

## Welcome to these new members

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in December 2020 and January 2021. We hope to see you at an Icon event soon!

**Angela Barber**  
Student

**Julia Brand**  
Student

**Sophie Broadhurst**  
Student

**Emily Brzezinski**  
Student

**Gabrielle Fox Butler**  
Associate

**Eva Catic**  
Bernisches Historisches  
Museum  
Associate

**Viviana Chettraru**  
Student

**Sophia Concha**  
Student

**Simoni Da Ros**  
University College London  
Associate

**Kim Alexandra Davies**  
Associate

**Clara de La Pena McTigue**  
Royal Collection Trust  
Pathway

**Eleanor Durrant**  
Student

**Rosie Eddisford**  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Supporter

**Eva Eicker**  
Shape Arts  
Associate

**Heather Garner**  
Student

**Alannah Hay**  
Student

**Susan Hull**  
Student

**Amanda Hutchison**  
Student

**Kathryn Keldeen**  
Student

**Leon Lee**  
Supporter

**David Loughlin**  
Historyonics  
Supporter

**Lauren Moon-Schott**  
Boston Public Library  
Associate

**Austin Nevin**  
Courtauld Institute of Art  
Associate

**Basia Nosek**  
Student

**Rosalyn Penna**  
Student

**Amalia Ranisau**  
Associate

**Wendy Reade**  
International Conservation  
Services  
Associate

**Kathy Richmond**  
Historic Environment Scotland  
Supporter

**Philippa Robinson**  
Auckland Art Gallery  
Associate

**Roberto Rosa**  
Serpentino Stained Glass  
Studio  
Pathway

**Sharon Tager**  
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem  
Associate

**Laura Turner**  
National Trust  
Supporter

**Iain Whittick**  
Associate

## In memory

### Vicki Cassman

#### March 1957 - August 2020

Those who were at the Textile Conservation Centre in 1985 will no doubt remember Vicki Cassman with great affection. Even during her short period at the TCC, her commitment to conservation and her personal warmth and generosity made a big impact. It was she who conducted the interview with Dr. Karen Finch OBE for The Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation (FAIC)'s Oral History Project.

Vicki was a graduate of the Winterthur/University of Delaware Masters Programme in Art Conservation and went on to work as textile conservator with a special interest in Chilean archaeological textiles. Her breadth of vision was well demonstrated by her PhD on the topic of ethnicity and archaeological textiles (Arizona State University 1997) and the book *Human Remains: Guide for Museums and Academic Institutions*, which she co-edited with Nancy Odegaard and Joseph Powell (AltaMira Press, 2007). After teaching in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Nevada (1997-2006), she developed her expertise in the preservation of cultural heritage at the University of Delaware where she served as Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Art Conservation (2006-2018).

Vicki was awarded the Sheldon and Carolyn Keck Award by the American Institute for Conservation in 2014 and the American Institute for Conservation's Textile Specialty Group Achievement Award in 2019 in recognition of her contribution to the field. Fittingly, Vicki's memorial will be in the Better Place Forest in the Santa Cruz Mountains, a protected woodland which conserves iconic California redwood trees.

**Mary M Brooks ACR**  
Durham University





**Anthony Cains**  
1936 – 2020

Tony was born in London on 28 December 1936. Although he had ambitions to become a gunsmith, his father steered him towards bookbinding and he began his apprenticeship in 1953. He studied in a number of schools dedicated to the Arts and Crafts and his contribution to our craft emerged, as he began to teach part-time in the Camberwell School of Art and Crafts, the London College of Printing, and the Farnham School of Art.

When the Arno river burst its banks in Florence in 1966, Tony was one of the team of first responders from England to offer assistance. He would remain in Italy for six years at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, where he was appointed Technical Director of Conservation. During his time there, along with colleagues from around the world, including conservators, bookbinders and scientists, new and innovative methods in book conservation were originated and the profession of the book conservator developed.

His pioneering work in Florence was identified by the then Keeper of Manuscripts in Trinity College Dublin, William O'Sullivan, who visited Tony in Florence and subsequently offered him the position of

Technical Director in Trinity College Library, with its responsibility for a globally significant collection of early medieval Irish manuscripts. Relocated to Dublin in 1972 with his wife and family, Tony's first task was to convert the allocated attic in the Long Room Library building into a working book conservation department. His Florence experience would serve him well and he was closely involved in every aspect of the work from designing the layout of the space and producing drawings for the contractors including detailed specifications for furniture and fittings, such as repair benches, washing sinks and drying racks. The Conservation Department opened in May 1974 to critical acclaim, winning a Europa Nostra architecture prize.

The department's initial responsibility was to the manuscript collection, but almost immediately, it expanded to include the early printed books collection, including the 250,000 books in the Long Room Library. In 1977 Tony introduced the 'Long Room Project' - a preservation action for the books on open shelves there, which aimed at stabilising the leather and parchment bindings through a programme of cleaning, consolidating, minor repairs and documentation. A modified form of the project continues today.

Tony's training of his book conservation staff was rigorous and, at a time before specialised programs producing professional book conservators existed, he focused his training on the apprenticeship system and a choice of staff he believed had the core skills that he could nurture over time. He believed it took ten years to develop a conservator with the necessary experience

to be 'let loose' on early material. Having commenced in the department in May 1984, I can attest to his methods.

Tony conserved a number of the early manuscripts held in Trinity, typically replacing 19th century bindings with sound structures based on the Roger Powell model of employing medieval methods combined with stable materials. Among the manuscripts conserved under his direction was the Book of Mulling (TCD MS 60), the Garland of Howth (TCD MS 56), the Winchcombe Psalter (TCD MS 53) and *Liber Hymnorum* (TCD MS 1441). In the 1990s he was instrumental in the design and development with the Chubb Safe company of the unique display system for the Book of Kells, combining innovative features for security and environmental control. His skills were in demand beyond the walls of Trinity and he also advised and conserved early manuscripts for other cultural institutions in Ireland.

In 1989 Tony was given the opportunity to display another side of his skill base, that of designer binder. He was asked to design and bind *Leabhar Mór na hÉireann* (The Great Book of Ireland) a modern, large-scale, vellum manuscript comprising the original work of 121 artists, 144 poets and nine composers. Tony assembled the skins, sewed and bound the enormous volume (510 x 360 x 110mm) between Irish oak boards covered with an Italian, alum tawed goatskin he had brought back from Florence. The manuscript, now in University College Cork has been termed Ireland's modern-day Book of Kells.

The Conservation Department in Trinity quickly earned an international reputation for its high standards and innovative techniques and internships

were much sought after. As a result, Tony's influence can be found in book conservation studies worldwide. He also extended his teaching into outreach and delivered workshops and lectures across continents, in addition to his plethora of articles published in the professional journals. In the mid-nineties, along with the late Chris Clarkson, he was involved in setting up and teaching in the European School of Conservation and Restoration in Spoleto, Italy. In the United States he, along with Maria Fredericks conserved and rebound the Ellesmere Chaucer, the 15th century illuminated manuscript held in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

Back home in Ireland, he was instrumental in establishing professional bodies and was a founding member of the Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and a director for many years. In 2014 the Institute of Conservator- Restorers in Ireland awarded Tony its Lifetime award for his services to Conservation.

One of his many leisure activities included fly fishing; of course he not only tied his own flies, but also made his own bamboo rod! He retired from Trinity in 2002 as the conservation department moved to its new home in the newly built Ussher Library. He continued to work privately from his well-equipped home workshop and he could now pick and choose his projects, which allowed him to enjoy another of his hobbies, that of metalworking. I have many the piece turned by him on his Myford lathe, including brass knobs for my engineer's toolbox and even a handle for my 19th century backing press.

#### **Dr John Gillis**

The Library of Trinity College Dublin

# FORTY YEARS AT THE BODLEIAN

## Robert Minte's career at The Bodleian Libraries is celebrated by Head of Conservation & Collection Care Virginia M. Lladó-Buisán ACR

On 23 June 2020, Robert Minte ACR, Senior Conservator, celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Conservation and Collection Care Department of the Bodleian Libraries. Under normal circumstances, we would have celebrated this wonderful achievement with Robert at Oxford University's Divinity School, with nice nibbles and a few adult drinks! However, this was not possible due to the pandemic restrictions, but, regardless, I very much wanted to mark Robert's 40<sup>th</sup> at the Bodleian in a memorable way. So what better than sharing with you all some snippets of his life and career!

Robert took his first steps into the bookbinding and conservation fields during his apprenticeship at the Bodleian from 1980-85, whilst at the same time studying at college. This was followed by an advanced internship in Book Conservation at West Dean College in 1989.

Over the years, Robert developed a keen interest in the conservation of East Asian books and art on paper, which

took him to study Chinese bookbinding and scroll mounting in Hong Kong, and to attend prestigious training programmes such as the ICCROM Japanese Paper Conservation Course in Japan.

He also gained experience of Japanese scroll mounting and conservation at the Usami Shokakudo in Kyoto, and has worked closely with the National Diet Library (NDL) in Tokyo, surveying and conserving Japanese collections at the Bodleian. The Bodleian has maintained a very close relationship with the NDL since, through collaborations and staff exchanges. In 1996-97 Robert worked with Philip Meredith at the Far Eastern Conservation Centre in Leiden to carry out the conservation of a 17th-century Japanese hand-scroll from the Bodleian's collections, depicting the tale of *Urashima*.

