

FROM ICON, THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Iconnect

MAGAZINE

Spring 2023 Issue 2

Top Gun

WWI industrial heritage project at Scapa Flow Museum

PLUS:

Small steps to sustainability

Working with ancient Egyptian coffins

'Use it or lose it' in buildings conservation

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WELCOME



One of Icon's key objectives this year is to investigate ways it can support the development of new skills to fill gaps identified within the conservation profession

part of Icon's steering group currently researching the skills gap in industrial heritage – was also asked if she could reflect on some of the challenges currently faced by NMRM, including an overreliance on volunteers (page 42).

I do appreciate that only a small percentage of Icon's membership is made up of conservators who specialise in industrial heritage. However, the more I learn about Icon's members, the more I realise that often what is 'true' for one specialism is also 'true' for others. And if I can return to the serendipitous nature of this issue of *Iconnect* magazine, when Julie Dawson reflects on how her work with Icon's Accreditation Committee was a personally formative experience (page 30), she comments: "A large part of that was the insights it gave me into conservation specialisms – such as the preservation and treatment of industrial machinery, which, on the surface, seemed a world away from my own." As always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Karen Young, Editor

Isn't it a great feeling when you're working on a project and everything seems to come together organically?

That's certainly how I feel about this issue of *Iconnect* magazine. Don't get me wrong – as always, a great deal of planning went into the content and design, and while we had every intention of shining a spotlight on industrial heritage, it's been quite lovely to see how a few of our regular features have naturally touched on this specialism, more by chance than design.

One of Icon's key objectives this year is to investigate ways it can support the development of skills within the conservation profession and following a successful bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Icon has received a grant to investigate workforce challenges and skills shortages specifically affecting industrial heritage conservation.

To highlight the need for experienced and specialist conservators working in this field, as well as the invaluable work they do to safeguard objects of historical significance, we invited Ian Clark ACR to provide a case study that focuses on the conservation of a gun from a World War I German navy ship for the newly opened Scapa Flow Museum (page 12). Icon Trustee, Diana Davis ACR – who is Head of Conservation at the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) and



***Iconnect* – a portmanteau**

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

Connect – verb;
to join, link, or fasten together; unite or bind – to bring together or into contact so that a real or notional link is established

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THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE

A month after the new magazine arrived in our office I did exactly what I said I would in my previous welcome. I carried a small pile of *Iconnect* magazines in my backpack to give to a group of architects and conservation advisors who had kindly invited me to join them at their weekly staff lunch. The gift was enthusiastically received and I hope that my hosts will benefit from learning a little more about the wonderful and engaging work that conservators and heritage scientists carry out.

Colleagues and members will be aware of the tragic death of Mel Houston ACR at the beginning of 2023. You can read a touching tribute to Mel later in the magazine but on behalf of the staff and trustees I would like to express our deep sadness at the loss of a valued trustee, respected professional and a warm-hearted and generous individual.

Meeting with colleagues in the built environment sector is always something I enjoy, given my architectural background, but I also believe that it is important that we foster understanding and mutual respect across all the professions who work in the cultural heritage sector. We will therefore be working to raise the profile of the conservation of buildings and architectural heritage in our advocacy and policy work in the coming months. Icon should be seen as the natural home for everyone who works in conversation and restoration, regardless of whether their specialist skills are more likely to be found on the building site or in a museum.

Finally, there is a truism that the only constant is change and this applies to Icon as much as everything else. Members will be aware of the appointment of our brilliant new Chair – Emma Chaplin – who takes up her post in April. Sadly, I will not have the opportunity to work with Emma for long as I will be leaving Icon in May, to take up a new role outside the heritage sector. I have enjoyed four hugely stimulating (if sometimes challenging) years leading Icon and I know that I will miss the colleagues and members who have become good friends. But rest assured, I will continue to look forward to reading my copy of *Iconnect* magazine and will certainly stay in touch.

Sara Crofts, Chief Executive



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INSIDE

REGULARS

- 03** EDITOR'S LETTER
- 05** CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S WELCOME
- 08** NEWS AND IMPROV
- 22** PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLICY
- 24** EMERGING PROFESSIONAL
- 37** GROUPS AND NETWORKS
- 42** EDUCATION MATTERS
- 46** ICON'S PEOPLE
- 49** CAREERS IN CONSERVATION
- 50** CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

FEATURES

- 12** GUNS AT THE READY
Ian Clark ACR shares a case study of a recent project completed on behalf of the Scapa Flow Museum
- 18** GOING IT ALONE
The transition from public to private sector: Siobhan Stevenson reflects on her experience
- 21** AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION
Alex Owen and Verena Kotonski ACR discuss a less hazardous solvent being bench tested at the British Museum

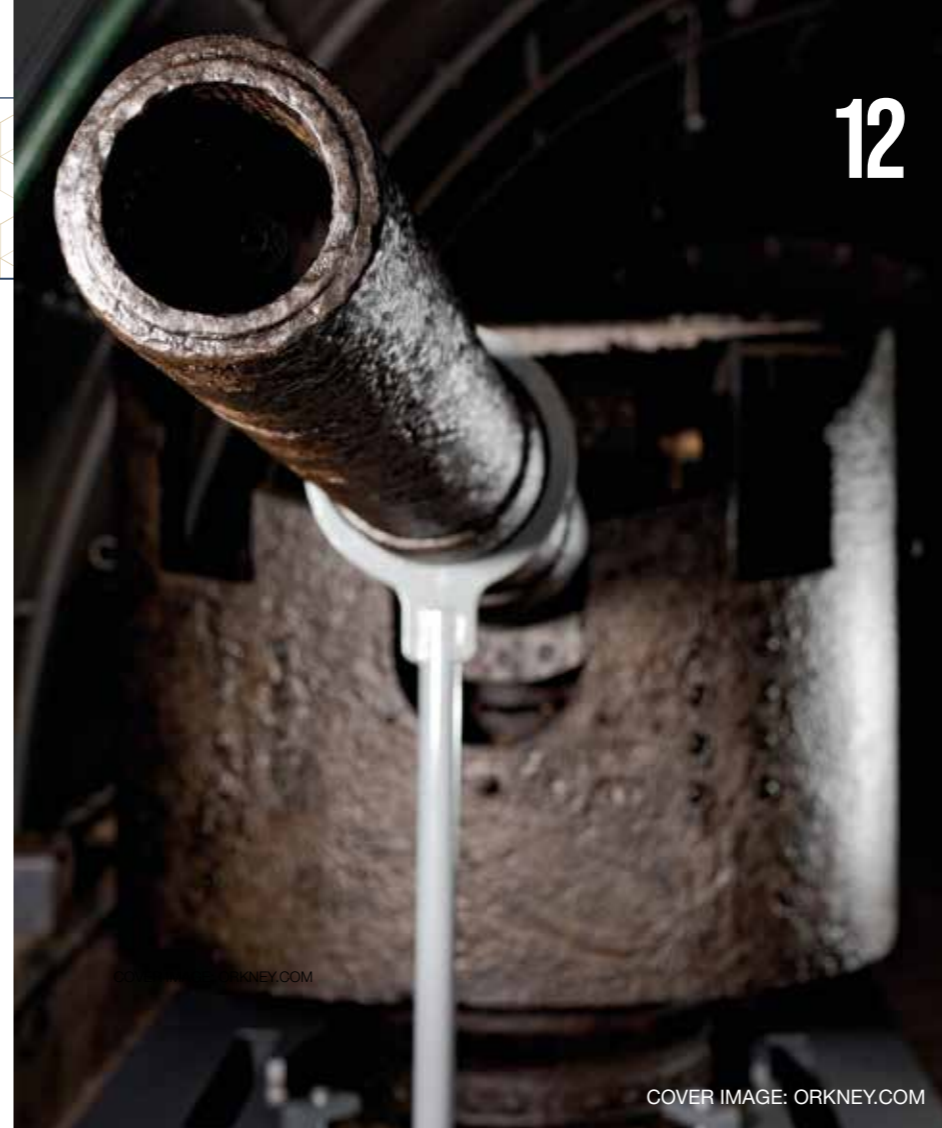


30

42

8

24



COVER IMAGE: ORKNEY.COM

26 SMALL STEPS TO SUSTAINABILITY
Lorraine Finch ACR shares an excerpt from her book, *Low Cost/No Cost Tips for Sustainability in Cultural Heritage*