But we asked Robert a few questions, so we could share his words and insights on his career with you.

Robert working with Keisuke Sugiyama on the 'Selden Map of China' in 2011







Robert teaching the conservation of Chinese books with intern Morgane Royo (from the Institut National du Patrimoine, Paris 2016)

*Where did you first study bookbinding/conservation?*

Whilst serving my apprenticeship I studied at Berkshire College of Art & Design, formerly Reading Technical College, completing a City & Guilds of London Institute Certificate in Bookbinding & Print-finishing. At the time I was also given the opportunity to work with Chris Clarkson and Judy Segal in the book and paper conservation workshops at the Bodleian, which introduced me to the world of conservation.

*You started at the Bodleian as a bookbinder and then your career evolved towards book and paper conservation. Would*

*you tell us what motivated you to take this career path? When did you first realise that you wanted to pursue a career in conservation?*

One of the first projects I remember with Chris Clarkson was the conservation of Chinese books, which he used to gradually introduce fundamental conservation principles and techniques through hands-on practical work – this, together with the long period of study through an apprenticeship, seemed an ideal way of learning, and my interest in pursuing conservation as a career began from there.

Robert showing al-Sufi's 'Book on the Constellations of the Fixed Stars' to Icon staff during a visit to the newly-reopened conservation workshops in May 2015







Robert working on a Mendelssohn sketchbook.  
Good to see – unstaged - issues of Icon News to hand!

*Who is the person or experience that had the greatest influence on you professionally?*

I have had the privilege to learn from a huge number of people over the years who have generously and freely shared their knowledge and expertise, but Chris Clarkson certainly had the greatest influence on me professionally – he encouraged enquiry, emphasising the importance of careful observation, attention to detail, and precision and accuracy in practical work. He taught how an historical awareness of objects, and an understanding of the subtle qualities of materials and how books function is essential in our work. It was Chris's enthusiasm for conservation and the study of books, and his teaching, which sparked my own interest in book conservation and his encouragement, which led to my later role as Superintendent of the Conservation Bindery for twelve years.

*What is your favourite tool?*

I love all Japanese tools! I have a traditional Japanese

bookbinder's knife given to me by Seiji Oyama from the NDL during his time in Oxford – it belonged to his grandfather and is a tool I treasure! I also have many hand-shaped spatulas (hera), which I made during my time in Leiden and Japan – I've since made many with colleagues and interns over the years and am almost down to the last piece of bamboo I bought in Kyoto!

*Can you tell us a little bit about your experience as a conservator in Japan and what this meant for your career?*

My work on the Bodleian's East Asian collections inspired my desire to study in the Far East – my year in Japan at the Usami Shokakudo conservation and scroll-mounting studio in Kyoto was a wonderful experience and, although entering a very traditional workshop relatively late in my own career, it opened my eyes to an incredible level of craftsmanship and practical expertise, which can only be achieved through many years of experience. In turn I was able to share Western conservation principles and techniques, and during my time in Japan I made lasting friendships.

I have been able to use skills learned in a very practical way working on Bodleian collections; but in a broader sense, the experience perhaps influenced my later decision to focus more on practical conservation in my current role – always with that high level of practical skill at the forefront of my mind as a goal, again reminding me of the same high standards instilled through my work with Chris Clarkson many years before.

*What are the projects you remember more fondly?*

There are many, but one would have to be 'The Selden Map of China', a beautifully-painted early 17th-century map of China and South East Asia bequeathed to the library by John Selden – it is a fascinating object, unique in its depiction of accurate trading and navigation routes in the South China sea. But it was also a challenging and incredibly rewarding conservation project, working with my colleague Marinita Stiglitz ACR and colleagues from the British Museum and British Library.

I also find something especially magical about handling and working on autograph literary and music manuscripts – one particular highlight was the conservation of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein Notebooks, the earliest drafts of her now iconic work, written in 1816-17, which beautifully convey the way in which she wrote her novel, showing annotations by her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

*You have been an Icon Accreditation assessor for a long time now - seventeen years. In your experience, what is the most important aspect of going through this process for conservators and for yourself as an assessor?*

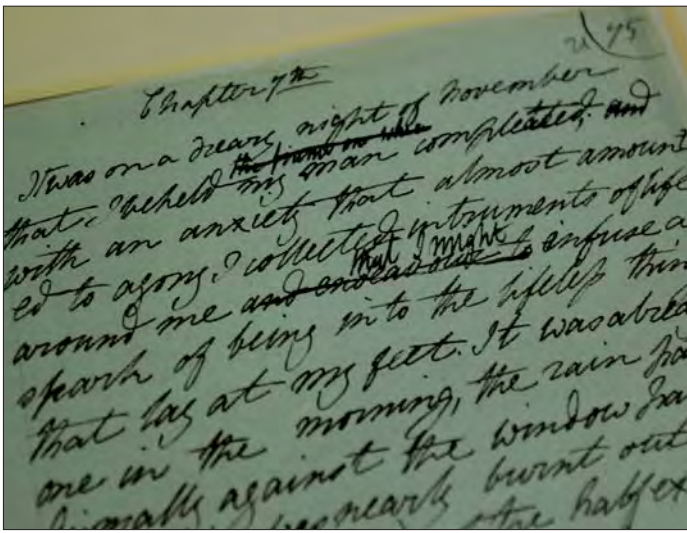
I would highlight its value in enabling a conservator's level of competence and expertise to be evaluated against a specific set of professional standards and ethics, irrespective of their background, training or formal qualifications – both as a process of reflection by the conservator themselves in preparing their application and then through the





One of Robert's favourite projects: *The Selden Map of China* (University of Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Selden supra 105)





A detail from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* Draft Notebook A (University of Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Abinger c. 56, detail of fol. 21R mounted for exhibition)

The opportunity to work on the wonderfully diverse collections at the Bodleian continues to inspire me and became especially apparent during the lockdown last year when we were suddenly unable to work with the collections! I am continually learning and still discovering treasures, which are new to me! I have had opportunities to meet many interesting and often famous visitors, and wonderful opportunities to travel with exhibitions and loans, one of which first took me to Japan! The Library and University have changed enormously over the forty years, as has our own conservation profession, but it has been, and continues to be, a great privilege to work in such a wonderful institution with so many talented conservators and curators.



As you can see, we are truly blessed for counting Robert amongst our staff, but we not only value his great expertise: Robert is a giving and calm colleague, always willing to share with and help others. We are a large team, continuously working to improve our practices and strengthen our inter-personal skills, and Robert's constructive and serene approach to work and colleagues make him a treasured colleague and friend, far and beyond the Conservation team.

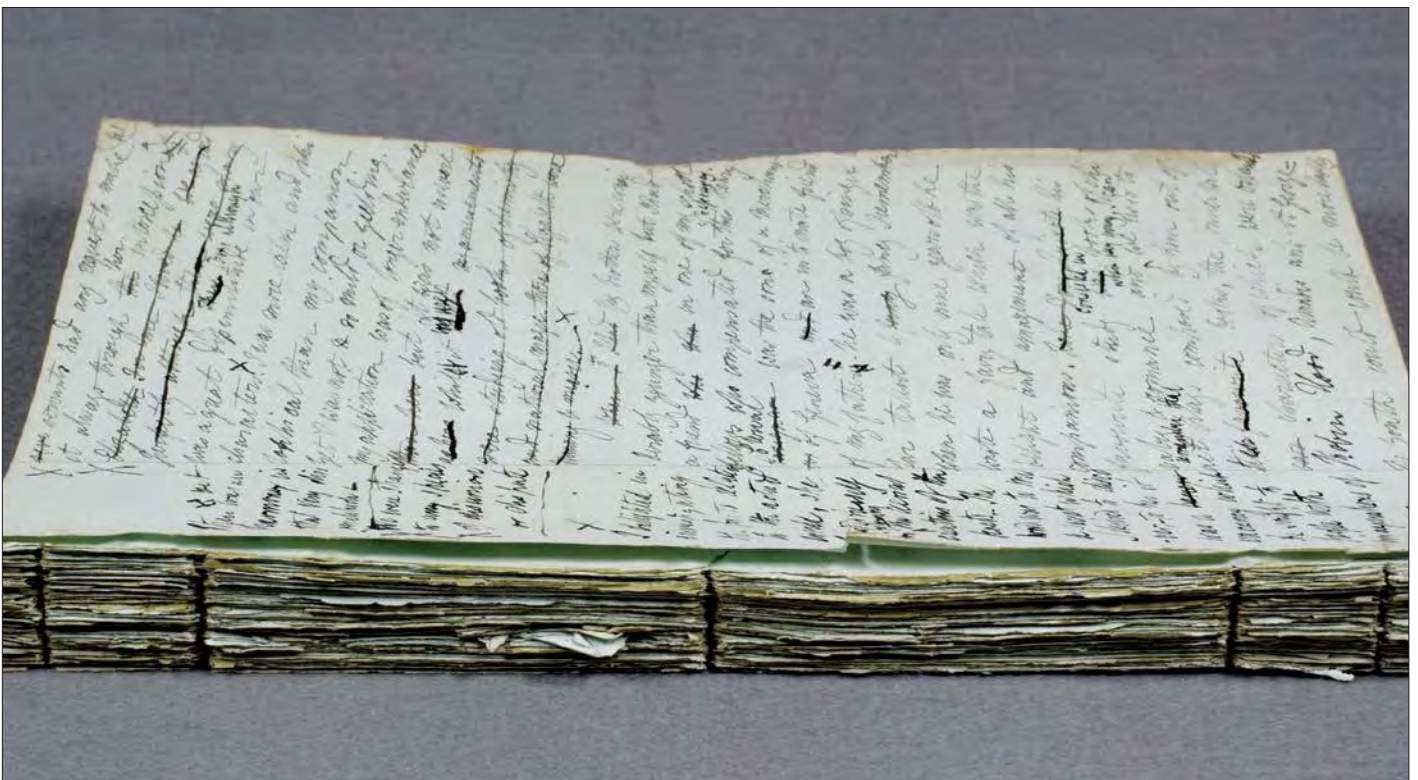
Thank you Robert, we hope to celebrate in person with you many more anniversaries!