28 THE PROOF IS IN THE PACKAGING
Alexandra Wade discusses some of the practical methods used to tackle waste at London Metropolitan Archives

30 ON REFLECTION
Julie Dawson talks about her work with ancient Egyptian coffins, the benefits of outreach work and improving diversity and inclusion in the industry

34 CONSERVING THE FABRIC OF A BUILDING
Charlotte Owen shares her views on Icon's 2022 Annual Lecture and the concept of 'use it or lose it' within cultural property

12

PROTECTING THE FUTURE

Iconnect

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

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With thanks to this issue's key contributors



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Siobhan Stevenson ACR



Alex Owen



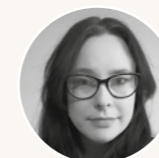
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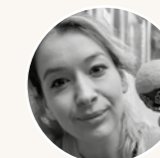
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Diana Davis ACR



Michael Sheppard ACR



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Dr Duncan Marks



Below: Project lead, Emily Howe, and research assistant, Florence Eccleston, cataloguing material from the Survey



THE COURTAULD LAUNCHES NATIONAL WALL PAINTINGS SURVEY PROJECT

Conservators at The Courtauld have started work on an ambitious project to catalogue, digitise and publish online the Institute's celebrated National Wall Paintings Survey archive.

Started in the early 1980s by Professor David Park, the survey is a vast and nationally important resource, containing records of all known British medieval wall paintings as well as extensive material on post-medieval schemes of painted decoration. The archive includes photographic records, conservation reports and previously unpublished art-historical research, and documents the UK's most lavish courtly and ecclesiastical murals alongside paintings in more humble domestic contexts.

The wealth of images held in the survey provides an exceptional record of the condition of the nation's wall paintings and are an essential point of reference for both scholars and those responsible for the ongoing care of these works. The survey also contains material from the archives of pioneering wall painting conservators such as EW Tristram and Eve Baker, the illustrated research notes of renowned antiquarian Edward

Croft-Murray, and Muriel Carrick's comprehensive documentation of domestic decorative schemes.

Launched in February last year with generous funding from the Paul Mellon Centre, Pilgrim Trust and Marc Fitch Fund, this three-year initiative seeks to improve the accessibility of the survey and stimulate important new research into the conservation of Britain's mural heritage. Supported by a project advisory group made up of stakeholders from across the academic and heritage communities, as well as conservators working in private practice, the project aspires to create a dynamic, online database of the survey's digitised content which will provide valuable insights into the significance of the nation's wall paintings and evolving approaches to their care.

An initial project phase, completed in January this year, has seen the archive fully audited and – for the first time – electronically catalogued, which means it is now possible to search the survey not only for a specific site, but also by date or iconography. Individual catalogue entries include information such as site location, building name, painting descriptions and dates, and provide

an overview of the types of material held. In time, the catalogue will be migrated into a bespoke, Spectrum-compliant information management system, with entries linked to digital assets including images, unpublished research and conservation reports.

Digitisation of some of the most important resources held within the survey will be carried out over the next two years and the scope of this work will be determined in consultation with those who study and care for wall paintings across the UK. It is hoped that the National Wall Paintings Survey database will become a dynamic and collaborative repository for documents relating to our mural heritage and help inform more sustainable approaches to their conservation.

An interdisciplinary research symposium is planned for the conclusion of the project in 2025. In the meantime, the project team would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in consulting or contributing to the survey.

Source: The Courtauld



For more information or to contact staff at The Courtauld please scan the QR code

REPORT INDICATES 3% DECLINE IN INSECT PESTS BUT PROBLEMATIC CHANGES IN THEIR BREEDING SEASON



NATIONAL TRUST, SAM MILLING



HISTORIONICS

Five most prevalent insect pests reported in 2022

1. Silverfish (*Lepisma saccharina*) – which increased by 14%
2. Webbing clothes moth (*Tineola bisselliella*)
3. Booklice (*Liposcelis bostrychophila*)
4. Woolly bear (carpet beetle larvae)
5. Australian spider beetle (*Ptinus tectus*)

The latest annual insect pests report produced by the National Trust shows that the overall number of webbing clothes moth (*Tineola bisselliella*) fell by 39% in 2022 compared to figures taken in 2021, and that overall insect counts fell by 3%.

However, data gathered from National Trust properties across England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the 2022 report also suggest that the two main breeding seasons for insect pests appear to be merging.

Icon Pathway member and Assistant National Conservator

for the National Trust, Hilary Jarvis, (pictured) who compiled the report, said: "Traditionally we've been used to two distinct spring and summer breeding periods, one often more productive than the other. But certainly with our indoor insects we're noticing a waning difference. This seems to echo the increasingly protracted warmer weather we're seeing these days, with earlier springs heralding a summer that often extends into a longer, mild autumn."

"Are the two periods morphing into one long breeding season for our indoor pests? If breeding was to happen anytime between late February and October, that's potentially concerning and would certainly put more pressure on our house conservation teams."

Hilary concludes that with so many potential drivers of insect activity, it's not easy to predict what might happen next with any insect pest. "Our main job is to keep robust records of the typical insect profile in our houses, so we can be alert to changes and potential risks and be ready for action – that's exactly what our annual report helps us to do." Source: National Trust

NEW BBC TWO SERIES SHINES A SPOTLIGHT ON CONSERVATION WORK

Following on from *Secrets of the Museum*, which explored the V&A's archives and exhibitions, BBC Arts has commissioned a new series that explores the behind-the-scenes work being carried out at National Trust properties across Britain.

Hidden Treasures of the National Trust, which starts in May on BBC Two, follows conservators, other experts, staff and volunteers as they help to preserve the

properties and objects in their care, for the benefit of future generations.

Projects showcased in the series range from the restoration of an ornate 19th-century Chinese bridge at Biddulph Grange Garden near Stoke-on-Trent, to the expert cleaning of a model of a Normandy harbour used by Winston Churchill in the planning of D-Day.

Pictured right are Emma McCullough and Niamh Hanlon cleaning a chandelier at Castle Ward. Located near the village of Strangford in County Down, Northern Ireland, Castle Ward



ANGUS GIBSON

ANCHOR FINDS A NEW HOME AT THE HISTORIC DOCKYARD CHATHAM

An anchor believed to date back to the late 1800s that was recently recovered from the Thames riverbed by the Port of London Authority (PLA) has now found a home at The Historic Dockyard Chatham ahead of going on public display.

The anchor was detected by the PLA during a routine survey to identify changes to the riverbed and any objects that could pose a navigational risk for vessels. It weighs more than five tonnes and is 15ft tall yet at the time of writing the origin of the anchor remains a mystery.

Karoline Sofie Hennem, a conservator at Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust and Icon Pathway

member, says: “As the anchor has been resting on the seabed for quite some time, it has started rusting. We estimate that, alongside working on other projects, the conservation process could take up to two years to complete due to the anchor’s size. When this has been completed, I will treat the surface with a coating to protect it from external deterioration sources. I am really looking forward to collaborating with our Heritage Engineering and Historic Ships Manager, James Morgan, to ensure the anchor survives for many more years to come.”

Source: Port of London Authority, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust



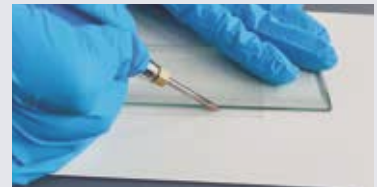
Above: James Morgan and Karoline Sofie Hennem in front of the anchor

Correction: In the article, A Spotlight on Colour Change (*Iconnect*, Issue 1, pp20-22), by Vincent Laudato Beltran, please note that on page 22, Vincent Beltran was omitted as the lead author of *Microfading Tester: Light Sensitivity Assessment and Role in Lighting Policy*. The opening sentence should read: ‘The aim of this 2021 document - *Microfading Tester: Light Sensitivity Assessment and Role in Lighting Policy*, by the author, Christel Pesme, Sarah K. Freeman and Mark Benson - is to establish a baseline of knowledge for MFT users and stakeholders involved in lighting policy.’ Our sincere apologies to the author for this omission.



IMPROV

Photograph Conservator Luisa Casella explains how to use a soldering iron to seal polyester film



A soldering iron has a temperature range from 200°C to 480°C. It can be used to seal polyester film (approximate melting point 255°C) to itself, making custom enclosures, or to spot weld to cellulosic materials, creating protected areas or pockets within a page. The seal can be continuous, dotted or dashed, the latter allowing for minimal adhesion.

To seal the film to itself, work over a tempered glass surface. Use gloves and clean inner surfaces with a microfibre cloth, a soft brush or air bulb, as film attracts lint and is easily marred by fingerprints. A glass ruler that is unaffected by temperature creates a sharp seal. Scoring over the seal line multiple times will result in a clean sealed edge. For spot welding, such as onto paper, one pass is sufficient.

The tool can also be used to make sharp, straight creases in polyester; to make v-channels for edge mounting; to seal unspun polyester web into breathable pouches for washing small fragments; and as a heated spatula by attaching custom hot tips. Rechargeable iron models prevent having cords in the work area.

Visit Luisa’s Instagram account for more tips: @conservation_tips



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With a background rooted in both mechanical engineering and industrial conservation, I have been a passionate supporter of the industrial heritage sector for more than four decades, founding my own business, Ian Clark Restoration (ICR), in 1983.

This recent 40-year milestone seems a timely opportunity to share some insights into a conservation project that ICR recently completed in Lyness, Orkney, on behalf of the Scapa Flow Museum. I hope that it highlights the historical significance and physical beauty of just one of the many industrial, maritime and architectural objects I have had the pleasure to conserve over the course of my career.

But more importantly, I hope it also brings to the fore how emerging conservators hoping to work in this field must be able to access relevant vocational and academic learning pathways to equip them with the essential engineering and conservation skills and experience they will need if we are to sustain this valuable sector and the cultural heritage that falls under our care.

The SMS Bremse gun

The old Royal Navy pump house at Lyness, along with one of the original oil storage tanks, were purchased by

Engineering and industrial heritage conservator **Ian Clark ACR** shares his recent experience working at the Scapa Flow Museum on the care and conservation of a rare WWI German naval gun

GUNS AT THE READY

the Orkney Islands Council from the Ministry of Defence in 1980 for use as a museum. It originally opened to the public in 1990, having been refurbished by the Special Projects Unit of the Orkney Islands Council, but it did not become a part of the Museums Service until 2000.

The Scapa Flow Museum has just gone through a major £4.4 million refurbishment, including a new building to house a significant amount of the collection. This means that fragile artefacts, including textiles and paper, can be exhibited safely for the first time. The museum tells the story of the naval base at

Scapa Flow during both World Wars, as well as the scuttling of the German Fleet and subsequent salvage operations.

The Imperial German Navy 15cm SK/L 45 gun from the minelaying cruiser, SMS Bremse, is one of the jewels in the crown of the Scapa Flow Museum collections. Commissioned in July 1916, Bremse joined the German fleet just after the Battle of Jutland.

As well as minelaying, Bremse and her sister Brummer carried out a successful raid on a British convoy to Norway in January 1917, sinking two Royal Navy destroyers and nine merchant ships. Bremse and Brummer were among the most modern German ships and, as fast minelaying cruisers, they were an innovative design, and both were selected by the victorious Allies for internment at Scapa Flow at the end of the war. Both sank when Admiral von Reuter ordered the fleet to scuttle itself on 21 June 1919.

Brummer remains on the seabed, but Bremse was salvaged and broken up at Lyness between 1929 and 1931. The gun, however, was removed, presumably to save weight as the ship was a very



Left: The newly opened Scapa Flow Museum

Right: The gun on display at the gallery



complex salvage challenge, lying on her side and perched precariously on a rock south of the island of Cava on the edge of deep water. It remained on the bottom until 1989 when it was recovered by Orkney Sub-Aqua Club with the assistance of Occidental Petroleum Limited and presented to the Scapa Flow Museum.

This gun is highly significant. It is believed that only five German naval guns from World War I survive above the water in the UK, of which three are at the Scapa Flow Museum.