All images reproduced with permission of The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

assessment process itself. As an assessor, I find one of the most rewarding aspects is the opportunity to see many interesting projects and techniques, making me reflect on my own experience and the importance of keeping up to date in my own conservation practice. As a second assessor when co-assessing a different conservation discipline, it enables me to see conservation in a broader sense, recognising the principles and values which we share across conservation disciplines.

What are the highlights of having worked for the Bodleian for over forty years now?

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* Draft Notebook A (University of Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Abinger c. 56)





# UNITING COMMUNITIES AND HERITAGE

Ruth Stevens ACR introduces a new Community Interest Company



## Born in lockdown

We as conservators like to pride ourselves on being flexible trouble-shooters and generally live up to this ambition, given enough tea and cake, to fuel the long hours and juggling with everything else life throws at us.

Recently life has thrown a rather large curve ball. There have been many responses to our forced isolation and restrictive working conditions, from learning how to bake through to picking up an obscure instrument and getting a few notes out of it (crumhorn anyone?). This conservator's response has been to figure out how to adjust to working mainly alone, which of the multitude of online courses to attend and how to diversify services based on zero contact with our lovely clients.

We are conservators not just because we want to work with amazing objects and artefacts in fabulous places, but to do something that has value to people. We cannot stem the tide of entropy, but we can save and care for enough heritage to maintain and enjoy our shared culture and stories.

During the initial lockdown last year a group of archive conservators decided to explore the possibility of working collaboratively, with community archives in our sights - Impact Heritage CIC is the result.

## About us and our aims

We are Ann-Marie Miller, Ruth Stevens and Ian Watson, and we are all accredited members of Icon, with over forty-five years of experience between us. Although we are based in the south we hope that our reach will extend throughout the UK. We want to increase the opportunity for communities to access funding and support to safeguard their collections and archives. We hope this will not only help their collections to become even more integral to their identity and less of a liability, but will also get the message out that conservators are there to help and make things happen.

### Impact Heritage Mission Statement

*We believe that archive collections, big and small, are the very stuff that communities are made of and we want to help all kinds of communities care for their collections and access the resources they need, whether it is conservation know-how, applying for grants or just being on the end of a phone for advice*

Typically the communities we want to reach are those with written, drawn and printed heritage collections that might be at risk of loss or damage. Our aim is to target those without easy access to funding and whose heritage involves a socially and ethnically diverse community such as:

- **Faith organisations** belonging to immigrant communities without access to conservation expertise.
- **Community cultural organisations** linked to immigrant communities.
- **School, University and College archives** with limited resources and based within socially and ethnically diverse communities.
- **Company archives** which involve communities not being currently given access to their own history, from tea picking to car manufacture there are companies whose archives can offer a real link to our national and international history.
- **Local arts and community sports centres, clubs, societies and local charities** including theatre and dance groups, art studios, music venues, recording and sound studios. Many have limited resources but have a unique story to tell.
- **Historical archives** recording the history of a community group, whether that is a social group organised by geography, demographic or activism.

We aim to create a bridge between these communities and grants available from funding organisations such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council, England as well as a host of other consistent heritage funders.

### The Arts Council:-

*We want to grow skills, knowledge and networks to help establish the conditions in which creativity and culture can flourish across the country*

*We believe arts organisations, museums, and libraries should ensure that their work draws on and reflects the full range of backgrounds and perspectives to be found in our society, as well as ensure that the leadership and workforce of arts and cultural organisations reflect the diversity of contemporary England*

Like the Arts Council, many funding organisations are dedicated to allocating money to projects that improve our well-being as individuals and a nation. We believe that looking after



Ruth Stevens, Ann-Marie Miller and Ian Watson

vulnerable community collections is a way we as conservators can improve access and education, making sure all our diverse stories and journeys are represented in our culture.

## Why the CIC Model?

We chose the not-for-profit CIC business model because it works like a limited company, is less complex and daunting to maintain than a charity, and fits well with our ethos because it has the delivery of a 'real and tangible benefit to a community' as its main purpose.

*The CIC is under a stronger obligation to have regard to the wider community which the company serves and involve stakeholders in its activities than might otherwise be the case*

Ceri Witchard - CIC regulator of CICs. 2008

Unlike a limited company, all our profits have to be used for the benefit of the communities we serve, giving funders reassurance that their money is being used effectively and completely targeted to their beneficiaries. It is called an 'asset lock', the assets being the profits or other surpluses generated by the CIC activities.

We charge for our services and have administrative costs such as insurance, but any profits from our activities will be used to pay for an initial visit, assessment and preservation plan for new partner communities. This initial plan will build the pathway to successful funding applications for culturally valuable projects. Ultimately we aim to bring successful conservation to communities that need it.

## Training opportunities

The Impact Heritage team offers a wealth of collection care expertise, practical conservation and training for volunteers and those who work with archive collections in the community.

Where a successful funding application will allow, education and training of the partner community in the ethics, methods and techniques used in conservation and collection care will be planned into projects. This is especially important in the conservation profession where access to our profession can be severely limited by cost and exclusivity at a time when the sector is crying out for people of all backgrounds to become involved in their heritage and history.

Additionally, we will create training opportunities and work experience for conservation students and people who want to join the conservation profession but can't afford to go through the existing professional pathway.

Until we can meet our partner communities in person we aim to get our messages out using social media and our website, so look out for those and follow our journey from lockdown to unlocking community archives.

Let us know if you know of or have any collections that you think would benefit from our help. We look forward to hearing from you.

Website: [www.impactheritage.uk](http://www.impactheritage.uk)

Email: [info@impactheritage.uk](mailto:info@impactheritage.uk)

Twitter: @Cicimpact

Insta: @impactheritagecic

Facebook: Impact Heritage

**We would like to thank Victoria Stevens ACR for her expertise, support and guidance through this process.**

## About us

### Ann-Marie Miller MA, ACR

Ann-Marie studied History of Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art, where she discovered conservation. She attained a post-graduate diploma and MA in conservation at Camberwell College of Arts in 2001. After working as a freelance bookbinder and conservator, she worked for seven years at the British Library, becoming an accredited member of Icon in 2007. In 2011 she set up a private workshop, Codex Conservation, where she works for a broad range of clients from private collectors to national museums and archives. She has been a mentor for the Icon accreditation scheme for twelve years and is a keen advocate for her profession. Ann-Marie is a Collections Audit assessor for AIM, teaches at City Lit and has delved into the digital realm, creating videos, open studios, presentations and practical online workshops.

### Ruth Stevens BA Hons, MA, ACR

Ruth's background is in Illustration and Design. After a career in publishing she retrained in 2005 as a book conservator at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation. With an MA in Conservation Studies she has worked as a contractor and a book and paper conservator at the British Library for seven years, becoming an accredited member of Icon in 2011. She is currently a co-Director at Sussex Conservation Consortium Ltd., which she founded along with Ian Watson in 2013. Their clients range from National Trust and Historic Royal Palaces to private libraries and collectors. Ruth serves as an Icon mentor and a volunteer for the Zibby Garnett Travel Fellowship.

### Ian Watson LLB, MA, ACR

After finishing a law degree, then working at Foyles, in 2009 Ian re-trained as a book and paper conservator, gaining a Masters with Distinction from West Dean College of Arts and Conservation in 2011. For five years he worked at Lambeth Palace Library before moving to work full-time at Sussex Conservation Consortium Ltd. He is especially proud of his work with Westminster Cathedral on their Treasures Collection as well as with the Library of the Society of Friends (Quakers) on their pamphlets and tracts collections. He became an accredited member of Icon in 2017, has served as Treasurer for the Icon Book and Paper Group, and is an Icon mentor and CPD Reader.



# ON THE MOVE

## Arianna Mangraviti, Preservation Project Assistant at Lambeth Palace Library, Introduces big changes for the Lambeth Palace Library and Church of England Record Centre



© Lambeth Palace Library

Room with a view: the Bancroft Room

Lambeth Palace Library's collections and collection care team are currently moving to a new purpose-built sustainable space at the end of the Palace garden. The collection includes significant religious and historical material on various aspects of the church and other related histories. It contains over 200,000 printed books, 4,600 manuscripts, and many church-related records, with items dating back to the 9th century.

Overall, the Library's collections have been housed across twenty-eight different stores, covering over 7km within Lambeth Palace, the historic home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, with another 14km of Church of England Record Centre collections held in a large warehouse in Bermondsey. However, neither site was able to provide any kind of suitable protection for the collections.

The Church Commissioners provided the funds to realise their goal of a single national library and archive for the Church of England on one site that would manage (and balance) both preservation and access needs. The new building will enhance the environment for the collections as well as facilitating staff and public access. This will enable the library to achieve its vision to be explored and enjoyed by all.

The new library was designed by Wright & Wright Architects, award-winning professionals with considerable experience in buildings containing historical collections. It is located at the end of the Archbishop's garden to maintain the link with its origins. It has seven environmentally controlled storage floors

with a sustainable management system, which recently gained BREEAM Excellent status. The building also includes a new reading room and offices, a small display area and, of course, a sparkling new Collection Care studio.

The next stage after the construction programme was an ambitious project to mobilise and migrate collections and staff. This covered a wide range of stakeholder needs and provided a wonderful opportunity for many staff to work and learn together on getting everything and everyone moved over safely. Tasks included collection mapping, identifying potential risks whilst on the move, and completing an almost five-year preservation protection programme, creating circa 35,000 bespoke boxes to protect individual items in the collections. Other duties involved condition checking, cleaning, mass measuring, shifting, disposing, and more recently move supervision and auditing.

Moving the collection during the covid-19 pandemic has been an extraordinary challenge for everyone working on the project. Despite the inevitable delays and disruptions, the resilient team has nearly accomplished this goal, having so far moved over to the new space nearly 14km of collection items (plus over 3km in off-site record storage), out of a total 21km.

We will discuss and exchange lessons learned about this over the coming months but in the meantime, we have had a great time working together with our archivist and librarian friends, to work towards amalgamating the entire collection into one unique fit-for-purpose entity.

This is an initial taste of Lambeth Palace Library's move, with more details coming soon...

[www.lambethpalacelibrary.org](http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org)  
[archives@churchofengland.org](mailto:archives@churchofengland.org)

### Storage space in the new library



© Lambeth Palace Library

# CELLULOSE ACETATE DEGRADATION

Simoní Da Ros and Katherine Curran of the Institute for Sustainable Heritage, University College London, describe their research into quantifying degradation in cellulose acetate-based historic artefacts: a new approach using  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectroscopy

Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy is an analytical technique widely used in the field of chemistry. It is the 'go to' tool for determining the molecular structure of unknown organic molecules, those mainly constituted of carbon and hydrogen atoms. But it is also commonly used to aid the characterisation of the most diverse materials, as almost anything containing atoms with certain magnetic properties associated with their nuclei can be analysed. Examples include, but are not limited to, molecules containing common elements such as hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus. Indeed, the full list of applications would certainly not fit in this article or even in a single book.

In this research we are referring to high-resolution liquid state NMR spectroscopy, which is quite different to mobile NMR tools, such as the NMR mobile universal surface explorer (NMR-MOUSE). The former, as noted above, provides detailed information on molecular structure, while the latter enables the characterisation of material properties on a larger scale, such as water content or the presence of

different layers in a painting. However, although it is very common in the field of chemistry, in the heritage field, the former technique is still underused, particularly in the analysis of contemporary modern materials involving plastics

Motivated to overcome this, our team has developed more efficient, simpler and innovative methodologies based on high-resolution liquid-state NMR spectroscopy which can contribute to the study of the degradation of historic cellulose acetate-based artefacts, such as the comb illustrated here. As is well-known, these artefacts can suffer from stability issues associated with the loss of their plasticisers to the environment, in addition to the degradation caused by the reaction between cellulose acetate (CA) and moisture.

Thus, understanding these degradation processes and their relationship with environmental conditions is of paramount importance for defining optimal conditions for storage and display, and simultaneously minimising degradation signs, such as warping, crazing, cracking and increased brittleness, which could impact on an artefact's historic, aesthetic or information value.

A cellulose acetate comb





However, up to now, analytical methods available for studying these degradation processes could be very time-consuming, requiring, for instance, the extractive separation of the CA polymer from its plasticisers prior to analysis.

Published in the *Polymer Degradation and Stability Journal* <sup>1</sup>, our work demonstrates how NMR spectroscopy can be applied to quantifying diethyl phthalate plasticiser content and monitoring degradation in historic CA artefacts, while presenting no requirement for the separation of the plastic structure from its plasticiser prior to analysis.

In addition, the method presents the advantages of requiring minute amounts of plastic sample (0.025 grams) and allowing for the further analysis of the same sample, see illustration, as the technique itself is non-destructive. The method suitability is illustrated by the analysis of a series of historic samples, involving colourful CA sheets produced in the 1960s and combs kindly donated by Colin Williamson and Jen Cruse, respectively.

Moreover, identifying plastic types from different artefacts in museum collections can also represent a challenge for defining their suitable storage conditions. Our research further shows how the high-resolution liquid-state NMR spectroscopy technique can be used to identify the presence of CA and its chemical additives (in addition to potential degradation products) in plastic pieces of unknown origin,

since obtained signals are characteristic of atoms' positions in the analysed chemical molecules. As a result, the technique can be used to determine complex chemical compositions from plastic artefacts (not limited to CA).

Therefore, we hope our work can not only contribute to ongoing efforts to investigate the impact of environmental storage conditions on the conservation of valued CA items in museum collections and archives, but will also inspire the conservation science community to make more use of this analytical tool.

This research was carried out as part of COMPLEX <sup>2</sup>, a European Research Council funded project under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 716390) at the UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Simóni Da Ros, Abil E. Aliev, Isabella del Gaudio, Rose King, Anna Pokorska, Mark Kearney, Katherine Curran, 'Characterising plasticised cellulose acetate-based historic artefacts by NMR spectroscopy: A new approach for quantifying the degree of substitution and diethyl phthalate contents', *Polymer Degradation and Stability*, 2020, 109420, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polymdegradstab.2020.109420>.

<sup>2</sup> [www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/heritage/complex](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/heritage/complex)  
Follow us on Twitter: @complexplastic

NMR instrument carousel with sample tubes



## BOOKS

### **INSIDERS OUTSIDERS: Refugees from Nazi Europe and their Contribution to British Visual Culture**

Monica Bohm-Duchen, ed.

Lund Humphries 2019

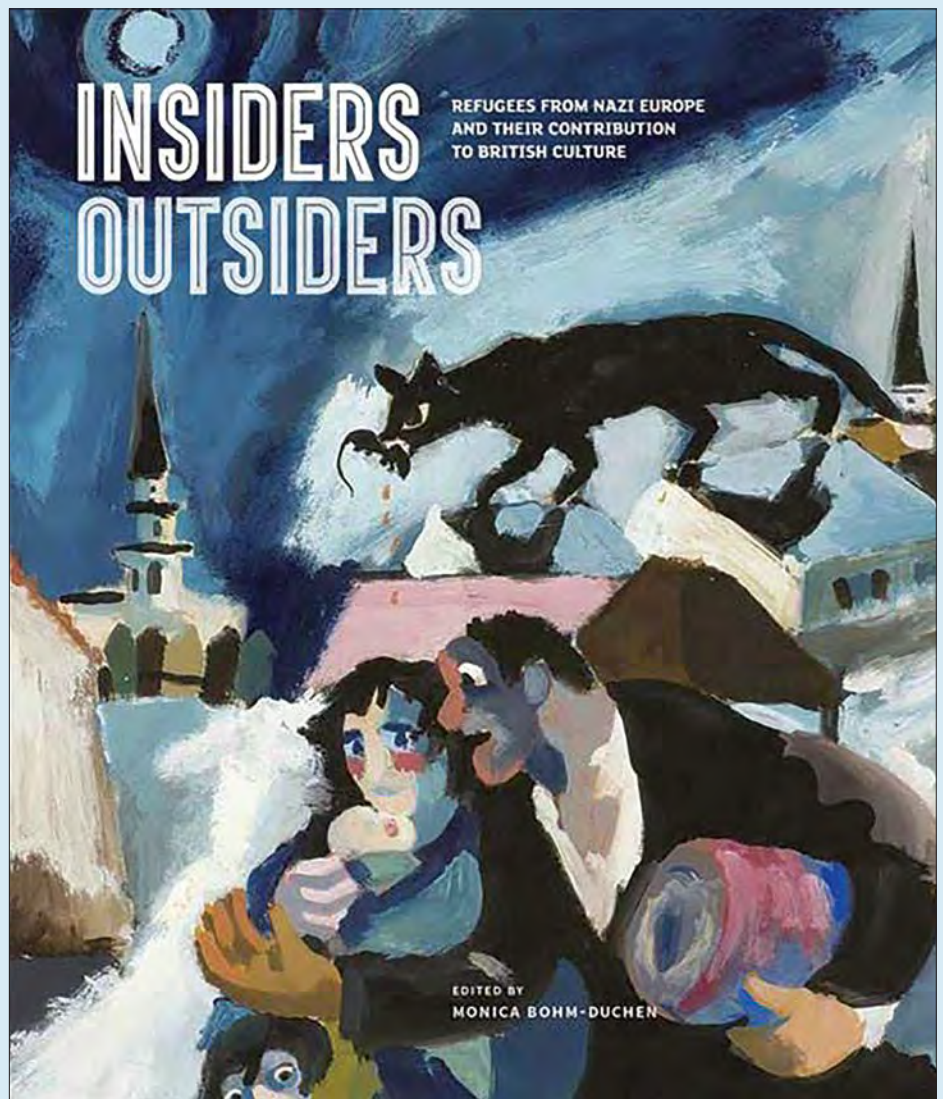
ISBN: 9781848223462

This richly illustrated volume accompanied the UK-wide year-long arts festival of the same name which began in March 2019 on the anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and of the Kindertransport programme. Together the festival and volume celebrate the rich contribution to British culture made by artists, art historians, publishers, architects and others who fled the Third Reich.