Condition and care

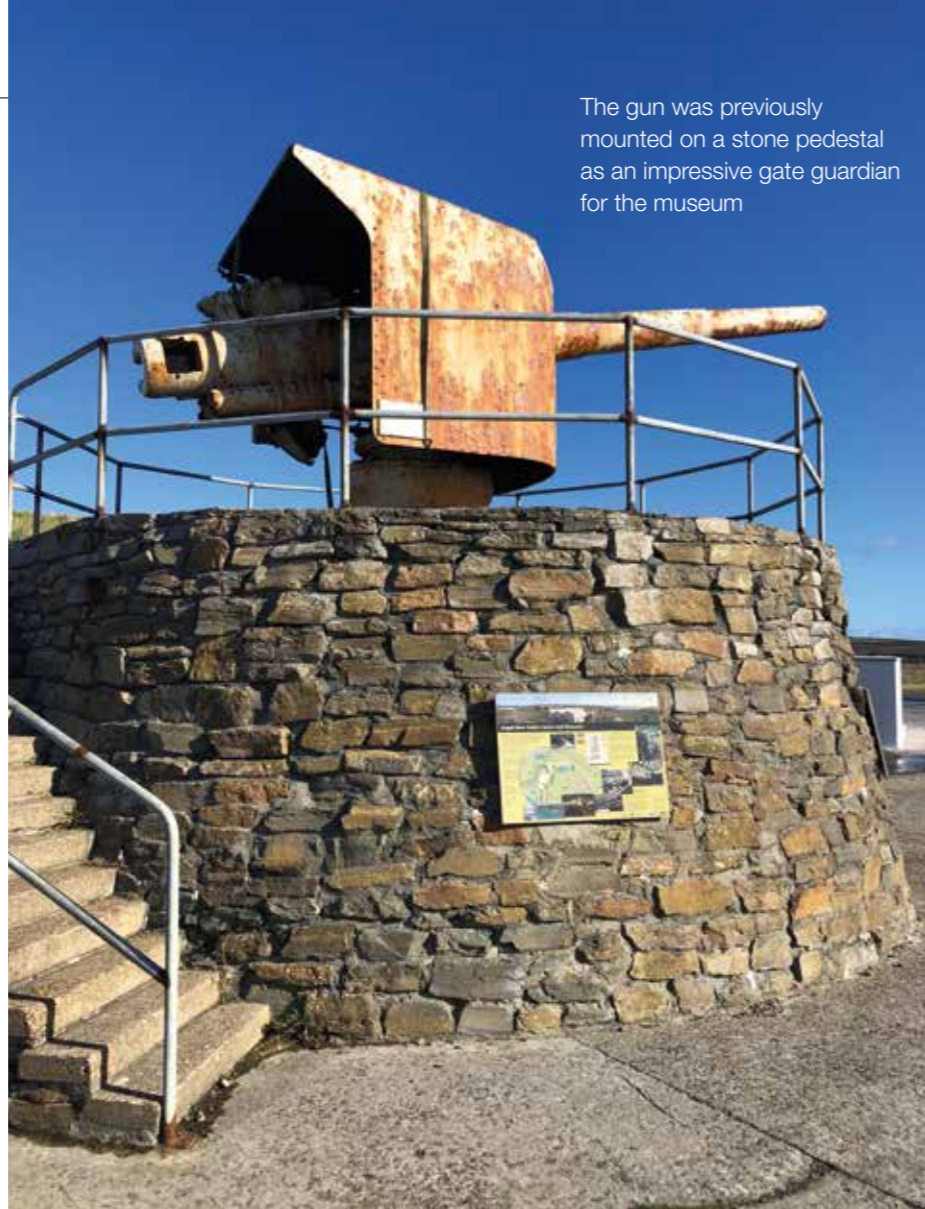
The gun had been displayed since 1989 in an outdoor location in its full form, embedded within a raised viewing position.

The environment on the island of Hoy and the wider Scapa Flow landscape would be categorised as C5, as defined for industrial areas with high humidity and aggressive atmosphere, and coastal areas with high salinity.

This environment is typical for military coastal artillery fixed-gun batteries and provides an added layer of complexity when defining a conservation methodology that is proportionate to both the object and interpretive parameters, such as where it should ideally be displayed to provide the most appropriate protection and interpretive best value.

An integral element within the Scapa Flow Museum visitor and collections care development plan was the decision to conserve the gun and move it to an indoor and protected location. This decision relaxed a number of pivotal conservation drivers and enabled the conservation methodology to consider a strategy that removed the previous challenges of safeguarding the condition of such a rare and historically significant military artefact in an exposed and environmentally aggressive location.

However, the change in display environment did not remove the complexity of the task to conserve the gun and redisplay it within an indoor location.



The gun was previously mounted on a stone pedestal as an impressive gate guardian for the museum

NICK HEWITT

The gun comprises three individual core elements:

- The mount, weighing 8 tonnes
- The barrel, weighing 8 tonnes
- The flash shield, weighing 2 tonnes

The gun had already been disassembled and moved into safe indoor storage while awaiting assessment. This location was a Romney hut – a prefabricated steel structure developed by the British military during WWII – and would ultimately become the new display location.

The specifics of past conservation treatments were unknown but the preliminary condition survey confirmed that basic traditional protective paint surface coatings had been applied directly onto deeply corroded and significantly degraded material.

Although it was not possible

Being submerged in Scapa Flow and displayed outdoors for a combined total of 100 years had contributed to significant material degradation and loss



Left: The disassembled gun in storage

Middle left: Deep ferrous (iron) corrosion and lamellar deformation

Bottom left: Detail from the gun mount after conservation

Right: Applying targeted heat treatment



combined total of 100 years had contributed to significant material degradation and loss. This made a conservation treatment plan that would both safeguard long-term preservation and add value to the interpretation of the gun and the visitor experience paramount.

Conservation ideology

When thinking about industrial heritage and how you might meet the challenge of providing proportionate and targeted collections care solutions, your initial emotion may lead you to ponder the complexity of how to conserve very large, heavy and often heavily corroded objects, but this complexity is perhaps partially masked by the significance of the subject itself.

The complexity exists within the science of the classification and the 'tools' and craft skills needed to find the solutions.

Traditional engineering conservation is not perhaps synonymous with ground-breaking step changes within conservation or embracing high-value technological innovation. However, conservation science is evolving rapidly and will further underpin our understanding of the metallurgical (metal-related) and environmental challenges ahead.

Drawing consistently on my own experiences as an industrial conservator for over 45 years reassures me that engineering conservation can be basic, straightforward and pragmatic.

to cross-reference any original construction drawings, past experiences of working on both WWI and WWII military artillery objects confirmed a commonality within the materials and how these react in a given situation.

As with all industrial heritage object conservation, understanding the underlying material science, the design engineering content and functionality, together with past environmental influences, will support the conservator in identifying the object's frailties and ultimately define the treatment plan.

Being submerged in Scapa Flow and displayed outdoors for a

Conservation solutions do not need to be complicated or cost-prohibitive but they do need to address the fundamental challenges embedded within a given project or required outcome, whatever that might be.

Conservation projects involving traditional core materials have known outcomes in known environments and we can draw on good references, evidence-based research and many years of experience and knowledge of working with these materials.

Significant steps have been made recently as we use more advanced analytical techniques to better understand the material science and further inform our decision-making process. However, in some cases traditional, craft-based engineering skills augmented with an appreciation of conservation in its purest form will provide the perfect blend of craft and science to achieve the best outcome for an outwardly challenging project.

Frequently as conservators, we are unable to apply a preferred treatment or ideologically perfect strategy, but this should not deter us from trying to identify what might be possible, given fiscal and logistical constraints.

We can often propose an approach that breathes new life into an object or heritage site by allowing a more pragmatic approach, driven by a desire to at least try and save some of the more challenging examples of our cultural heritage by deploying

uncomplicated, informed and honest solutions that are cost-effective and deliverable.

The principle qualities for engineering conservation treatments when dealing with complex surface corrosion states and deep-seated metallurgical degradation on large-scale objects must be pragmatic, cost-efficient, reversible and surface tolerant.

ICR has refined its appreciation and execution of engineering conservation by embracing a more sensitive delivery that blends the best of engineering and art conservation techniques to allow a stripped-back ideology, which helps restore the dignity and identity to a complex object that might appear to be too challenging to undertake.

The treatment

The gun was constructed using traditional marine and military engineering materials including cast iron, cast and forged high carbon alloy steel, cast and machined bronze, copper and brass with some organic elements.

No scientific material analysis or laboratory-based research was carried out to define the actual metallurgical makeup or chemical or molecular structure of the material, as such information in this specific case would not have further informed or enhanced the conservation treatment required.

In essence the material was highly degraded due to significant environmentally sponsored chloride corrosion. It was also covered in high concentrates of marine concretions as a direct result of 70 years submerged in sea water and 30 years of continuous exposure within a C5 coastal environment.

Despite many of the original components of the gun being displaced, lost, stolen or scrapped, the surviving material conveyed a powerful, albeit cloaked message, which deserved unmasking.

The non-ferrous materials were unaffected by the prevailing environmental conditions and were only compromised in locations

where embedded rust jacking had forced physical fractures to vulnerable cast components.