Kokoschka, Kurt Schwitters, Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, Ernst Gombrich, Nikolaus Pevsner, Walter Gropius, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Eric Hobsbawm are names to conjure with and this book delves deep into the effect that émigré talent and 'a harsh, direct, industrial and urban culture' had on a very different insular British cultural scene. Daniel Snowman, in his introduction (p.19), points out that the story of the Hitler émigrés can be seen as 'just another chapter in the long story of British ambivalence towards successive waves of immigrants from the Continent', an interesting observation in our post-Brexit times.

The volume is thematically organised into six parts starting with the visual arts; art education/scholarship; publishers, dealers and collectors; places of internment, creativity and sanctuary; patriotism and group identities; and finally key supporters. At the end is a comprehensive reference section which includes a chronology of key events, and a select bibliography which provides an excellent source of information for further study.

Section 2, 'Art Education and Scholarship', contains chapters exploring the émigrés as art teachers (by MacDougall pp.77-85), the London-based vocational Reimann School of Industrial and Commercial Design (by Kuhfuss-Wickenheiser, pp.87-95), art history in Britain (by Hones pp. 97-103) and Morwenna Blewett's chapter, 'Refugee picture restorers in the United Kingdom' (pp.105-111), the last and the main focus of my review.



Blewett is a paintings conservator at the Ashmolean Museum and Sackler Fellow in the History of Conservation at Worcester College, Oxford. Currently researching the conservation history of the Ashmolean Museum, she has published widely on history and conservation practice. Amongst her publications on subjects such as vandalism and artworks, rigid supports for easel paintings and consolidation of flaking paint runs another seam of work on refugee restorers (and others) who fled the Nazi regime during the Second World War.\* Her chapter 'Refugee picture restorers' for *Insiders Outsiders* explores the underlying reasons for the mixed reception received by refugee art restorers who sought refuge in the UK. It is a cautionary tale that needs retelling, featuring as it does xenophobia, protectionism, and anti-Semitism.

Blewett begins with the formation of the Committee of Picture Restorers in 1938, and their aim to take action against competition from émigré restorers, even reporting those with foreign names to the Home Office or Ministry of Labour (a practice that went on for many years in

fact). This group became the Association of British Picture Restorers in c.1944, and required its members to be British born, and not to employ foreign restorers. These membership criteria were concealed from some of their supporters and powerful patrons, including Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, who on learning more about ABPR's aims promptly withdrew their support.

If the English paintings restorers come out badly in this account, then the more privileged and entitled members of the art world who welcomed and supported the refugees, come out somewhat better. The first group perhaps had reason to fear for their livelihoods (although in fact most 'high level' restoration work was already separated out and sent to restorers on the Continent), and no doubt resented the openly expressed opinion that their skills were inferior to those of the newcomers. In the second camp, Clark provided much needed work for the restorers, helped some obtain residency and promoted their services to museums and private collectors, although Blewett points out that his actions may have been shaped by a 'lack of regard for the skills and social



status of British restorers', and were carried out in spite of his own 'undisputable anti-Semitic tendencies' (p.111).

Blewett notes that contemporary correspondence reveals other areas which contributed to the hostile reception of the émigrés – issues of class, social spheres, and anti-Semitism. Clark, for example, discloses his bias in a letter saying that Isepp was 'unlike the average restorer, a man of education and good taste'. Anti-Semitism was a factor, and the privileging of different categories of work – structural work carried out by London restorers being seen as inferior to the more prestigious cleaning and retouching work or 'special jobs' to be done by the refugee restorers – must also have sown division and bad feeling.

I found this a fascinating account, and Blewett's handling of the complexity of the issues adept. It is interesting to contemplate, as she does, what the national institutions had to gain from supporting the refugee restorers, obviously the advancement of the restoration field through cross fertilisation and new techniques, but also valuable connections to wealthy collectors, 'a useful consequence of assisting the refugees'.

She balances her essay nicely in the final line, saying that 'issues of underpayment, exploitation and the undercutting of local restorers, and of how instrumental these considerations were in the decision to make use of refugee restorers, remain uncomfortable questions that still need to be addressed.' Hopefully she will continue to address these in the future.

### **Jane Eagan ACR FIIC**

Head Conservator  
Oxford Conservation Consortium  
Oxford

\* Including the brilliantly titled piece for the Association of British Picture Restorers, 'Olive branch or Fascist totem? An informal history of the electric spatula in the UK', in which Blewett traces the route to the UK of the heated spatula invented by émigré restorer Helmut Ruhemann, erstwhile Curator and Chief Restorer of paintings at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. See: <https://www.willard.co.uk/post/an-informal-history-of-the-electric-spatula>

**Note: The review copy of *Insiders Outsiders* has been given to the Chantry Library. While the library is closed, requests for scanning will be answered if possible.**

## CONFERENCES

### EMERGING PROFESSIONALS WEBINAR

Icon Archaeology Group  
Online 8 December 2020

The Icon Archaeology Group held their first Emerging Professionals Webinar, via Zoom, in December 2020. The event aimed to enable emerging professionals to present projects and research related to archaeological conservation, with an emphasis on projects which had allowed them to expand a particular skill or knowledge area. This online event was an opportunity for students and early career professionals to increase their confidence in presenting ideas, in a friendly setting, and a chance for attendees to hear about their research and projects.

The event was attended by around eighty participants, who heard the four presentations on offer. The first, from **Amanda Berg**, an object conservator working in the United Arab Emirates, compared various 3D printed infills for low-fired ceramics. There was a particular focus on creating a surface to which paint could be well applied to create an aesthetically fitting infill.

**Andrea Díaz, Júlia Jiskoot and Noé Valtierra**, from the Institut Català de Paleoeologia Humana i Evolució Social

(IPHES) at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, then spoke about their research involving archaeological bone, paying attention to the most effective cleaning and consolidation processes.

**Claire McQuillan**, a Masters student at the University of Lincoln and the Archive and Collections Care Officer at Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, focussed on two concealed leather shoes discovered in one of the Dockyard's eighteenth century buildings during major renovation works in 2018. She spoke about how procedures were established to ensure that such objects were recorded and recovered, and the interesting question of how and whether the shoes should be reinstated in the renovated building.

Finally, **Heather Stewart**, a Marine Archaeological Conservator working on the Rooswijk shipwreck, discussed the conservation of two composite pistols recovered from the wreck, with particular attention given to their composite nature and the decision making needed when undertaking conservation. The event was rounded off by the Archaeology Group Chair, **Helen Ganiaris**.

Afterwards, the Group received positive feedback from all the speakers, highlighting how the experience of presenting and the questions and feedback received from the audience had been beneficial. An equally enthusiastic response was also received from attendees.

Archaeology Group Emerging Professionals event Top Row: (l to r) Emma Smith, Noé Valtierra, Heather Stewart Middle Row: (l to r) Claire McQuillan, Júlia Jiskoot, Andrea Díaz Bottom Row: (l to r) Amanda Berg, Helen Ganiaris



Full abstracts of all the talks can be found on the Archaeology Group section of the Icon website, alongside future events that the Group have coming up.

**Emma Smith**

Emerging Professionals Liaison

## CURATORS' COLLOQUIUM ON KNITTED TEXTILES

Online 29 January 2021

Over the last year my knitting productivity has skyrocketed. Although I was someone who learnt to knit at an early age it has taken the lockdown lifestyle to really push me to try some new patterns and techniques. As an alumna of the University of Glasgow I already had an awareness of the 'Fleece to Fashion: Economies and Cultures of Knitting in Modern Scotland' project, so when they announced they were to host an afternoon colloquium I jumped at the chance to attend.

'Fleece to Fashion...' is a three-year AHRC funded research project which aims to make an original and timely contribution to knowledge of knitted textiles in the Scottish context. As its name suggests the project examines all stages of production, beginning with sheep husbandry, through to spinning and dyeing and finally production and retail.<sup>1</sup> This event sought to share knowledge and practice regarding 'collection, conservation, preservation and interpretation of knitting collections'.

Although advertised as a curator's colloquium the five papers superbly highlighted the different capacities in which knitting, and collections of knitwear can be appreciated. The event started with **Carol Christiansen** from Shetland Museum discussing how they have used funding from National Museums Scotland to better investigate their collection. They are considering the social and economic stories of their objects and how this in turn impacts the museum's collecting policy going forward. As a textile conservator it was insightful to hear of their investigations into imperfect or unfinished pieces of knitwear; those objects which hold stories of the maker's process or improvement.

**Helen Wylde**, National Museums Scotland, echoed some of these thoughts whilst examining how different pieces of knitwear came into their



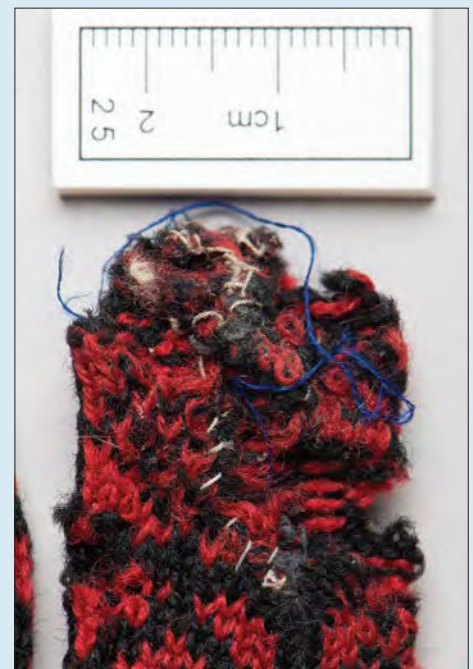
The Sanquhar glove, from Sanquhar Tolbooth Museum, after treatment

collection, from 18<sup>th</sup> century accessories found with the Gunnister man through to an exhibition celebrating 200 years of Pringle of Scotland.

**Professor Frances Lennard ACR**, University of Glasgow, **Jen Gordon** and **Federica Papiccio**, Scottish Fisheries Museum, separately emphasized the importance of conservation and collections care in specific regard to knitwear. The ability of knitwear to stretch and form to a body means that even contemporary fashions are more vulnerable to common hanging storage. Professor Lennard discussed research done by students at the Centre for Textile Conservation (University of Glasgow) into support stitching for knitted objects. The Fisheries Museum shared their 'Knitting the Herring' project which documents and explores the design and production of Scottish ganseys, a type of fisherman's knitted jumper.<sup>2</sup> They have recently had to rethink some of their collection's storage due to the influx of requests to study the traditional knitwear patterns.

The talks were rounded off with **Lisa Mason** of National Museums Scotland speaking on the design work of Bernat Klein. She explored his move into designing patterns which one could knit at home and the production of yarn kits to help home knitters create their own 'designer' items.

This colloquium not only showcased the breadth of knitwear in Scottish museum collections, but also the worldwide interest in this topic. The host's themselves admitted to being hopeful of twenty to thirty people attending if the event had taken place in-person at the University of Glasgow. The peak number of attendants I saw was 382 on Zoom, with countries being called out in the



Detail of the glove's damaged index finger. The damaged area was supported with a patch of bias-cut twill-weave wool fabric

chat window as far flung as Bulgaria, Kenya, Finland and Canada. Shout out to the west coast Americans tuning in at 5.30am! Attendants were encouraged to follow the project on Twitter @UofGKnitting or on the University of Glasgow website. If you want to catch up on the highlights of the session, the team stated there would be a follow-up blog post on their website.

**Hannah Sutherland**

Textile Conservator  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

<sup>1</sup> [www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/researchprojects/fleece/](http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/researchprojects/fleece/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://scottishgansey.org.uk/the-project/about-the-project/>



## CONSERVATION OF A PICCHWAI

Emma Telford ACR presents a case study of a splendid gilded textile

In May of 2018 I was asked to examine an unusual textile which had recently been purchased at auction, with a view to offering proposals and costs for conservation. I was stunned when the textile arrived at my studio, as I had never come across anything like it before.

### HISTORY AND MANUFACTURE

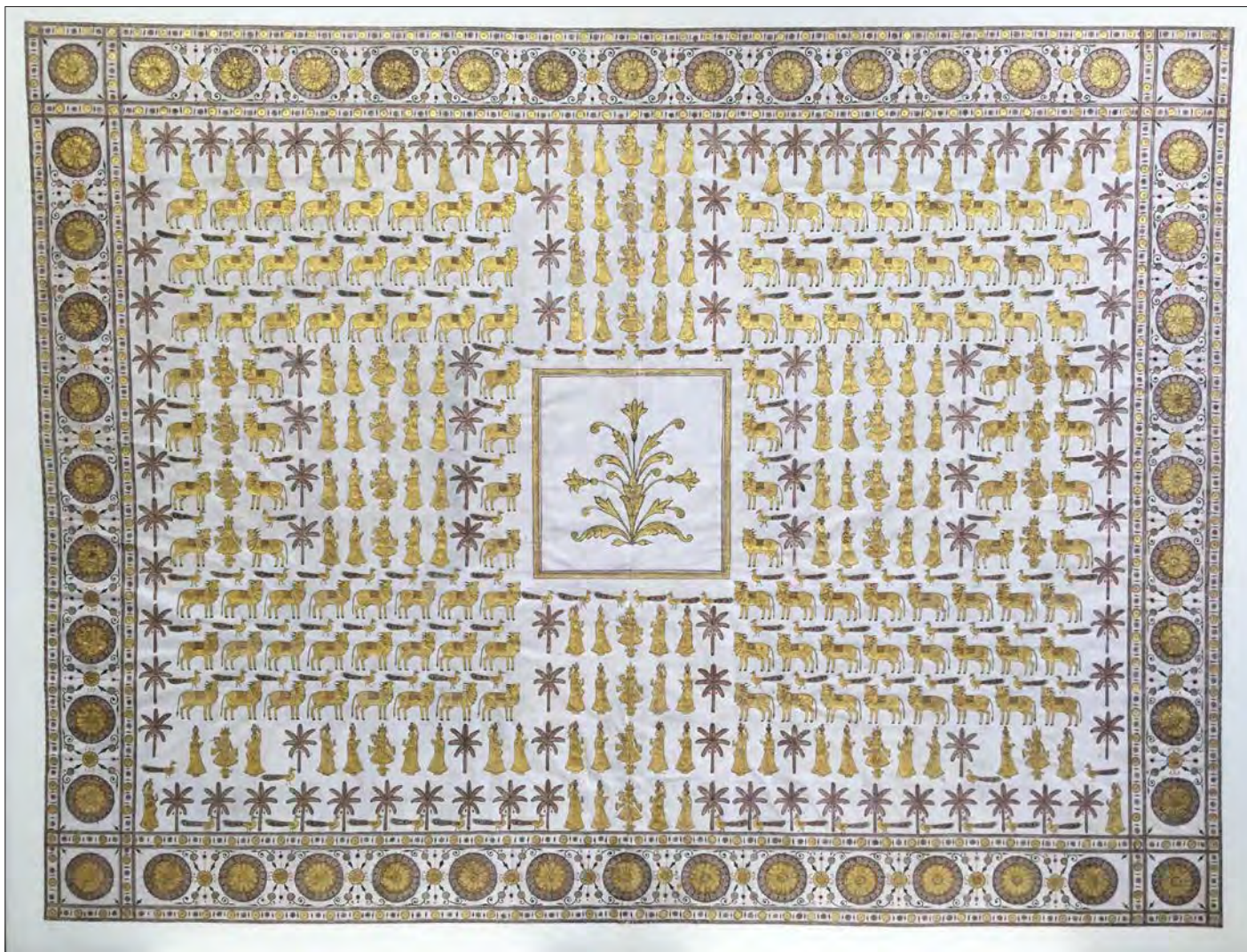
The textile was a large (181 x 289cm) picchwai, or picchvai (I had also never encountered this word before). Picchwais are typically large paintings on cloth relating to the worship of Krishna. They were commissioned for temples and shrines, often for specific festivals, and hang behind the altar. This picchwai celebrates the festival of Gopashtami, the festival of cows, and represents a significant day for worshippers of

Krishna, marking the day in which Krishna is elevated from aherder of calves to a fully-fledged cowherd.

Although most picchwais originate from Gujarat and Rajasthan, this piece was produced in the Deccan. It is decorated in opaque pigments, gold and silver leaf on a cotton ground fabric. A central square contains a floral spray, which is surrounded by multiple rows of Krishna as the cowherd flanked by gopis (milkmaids) and cows, and other motifs of peacocks and palm trees. The main field is surrounded by a border of flowerheads and foliate motifs. The profuse use of gold and silver is typical of Deccani picchwais, which began to be produced after a community of Sri Nath-ji devotees moved to the region. The symmetrical and ordered style of the floral spray to the centre typifies the influence of the Mughal aesthetic in the Deccan, which assimilates with the typically Rajasthani subject matter.

In this case the picchwai was made using a waraq printing technique, a process wherein gold or silver leaf is applied onto the textile through a transfer technique using blocks.

The finished article – the picchwai after treatment



Images: Emma Telford





A detail from the border before and after treatment

A base layer, typically roghan paste made from linseed oil mixed with chalk and sometimes pigments, would be stamped on the fabric using blocks. The waraq (leaf) was then applied while the gum was moist. Over the top of the waraq, and directly on the substrate, fine detail had been painted using black, red and green pigments.