The depth and severity of the surface corrosion and general degradation required a robust two-way conservation cleaning process to remove the primary lamellar deformation and marine growth.

Stage 1 of the process was a very traditional hand descaling technique using wire brushes, scrapers, chisels and manual chipping hammers. These tools are very easy to use and ideal for smaller areas and irregular constructions to achieve an accepted sector best practice surface finish or 'St2 classification' (which was required to support Stage 2 of the process).

This process is highly interventive and perhaps regarded by some conservators as too robust, but experience can confirm that when dealing with this level of corrosion a lesser and more sensitive approach would not remove the surface degradation to the required level of surface preparation.

Stage 2 was air-abrasive cleaning to achieve a surface preparation value

Below: After abrasive cleaning

Below left: Checking the alignment of the flash shield before starting the conservation process



of Sa 2.5, using an aluminium oxide medium. This was chosen instead of recycled glass bead as it provided a more aggressive but proportional cleaning option.

Air-abrasive cleaning is also highly interventive and although robust and efficient it is not cost-effective in removing deep-rooted lamellar deformation, therefore in these situations it must be preceded by hand descaling.

And there is still a time and place for a more sensitive approach, which is why localised degradation on very vulnerable items was removed with bamboo picks. The hand descaling phase of the project alone required 400 conservator hours.

The next stage was to define and choose an effective protective coating which can be very challenging within an industrial setting. An established entry route would be a paint system with a technical performance matched to your individual conservation parameters and display environment.

This might appear to be a straightforward decision-making process but in reality, the ability

Despite many missing components to the gun... the surviving material conveyed a powerful message which deserved unmasking

to reach a surface cleaning value that will support some paint manufactures' technical guidance and guarantee is not always possible. This disparity is often due to the sensitivity of the material, location of the project or physical size of the object.

ICR's experience of industrial, maritime and architectural conservation has led us to develop

and pioneer the use of protective wax coatings, where applicable, as our preferred protective coatings to navigate these challenges.

Although all the gun components were fully air-abraded, we revisited all the non-ferrous surfaces and blended and stippled these using bronze brushes, to soften and redefine the surface profile created during the air-abrasive process.

The non-ferrous components on the gun were protected with two coats of warm-applied micro-crystalline wax and the large-scale ferrous surfaces coated with Ensis DW 6055 industrial dewatering wax, tinted with a vegetable pigment.

Many original as-built components of the gun have been lost, either when the ship was scuttled in 1919, during its 70 years on the seabed, or as part of damage sustained during the salvage operation.

Although the gun has been conserved with a pure and stripped-back identity, additional targeted works were completed to enable the gun to be displayed within the Romney Hut Gallery at the Scapa Flow Museum, which opened its doors to visitors in March this year.

The remaining length of the original gun mounting tube was shortened to allow the gun to be displayed at a height that provided maximum public access and an enhanced visitor experience.

Traditional mechanical engineering skills and techniques were used to restore the capability of the gun barrel main trunnion bearings and a bespoke transport skid was designed and fabricated to facilitate the gallery installation and provide a through-life display mount.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ian Clark ACR, founder of Ian Clark Restoration (www.ianclarkrestoration.com), has over 40 years' experience within the museum and heritage sector and offers pragmatic collection care solutions and informed industrial heritage consultancy.

Thanks and acknowledgments

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The gun on display in the Romney Hut Gallery

GOING IT ALONE

Siobhan Stevenson ACR, Director of Legacy Conservation and former Chair of Icon, reflects on her transition from the public to private sector and shares some tips to others embarking on the same path



NIMC/PETER O'HARA

Above left: Siobhan undertaking a stores assessment at Whitehead Railway Museum

Above right: Providing training for Northern Ireland Museums Council at Mid Antrim Museum

I had been a conservator in the public sector for most of my working life and never thought I would make the leap into private practice. So why, after more than 35 years' employment – including 10 years as Head of Collections Care with National Museums Northern Ireland – did I decide it was time?

I have to confess that it was more of a decision to leave than to become self-employed. The incentive of a 'voluntary exit scheme' provided me with the opportunity to take a risk. I was ready for fresh challenges and felt there were other areas where my skills could be put to good use. Sometimes you just have to take a chance.

My background

I have had a varied and rewarding career, both in conservation and the wider cultural sector. I started out with a degree in archaeological conservation and worked initially in textiles and ethnographic collections before becoming the Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments) contract conservator based at Cardiff University.



The experience of being a contract conservator provided me with the discipline of doing estimates and accounting for my time early in my career. The university also gave me a route into teaching, and it was there that I developed my knowledge of preventive conservation, setting up the Masters in Care of Collections. I was fortunate to next land a job as Culture and Arts Manager for Belfast City Council and to return home to Northern Ireland. The strategic work within the Council and the experience of working with a wide range of stakeholders and partner organisations has proved invaluable.

I then returned to my first love – conservation – in 2009 at the National Museums Northern Ireland. It was the institution where my interest in conservation was first sparked, when I turned up for work experience as a wide-eyed schoolgirl. Returning as Head of Collections Care was a fantastic opportunity; the work was varied and rewarding, with the challenges of a diverse and inspiring collection. As I mentioned earlier, it was a very difficult and somewhat rapid decision to leave.



Setting up in business

I established Legacy Conservation (www.legacy-conservation.com) within a couple of months of moving on from the National Museums NI. My business offers conservation consultancy services for project management and collections care. Clients include local and national museums, heritage organisations and government services. Projects range from half-day jobs, such as condition assessments for loans, to overseeing the collections aspects of large capital projects that span many months and years. I also offer training and carry out some hands-on work.

In the initial months, I developed my own website and a Facebook page for Legacy Conservation and created templates for quotations, billing and reports that give a professional and branded look. Peculiarly, the website has been important for verifying my business but not really for attracting clients. Most of my work comes through personal contacts and referrals from professional colleagues. Investment in maintaining networks has also been very important.

The experience of being a contract conservator provided me with the discipline of doing estimates and accounting for my time early in my career

Dealing with my own IT requirements has been one of the more challenging aspects of going it alone. I now outsource IT support and consider this a worthwhile expense as a day spent without computer services or with limited connectivity impacts so much on my business.

Money matters

At the moment, I don't have an accountant. I am not currently VAT registered and only work with other self-employed colleagues, which keeps things simple enough for me to complete my own tax returns. Professional accountancy services would be essential if I expand the business or employed others, which is something I may consider in the future if the right opportunities come along.

In terms of charging, it's important not to underestimate the fixed costs of running a business. Although I don't have the overheads of a premises-based business, there are regular costs for things such as insurance, IT and professional services. I would also urge people in private practice to think about provision in case they are sick or unable to work. This is easy to overlook when setting fees.

It is also useful to consider phased payments for larger jobs. I had some 'money in the bank' from my exit payment, so was prepared for an initial wait to be paid for larger projects. Even with public-sector clients it can take a while to get paid, so managing cash flow can be tricky.

I have recently set up a small studio space, which I consider a bit of a luxury, but it will allow me to do more hands-on work. The plan is to intersperse the more office-based parts of my work with some practical work. I'm hoping that alternating in this way will keep my outlook fresh and provide variety.

I have been fortunate that having a financial cushion meant that the transition could be gradual and I had time to build up my business. The timing for setting up my own business, however, could not have been worse. As the momentum was building and my services became more in demand, Covid hit. I was returning from work for the National Trust for Scotland, heading to one of the museums in Northern Ireland to undertake a storage project, when arrangements were abruptly turned on their head. By the time I got home, >



Left: Siobhan providing training in Collections Care at Armagh County Museum

Below left: Undertaking a loan assessment and checking environmental monitoring and control at Ballymoney Museum

My advice to anyone wanting to embark on a similar path would be to keep an open mind and not to be intimidated by opportunities



public buildings were closed and all contract work was postponed indefinitely; 2020 was a difficult and uncertain year for many. My husband, who worked from home throughout the pandemic, would say that I had it easy, but not having regular work was disheartening.

One more shot

My experiment with self-employment nearly ended in March 2021 as after a year with scant work opportunities, I was appointed as Director of the Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) in an interim capacity, which helped me to regain some stability. Alongside my intense schedule as NIMC's CEO, I also maintained one-day-per-week in my own business and continued my work with the National Trust for Scotland remotely. Despite being

offered the NIMC post on a longer-term basis, I decided that Legacy Conservation needed one more shot.

I am so glad that I have been able to maintain the business, despite the ups and downs of my initial years. In retrospect, I think my expectations of the projects that people might engage me for are a little different to the work I am actually doing. I anticipated that being based in Northern Ireland might mean more limited opportunities and I was prepared to supplement my income with other piecework. The opposite has been true – my skills have been very much in demand. One benefit of the pandemic is that clients are increasingly happy to use online meetings to help with projects and that can be really beneficial. It has enabled me to take on work further afield.

I've also been lucky to gain a good bit of strategic work, both in conservation and more broadly in the museum sector. I love developing policy and the more complex capital projects. Being freelance allows me to play to my strengths and I feel that my contributions are making a meaningful and lasting difference.

I do miss the staff management side of my former employment and the people that I used to work with. Self-employment can be a little isolating at times, but there are still periods of working as part of a team and working away. I also have a much healthier work/life balance and can be flexible with my time rather than sticking to rigid hours.

The importance of self-belief

My advice to anyone wanting to embark on a similar path would be to keep an open mind and not to be intimidated by opportunities. As an external contractor you have a status that an employee rarely enjoys and that makes some aspects of the work much easier.

On the flip side, I often have to learn very quickly about new projects and organisations. At times it can be challenging and there can be a little more pressure when you are contracted for your expert opinion, so self-belief is something to actively cultivate!

There are, however, many rewards to private practice. I get to find out lots about the organisations I work with and I also get to do the fun bits without having to get too involved in the bureaucracy that goes with working at a senior level in the public sector. I also have the flexibility to choose when I work but, perhaps most importantly, I feel very much appreciated by my clients.

AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION



Above: Alex Owen applying propyl propionate as a wetting agent to the decorative surface of an ancient Egyptian coffin prior to the introduction of an adhesive

Alex Owen and Verena Kotonski ACR provide an anecdotal evaluation of a less hazardous solvent

The Organic Conservation studio at the British Museum treats artefacts that have organic chemistry as their foundation, some of which are sensitive to treatments involving water and other polar solvents. As a result, the studio has traditionally made use of non-polar solvents such as white spirit and xylene.

However, these non-polar solvents are classified as a significant health and safety risk. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) legislation requires that, wherever possible, these solvents be replaced by ones that are less hazardous. In a conservation context, any alternative solvents also need to fulfill a range of stringent criteria relating to their properties and interaction with objects.

Thanks to Dr Paolo Cremonesi, an independent Conservation Scientist based in Lodi, Italy, propyl propionate was identified as one possible alternative. As such, qualitative, bench-side testing is currently being carried out in the Organic Conservation studio at the museum to better understand its use as a solvent (for cleaning and adhesives) and as a wetting agent.

Propyl propionate is of interest to bench conservators due to its combination of a highly polar ketone group, as well as a less polar alkyl chain. According to the H-phrases in its material safety data sheet, propyl propionate poses a health risk similar to that of acetone and less than that of IMS. It should be noted that as propyl propionate is a novel solvent within conservation, we continue to employ

additional health and safety controls around its use.

Practical testing has so far focused on the effectiveness of propyl propionate in three areas of application:

- As a solvent for cleaning purposes: propyl propionate has been used successfully in the cleaning of East Asian lacquer surfaces.
- As a wetting agent: propyl propionate has also proven effective in the treatment of water sensitive surfaces prone to staining, such as those found on ancient Egyptian coffins. Here propyl propionate is used to pre-wet the surface ahead of the introduction of an acrylic emulsion or dispersion.
- As a solvent for adhesives: the solvent has successfully been used as a carrier for Paraloid B72 in both adhesive and consolidation contexts.

In many cases propyl propionate appears to be a highly effective replacement for non-polar solvents in cleaning, pre-wetting and adhesive treatments on water-sensitive surfaces, and a promising candidate for further testing. Next steps could include research into its efficacy as an adhesive carrier, and its rate and extent of evaporation, including the presence of any residues on artefacts.



To read the unabridged version of this article, which includes technical information, a structural diagram and references, please scan the QR code.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Alex Owen is a Senior Conservator in the Organics Conservation studio at the British Museum. Alex has

primarily worked on a range of wooden, decorative surface and East Asian lacquer objects at both the British Museum and the V&A.



Verena Kotonski ACR is Head of Organics Conservation at the British Museum. In the past 20 years Verena has treated

decorative surfaces on a diverse range of objects while working at the British Museum, National Museums Scotland and elsewhere.

A look at Icon's recent work in supporting skills development, providing care of collections workshops for non-conservators, and contributing to the development of a Culture Strategy for Wales

GRANT WILL SUPPORT ICON INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE PROJECT

Icon successfully won a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to investigate industrial heritage workforce challenges and conservation skills shortages. We will convene a stakeholder group to help us develop innovative and sustainable solutions that are grounded in thorough research and clearly evidenced need. As one of the cohort of 35 grantees, Icon will receive support from The Young Foundation, whose staff will act as a critical friend and guide our thinking.

The focus of the project is industrial heritage conservation, an area of practice which was highlighted in our 2022 Labour Market Intelligence research as being required by 16% of employers, but with less than 1% of Icon's membership reporting to have the level of knowledge and skill



needed to care for such collections. The low number of practitioners makes this a pressing issue as any loss will significantly impact on the ability to care for collections appropriately.

We know that this is a particularly challenging area to investigate, not least because there are no established training programmes which focus on the conservation of industrial heritage collections. However, this is also part of the sector where there is a high reliance on volunteers, with many coming into museums towards the end of their career, having worked as engineers, blacksmiths and a huge variety of other non-heritage roles. Through the project we will consider the following questions:

- What is the full level of demand for engineering and industrial heritage conservation for the scale of the collections in the UK?
- What are the different training models available and how suitable are they to the profile of entrants into the sector and the needs of employers?
- How can the knowledge of existing practitioners be appropriately documented and transferred to ensure that existing knowledge and understanding is not lost?
- How can we ensure that solutions developed are sustainable and can be maintained long term?

As there are strong parallels between the challenges being faced between the conservation of industrial heritage and other material specialisms within the profession, we hope to be able to roll out what we learn here to those areas of practice.

NEW SKILLS FORUM ESTABLISHED

Icon has been invited to take part in the inaugural meeting of the newly established Skills Forum (a working group of the wider Historic Environment Forum). The forum is being chaired by Historic England and brings together government, employers, practitioners and representative bodies from across the heritage sector, all of whom are working to address skills needs in the heritage workforce. This offers an invaluable chance to coordinate our joint efforts, identify opportunities for collaboration and maximise the impact of our



work to bring in new entrants to the sector, and support the continuing professional development of professional conservators.