## CONDITION

The textile was in a poor condition. The cotton ground fabric, whilst structurally sound, was very soiled and stained throughout. The gilded motifs exhibited extensive cracking, a common feature with this type of printing, caused by shrinkage in the base layer as it dries after the gold and silver leaf has been applied. In particular, the foliate motifs in the borders, where the base layer had been applied more thickly, had sustained quite significant losses in places, as the materials had cracked and lost their adhesion to the textile. Remaining elements were flaking and loosely bonded.

The overall aesthetic impression was one where there was little definition of design due to the heavy soiling of the substrate, and damage to the border motifs so extensive that some were almost entirely obliterated. The figures and animals in the main field had fared better, apparently due to a thinner base layer, and whilst there were losses to the gilding, this was much less extensive.

## TREATMENT PLAN

The client wanted the textile to be 'restored to its former glory'. Who among us in the freelance world hasn't heard that before? I had no idea where to start, and I usually find it is helpful to consult other specialists in these circumstances.

I sent samples to historic paint consultant Catherine Hassall for analysis, and this revealed several useful things: the silver leaf and the gold leaf were both applied using an oil gilding technique, and this encouraged me to think that an aqueous treatment might be possible.

The gold leaf was laid over a yellow oil size tinted with finely ground iron oxide yellow.

The silver leaf was laid over a clear oil size. EDX analysis showed that the metal was pure silver, and not an alloy as was sometimes used. A thin layer of yellowish varnish was applied over the top, presumably to inhibit corrosion and discolouration of the silver.

The pink ground layer was a mixture of a white clay, zinc oxide white, some red and brown iron oxides and a small amount of the pigment chrome yellow [lead chromate].

The presence of the pigments chrome yellow and zinc oxide means the ground must have been applied to this textile in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. Chrome yellow was first introduced as a pigment in 1819, so I fixed that as the earliest this textile could have been made.

I also asked Kath Lloyd Haslam, a gilding specialist, to come and take a look at the textile and I was able to use her expertise to develop a treatment plan.

## CLEANING TRIALS

I wanted to trial some cleaning to the ground fabric and was pleased to find that the soiling started to shift when I used a pipette with the textile on a vacuum suction table. I screened off all but an area 5cm square, so the suction was quite powerful, and was relieved to see that the gilding was stable using this method.





Images: Emma Telford

A detail from the centre design before and after cleaning

However, the overpainted green, red and black pigments were highly fugitive if there was the slightest contact with the pipette, and I knew if this kind of localised cleaning approach were to be at all successful, I had to find a method that allowed me to clean up to and around each small detail in the design without making contact with any of the pigments, and without taking several years to complete.

This was a significant challenge because the textile was large and many of the motifs were elaborately decorated – each peacock had tail feathers made from multiple very fine brush strokes of black pigment, for example, and there was a considerable amount of painting directly onto the cotton as well. There was also an imperative to work quickly to minimise the potential for any absorption of water by the pink ground layer, which I anticipated may cause some swelling.

Looking into the tools available for such a job I quickly found that most involved either steam, or humidity, neither of which I wanted. Bespoke conservation tools often run into thousands of pounds, and such investment is not always either possible or desirable for a small studio where one may not require the use of it more than once or twice. What I needed was a micro pressure washer, and after recalling seeing something like this being used when my children were at the orthodontist, I shopped around and found the Waterpik flosser, under £80 on Amazon. It was perfect for my purposes.

A jet of water is propelled (with a variable pressure) from a small pencil-like tool, with a range of heads, including a 2mm silicone nozzle, and a small nylon brush, which are what I used. In conjunction with the vacuum suction table and using only cold de-ionised water, I was able to clean around each motif first with the silicon nozzle for accuracy, and then the larger areas in between with the brush. A good level of cleaning was able to be obtained in this way, and as the water was drawn through the textile, I avoided any saturation of the base layer under the gilding.

## FURTHER TREATMENT

After cleaning, the next stage in the treatment was consolidation of the gilded motifs, and for this I took advice from Kath Lloyd Haslam. During her visit we trialled a consolidant, Primal WS24, an acrylic colloidal dispersion, water-based and odourless. This was mixed in a ratio of 20:1 water: consolidant, and was applied to each motif using a small brush. It was highly effective at stabilizing all fragmenting and flaking material.

Kath also made suggestions for possibilities for in-filling losses to the gilded motifs. It was quickly obvious that replacing lost gilding with new was not appropriate colour-wise, and we settled on Goldens acrylic paint for this, which has a really

The effect of cleaning in progress can be clearly seen



Images: Emma Telford





Image: Emma Telford

Cleaning in progress on the suction table

close colour match for old gilding. More than one layer of paint was often required to build up the in-fill to get a similar depth to the original although there was no intention to try and conceal the presence of the in-fill.

For silver losses I used the same acrylics but needed to mix these as there was a great deal of variety in the colour. I used Liquitex acrylic inks (also mixed to colour-match) to apply overpainting detail. It is uncommon when working with textiles to 'colour in' or in-fill areas of lost pigment and although I have done it before I have usually used watercolours.

I think there can be an ethical argument against the use of pigments which are irreversible, and I was clear with the client that this was a permanent change. The principle of reversibility is an important one to bear in mind when one formulates any treatment plan but my view is that each object must be treated according to its condition, provenance, historic significance and client wishes and the aesthetic integrity of a piece such as this is as important as the physical. Any type of cleaning of course is also irreversible, and I trust readers will agree that it was worthwhile in this case.

Following treatment, the textile was stitched onto a padded board and framed.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

It was an absolute privilege to work on this unusual textile, and I hope fellow conservators will find the treatment I have described interesting and potentially useful.

The waterpik



Images: Emma Telford





The Waterpik in action



Working around the motifs with the silicone nozzle

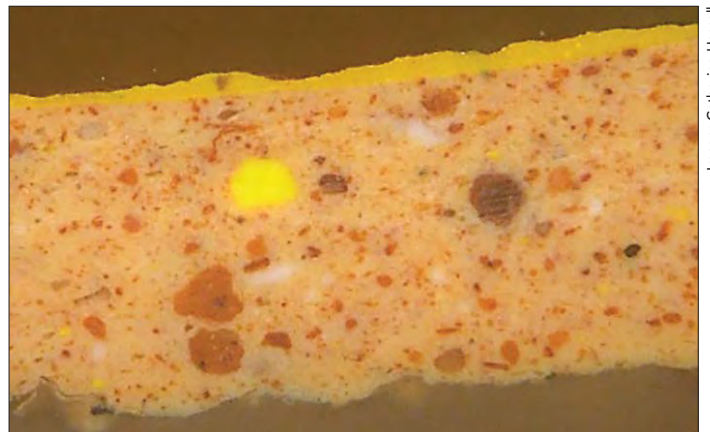
Many will recognise the challenges of working in private practice without the support of a well-equipped institutional conservation studio, but finding economical, novel treatment solutions is a universal imperative when faced with complex objects and an ambitious client brief.

If you are interested, there are more photographs and short bits of video of the Waterpik in action and an enormous piece of glass being installed in the frame on my Instagram page @historictextileconservation.

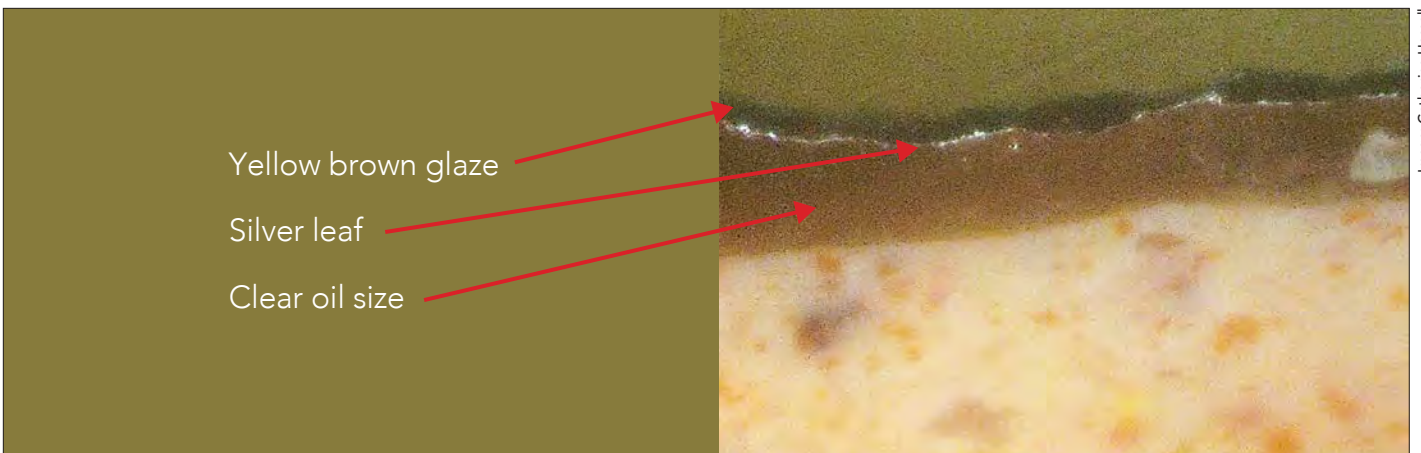
### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Catherine Hassall and Kath Lloyd Haslam for their expertise, and also Radhana Raheja, PhD student at the University of Delhi, for her helpful contribution on the history and manufacture of waraq printed textiles.