Icon has also been invited to join the Steering Group for the forum, which puts us in an excellent position to advocate for the conservation profession. The first activity will be to agree a statement of intent, identify the priority areas of focus and then to develop an action plan which will enable Icon to work with sector partners to increase our influence and drive forward much needed change.

ICON SKILLS STRATEGY

Icon has begun work to prepare a new Skills Strategy, building on our 2022 Labour Market Intelligence research. Over the last few months we have held discussions with stakeholders across the sector to investigate the role that Icon can play in supporting the development of skills within the conservation profession. Six key themes have arisen:

1. Understanding the core skills that are required to practice as a conservator.
2. Ensuring that there are sustainable ways of retaining and developing

skills in the workforce.

3. Recognising and responding to changing employer demands.
4. Supporting the resilience of a range of training providers.
5. Supporting a diverse range of routes into the conservation profession.
6. Stimulating client demand for conservation skills from employers, clients and commissioners of conservation services.

The new skills strategy will be published later this spring and we will continue to actively work with members, education providers and wider stakeholder groups to ensure that we can continue to support the skills needs across the conservation workforce.



In an ideal world, everyone who has the responsibility of caring for a collection of art, artefacts, machines, textiles, books or other objects would have ready access to a professionally trained conservator.

However, the reality is quite different. There are many small museums, galleries, historic houses, churches and even businesses where there is no in-house conservator and no money to pay for a consultant. So, we recognise that not all conservation is carried out by conservators. Many organisations rely on their curators, front of house staff or volunteers to undertake the essential day-to-day care and maintenance of their collections.

To address this gap Icon has launched an exciting series

of workshops to equip non-conservators with the basic conservation skills needed to support the ongoing management of a cultural heritage collection. The workshops – Essentials of Collections Care for Non-Conservators – do not require any existing knowledge and cover everything from basic condition assessments and risk management to understanding the different materials that are found in collections and how to ensure their longevity. The aim is to ensure that participants will be well-equipped with an appreciation of the fundamentals of successful collections care. And, importantly, participants will also learn when to get a professional conservator involved.

DEVELOPING A CULTURE STRATEGY FOR WALES

The Welsh government has a long-held interest in culture and understands that



cultural and creative experiences are valued by the public. Welsh ministers also recognise that the arts, culture and heritage sectors contribute to personal wellbeing and community cohesion. Culture is therefore embedded in important documents, such as the *Future Generations Act*, and continues to be a key policy focus.

Icon was pleased to be asked to contribute to the development of a Culture Strategy for Wales and Sara Crofts, Icon's Chief Executive, was interviewed by the research team in early 2023. The scope of the strategy will include arts, museums, libraries, archives and the historic environment, and it will look at how the Welsh government can best support and develop these sectors in Wales.

The strategy will consider, but not be limited to, the role of culture and the arts in promoting positive health and wellbeing, equalities, lifelong learning and skills, supporting digital developments in Wales, the visitor economy and the Welsh language, together with resilience-building to enable effective recovery from the pandemic and delivery on the requirements of the *Future Generations Act*. We were able to demonstrate the role that conservation in particular can play in achieving these objectives, with a strong emphasis on how conservation enables people to access and appreciate their local heritage.



Above: Carola Del Mese working at Worthing Museum
Below: Corrosion treatment on a 17th-century locking casket

MEET CAROLA DEL MESE

Carola Del Mese, a metal conservator based in Brighton, talks about her recent work with sabres and the importance of advocacy and collaboration

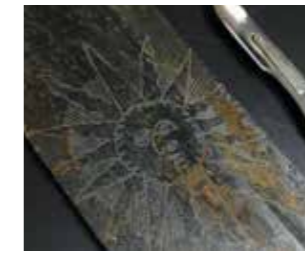


Conservation is a mid-career change for me. I have always worked with my hands and during my earlier career as an artist and prop maker, metal was one of my preferred materials. My practical skills and interest in ancient history and archaeology naturally led me to conservation, which for me is the perfect balance of manual skills, problem solving, creative thinking, historical research and learning.

My undergraduate degree was in 3D glass craftsmanship and design at the University of Wolverhampton, where I learned glass blowing, glass casting and stained glass. Although I love glass as a material, there aren't many jobs for glass blowers, so I applied for a placement at the English National Opera prop department, followed by an apprenticeship at Glyndebourne Opera House. I then became a freelance prop maker, building sets and scenery for festivals, events and shop windows – including Harrods and Selfridges – before finally moving into project management for prop companies. It was physically hard work and often stressful, with long and unsociable hours, but I loved the energy.

Then, after 20 years, I decided it was time for a change. I was accepted onto a three-month placement at Brighton Royal Pavilion conservation department and knew immediately that conservation was the right choice. I went on to apply for the postgraduate metal conservation course at West Dean College and followed that with the Masters, which I completed last year.

I am currently working on the most incredible project, conserving a chest of sabres from the Rooswijk shipwreck, a Dutch East India Company ship which sank near Ramsgate in 1740. This work is with MSDS Marine, a specialist archaeological contractor, and I'm based at the



Left: Cleaning one of the swords from the sabre chest as part of the Rooswijk 1740 project

Above: One of the delightful etchings on the Rooswijk swords



Below left: Coloured wax application to a Francesco Messina sculpture

Below: The corroded block of sabres from the Rooswijk chest



Historic England conservation lab in Portsmouth. It has taken almost six months to disassemble the corroded block of 100 sabres and each one is etched with hand-drawn designs. It's very exciting to remove the concretion and reveal suns, moons, snakes and other symbols, because they are all so different!

Another one of my favourite projects was carrying out remedial work on some very beautiful and rare early Bronze Age objects called Sussex Loops, while I was working at Worthing Museum. The project involved collaborating with West Dean College to analyse the loops using XRF, along with a collection of Saxon jewellery recovered from a hilltop cemetery in the area. It was a pleasure to be given the freedom to

If I was offering advice to students or other emerging professionals, I'd say take every opportunity you can

add value to the work I was doing, so I wrote a series of conservation blogs, and one day a week I worked in the gallery, talking to the public about the process of conservation.

I joined Icon's Emerging Professionals Network (EPN) as a committee member because I want to play an active part in supporting

other emerging professionals. At the moment I think it's very difficult out there for emerging professionals – work is scarce and salaries don't always reflect the level of skill and knowledge that we bring, so the collective aim of the EPN is to create a more visible and supportive community. I've also been thinking about suggesting a cross-group public engagement network, so watch this space.

I think advocacy and collaborative work are important, both personally and within the sector. In my experience, most people don't understand the role of a conservator, but the visual communication of ideas and creating positive experiences was at the core of my work in the arts and I have experienced the positive results of both approaches firsthand. If people understand and enjoy something, they will talk about it to others and if I can help to communicate the importance of conservation, then maybe this will draw more public interest and, in turn, more public funding to the sector. Ultimately, learning and engagement brings people together, promotes respect for cultural heritage, and for each other, which will hopefully lead to more opportunities.

If I was offering advice to students or other emerging professionals, I'd say take every opportunity you can. Don't be afraid to go for those internships or job vacancies, interact with the heritage community, join or create a network and above all, show your passion! In my experience the conservation community is very helpful and I've received positive advice and support from those people I've reached out to.

Over the next few years, I would love to work more closely with archaeologists. Working with public collections is also really important to me and I want to learn more about education and outreach. My dream job would encompass all these things.