A cross section of the gold decoration showing the thick pink ground



Detail of the silver decoration in cross section





# the emerging conservator

## JOINING FORCES

**Students at the West Dean College of Arts and Conservation, Marie-Luise Rönsch and Ben Hall, collaborate on the treatment of a George III long case clock**

## INTRODUCTION

Conservation projects requiring multiple specialisms can often be difficult to organise and carry out, as conservators of the various specialisms usually do not work under the same roof, which makes it challenging to discuss issues as they emerge and can result in delays and the prolongation of the process. This is not the case at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation – with a wide range of conservation departments, including ceramics, books, metals, clocks and furniture, gathered in one and the same building, good advice is always at a convenient distance.

This unique opportunity came into play during the conservation treatment of a long case clock belonging to the collection of West Dean House. The movement of the clock was treated by clocks conservation student Ben Hall (Intern, Clock Conservation), while the case was worked on by furniture conservation student Marie-Luise Rönsch (MA Conservation Studies).

## DATING THE CLOCK

The stylistic classification and therefore dating of the clock was a first motivator for collaboration. Based on the distinctive expertise of conservators from different specialisms, interdisciplinary discourse is an invaluable source of information in the identification of objects combining components from different object groups. It often results in a very accurate assessment of the age and sometimes even geographic provenience of objects.

### The furniture evidence

From the perspective of the history of furniture, the clock case can be classified as Georgian. This conclusion is based on stylistic elements such as the overall architectural design of the case, the classic ornamentation, such as the carved rosettes and fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, as well as the choice of mahogany as the primary material.

The somewhat unusual design of the hood combines elements of the classic (Corinthian columns), French (pierced lattice fretwork resembling the *treillis Régence*) and Asian (the pagoda-style roof). The fact that this is an almost exact realisation of a design from Chippendale's book *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*, further reinforces this assessment. The *Director* was published in 1754, hence the clock case could be dated to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### The clock evidence

A more exact dating was possible due to the style of the clock's movement, which is weight driven with two separate wheel trains, of eight-day duration with an unusual

Marie-Luise Rönsch admires her and Ben's handiwork in the College



West Dean College of Arts and Conservation





The batten introduced to the bottom of the spine (the boards forming the back of the clock case) to increase the stability of the construction

quarter striking system. The break arch dial has a silvered brass arc at the top signed *William Pridgin, Hull*, and within the arch is the painted form of a rolling moon with the space between the full-moon faces featuring a landscape scene dating from around the 1770s onwards. There are large gaps in the dial plate behind the chapter ring, which tend to be a feature of Northern English clocks.

Both the hour, minutes and seconds hands are of blued steel and are non-symmetrical. Matching hands only started appearing in the 1770s. Four gilt spandrels in Rococo style (1740-1770) adorn the corners of the dial around the chapter ring and the movement has an anchor recoil escapement regulated by a pendulum, striking on the quarters and on the hour, plus a rack of three bells, with date, seconds and moon phase mechanisms.

William Pridgin of York and Hull was apprenticed in 1756 to William Thornton (*UK Register of Duties paid for Apprentices' indentures, 1710-1811. Payment: January 1763*). William became a freeman of the city in 1778 and worked in York, where he had a shop in Collier Gate in 1787 and later at Coney Street in York. Information from Hull Museums Collections indicates that he also had premises in Silver Street, Hull in 1767. There is an example of a similar style of clock dial by John Baker of Hull dated to around 1760.

False edge from jelutong attached along the top edge of the door to close the gap between carcass and door



To drill the holes for the screws fixing the batten to the spine the creation of a bespoke drill handle made from Polymorph (a thermoplastic polymer) was necessary due to the limited space inside the carcass

As clocks are dynamic objects and have usually had many repairs and alterations over time, it is always wise to consider all the components, alterations and witness marks when dating a clock; however, all the research indicates the dating of this clock to be between 1770 and 1780.

## CONDITION ISSUES

### The clock

Close inspection revealed the overall condition of the movement to be poor. Dirt and dust had formed a thick layer. The oil had run dry forming hard green deposits, and rust was present on some of the steel parts - the most concerning being the working parts and contact faces. Intervention was needed immediately to stop further deterioration. Several 19<sup>th</sup> century repairs had been made; dates etched into the movement plates by earlier clockmakers/repairers support this and show that it has been through more than a few workshops in its life.





© Marie-Luise Rönsch

Pagoda-roof of the hood, area to the right: surface already cleaned with lukewarm deionised water

The movement was fully disassembled and mechanically cleaned by hand using a variety of techniques to remove all the dirt, dust, oil deposits and rust. Having previously observed the clock in its environment, it had been noticed that it was not striking the hours or quarters correctly. Further investigation revealed that friction arising from worn components was causing them to stick in one position. This was carefully rectified to restore a functioning striking system.

### The clock case

Meanwhile in the furniture conservation workshop: the assessment of the clock case led to the conclusion that it was in an overall acceptable condition. The main issues to be addressed were the compromised stability of the spine (i.e. the board(s) forming the back of the clock case), the deficient closing of the door due to warping and the generally quite polluted polished surface.

Wax accumulations around the rosettes before cleaning in lukewarm deionised water



© Marie-Luise Rönsch



© Marie-Luise Rönsch

Half-capital, condition after retouching with mica pigments and the application of a protective coating of Paraloid B72 to the whole surface with airbrush

The reinforcement of the spine had to be carefully considered, as most of the damage was caused by fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity - environmental conditions that could not be entirely excluded in the future, due to the traditional position of the clock facing the entrance hall. This issue was approached, first, by only partially filling in splits with Jelutong (a south-east Asian timber) to allow expansion and contraction of the original wood and, secondly, by introducing a support structure.

This specific aspect was once more a reason to consult the clocks department, as any components added to the inside of the carcass could be a hindrance to the mechanism - specifically the weights.

Based on the exact requirements and information provided by Ben, a batten made from pine was introduced at the bottom end of the spine. The batten was glued to the bottom boards of the base and screwed to the spine. The slots housing the screws were created in an oval shape to allow some movement of the boards of the spine without bearing the potential of causing further damage.

To prevent dust from permeating into the carcass and compromising the functioning of the movement, a solution had to be found to both close the gap caused by the warping of the door and to restore the functionality of the lock. To close the gap, a false edge of Jelutong was glued to the top edge of the door from the inside. As for the closing mechanism, a plate of mahogany of 4 mm thickness with a cavity to house the bolts was attached to the inside of the carcass to compensate for the deformation of the door.

The visual inspection of the polished surface revealed an interesting discrepancy in the gloss level of the proper left side of the carcass in comparison to all other polished areas. This observation was confirmed by the use of a Glossmeter. During examination under UV light this area showed a milky,





The clock dial

blueish fluorescence, which is fairly common for nitrocellulose polishes, whereas all other areas showed the orange fluorescence characteristic for shellac-based polishes. This finding, however, did not interfere with the method of cleaning: after initial solvent tests it was established that slightly warm de-ionised water could be used not only to remove pollution but also to thin down accumulations of wax and to redistribute the remaining wax to achieve an even appearance of the polished surface.

### SEEKING ADVICE ON METAL ELEMENTS

The treatment of the brass mounts, i.e. the bases and capitals of the columns, was one more aspect of this project to require support from another conservation specialism.

Due to the complex nature of the oxidation and corrosion present on the surface of the mounts, multiple consultations with West Dean's metals tutor Eric Nordgren were necessary to come up with a solution and subsequently a satisfactory outcome. Had these consultations not been as easy to





© Ben Hall

Non-matching hands add to the dating evidence. The minute hand has been bent at some point to stop minute and hour hand contacting.



© Ben Hall

After the clock's movement was disassembled, a mother of pearl scraper, amongst other tools, was used to remove corrosion and rust from steel parts



© Ben Hall

Back of the dial showing the large gaps in the dial plate – a feature of Northern English clocks

organise in-house, delays would likely have been the result. Another great thing about these conversations was the opportunity to learn more about metals conservation and thus, as a furniture conservator, being able to treat smaller, less-complicated metal parts, of which there can be many in furniture. (Of course: always within the spectrum of competence!)

In November the long case clock was finally returned to its traditional place, presiding over the entrance hall of West Dean College and announcing the time with bell-like strokes.

*West Dean College of Arts and Conservation has an international reputation for excellence and is a full partner of the University of Sussex. For more information on foundation diploma to masters study in Conservation and Fine Art, please see [www.westdean.ac.uk](http://www.westdean.ac.uk).*

Detail of the landscape scene in the moon face phase showing chips to the paint



© Ben Hall

Manual cleaning of the movement's components using peg wood to remove hard oil deposits and dirt



© Ben Hall



Disassembled components of the  
George III clock movement treated at  
West Dean College of Arts and Conservation  
© Ben Hall







Detail of a flowerhead motif from the border of a gilded textile - a Hindu picchwai - after treatment.  
Image: Emma Telford