SMALL STEPS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Lorraine Finch ACR shares an excerpt from her book, *Low Cost/No Cost Tips for Sustainability in Cultural Heritage*, to highlight how small changes can help us to work and live more sustainably

Welcome to my tips for low cost/no cost actions to reduce your impact on the climate and the environment.

I was moved to make these tips available because so many times I have heard from others that they felt powerless to effect change, that the actions they needed to take were too costly and that the steps needed took too long to have an impact.

The following actions are just a small selection taken from the 'Equipment and Materials' chapter of my book. They are all in your power to take straight away.

Equipment and materials

i Extend the lifespan of equipment with careful handling and frequent maintenance. Keep operations and maintenance manuals up to date to ensure that equipment is maintained in top condition.

i Repair equipment rather than replacing it. Equipment you no longer need may still be useful to others. Think how it can be reused, donated, repurposed, recycled or stored. Waste Electrical and

Electronic Equipment (WEEE) recycling schemes can ensure safe disposal.

i Use equipment that is appropriately sized for the job, for example, don't use a large fridge if all you have in it is a jar of starch paste.

i When you replace equipment:

- Make sure you purchase energy efficient equipment. The website www.sust-it.net gives details of energy-efficient household electricals and lists the annual running cost.

- Buy the best quality you can afford to ensure you can use it for as long as possible.
- Purchase equipment which: is designed to have a long usable life; can be repaired; has spare parts readily available, long term; can be recycled at the end of its life, and is designed for disassembly (i.e. can be broken down at the end of its life); and where the components can be reused and the constituent items are easy to recycle.

i Check whether the manufacturer has a take-back scheme for recycling the equipment at the end of its usable life.

i Your mantra for equipment should be 'Durable, repairable, recyclable'.

i Organise. That way you'll know what materials and equipment you have and where they are. This will stop you from buying something and then discovering that you had it already.

i Carry out a waste audit to identify what waste you are creating. This will help you to work out how you can reduce the waste you produce and how you can reuse and recycle your waste.

i If you need to buy materials and equipment, buy them in one order. This will avoid the need for multiple deliveries and so reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with deliveries. Aim for one or two orders a year.

i Coordinate orders with others to reduce deliveries even further. Contact your regional Conservation Development Officer or Museum Development Officer. They may be able to organise a group purchase.

Alternative sources for equipment and materials

i Look out for cultural heritage organisations that are being refurbished. Two examples I am aware of include:

- A museum that was refurbished and gave away all their office furniture and office supplies. They also gave away surplus display cases, exhibition materials and materials from the education department.
- An archive that moved buildings and gave away all the surplus packing materials at the end of the project. This included Plastazote, boxes, boxboard and acid-free tissue.

i Look out for schools being refurbished, and especially those refurbishing their labs. You'll be able to get hold of benches, glassware, microscopes and much more.

i Keep an eye out for shop refits or closures. They often give away shelving; display units, which make excellent workbenches; mannequins that can be used for display; and clothing rails, which can be used by staff or the public for their coats.

i Contact your conservation/preservation suppliers. Many sell offcuts, end of rolls, old stock and materials that they have purchased to test. As a result, you may be able to buy in the small quantity that you require. One conservation studio has sourced Tyvek, repair tissue, Bondina, fly mesh, sprayers, weights, a drying rack and brushes for free this way.

You can also try eBay (www.ebay.co.uk), Gumtree (www.gumtree.com), Shpock (www.shpock.com/en-gb), JiscMail (www.jiscmail.ac.uk) and other online sites for trading used items.

i Contact your local police service. They hold auctions of lost property and seized items. This could be anything from a bike or vacuum cleaner to a MacBook or power drill. For more information and useful links, read 'Police Auctions: How to Legally Buy Stolen Stuff', available on MoneySavingExpert's website (www.moneysavingexpert.com/shopping/police-auctions)

i Ask for equipment donations from the public and local companies. This is great engagement and demonstrates what you and/or your organisation are doing to help the climate and the environment. You can include storytelling, for example, 'We need X to display/ conserve/store Y which was used by Z. Can you help?'

i Borrow equipment and loan out yours to others in the sector and to other organisations.

i Share your surplus materials with others. This could be through your networks or socials and/or by putting it outside with a sign saying 'Free. Please Take'.

i Coordinate your work. If you need specialist equipment for a short period of time, work with another person or organisation to reduce the GHG emissions associated with transporting the equipment to you. It will also help to reduce the cost. For example, two museums had a mould outbreak.

They were located close to one another, so coordinated their work and shared the hire of a document cleaning station.

i Consider hiring equipment. From conservation suppliers, you can hire a document cleaning stations, vacuum packers, display cases and book cleaners. From high street electrical stores, you can hire vacuum cleaners, computers, fridges, freezers, microwaves and ovens. You can also lease lighting systems and hire plastic crates and bikes. You can even hire microscopes on a weekly or a monthly basis (www.laboratoryanalysis.co.uk)

With thanks to Lorraine Finch ACR, Chair of Icon's Sustainability Network and author of *Low Cost/No Cost Tips for Sustainability in Cultural Heritage* (available in print and as an eBook – visit www.lfcp.co.uk/publications for more information and purchasing options).



i Ask others. If you need only a small amount, put a call out on your socials. Use your networks.

i Use Museums Freecycle (www.freecycle.org/town/MuseumUK) and Freecycle (www.freecycle.org)

i Have a look at Freegle (www.ilovefreegle.org), which matches you up with local offers and gives for free.





THE PROOF IS IN THE PACKAGING

Following on from Lorraine Finch's book excerpt, **Alexandra Wade**, a Pathway member of Icon, discusses some of the practical methods used to tackle waste at London Metropolitan Archives

Since the formation of our dedicated Green Group in 2014, the push for real sustainable methods of working within the archives has been at the forefront of our everyday practices. With this in mind, we have created some zero waste, non-virgin material packaging that can be applied across the collection.

We are fortunate at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) to have our own boxing machine and

therefore buy in a range of card stock to make our own packaging. However, this was often leaving us with a lot of scrap card that we did recycle in bulk but wanted to put to a more practical use.

One of our biggest re-packaging projects required us to re-house an entire storeroom of flat plans. These are stored in temporary folders that have no sides, are often the wrong size for the material they hold and are very difficult for staff to handle safely. To create or buy in new

packaging for this project would run into huge costs and it was clear that we had a large stock of unused and second-hand materials in our boxing room that we could utilise.

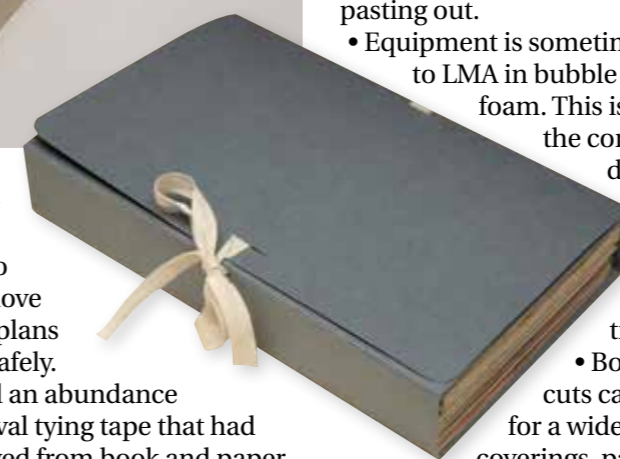
Taking the original folder, we cut it down to fit the material inside snugly. Using scrap 300 gsm covering card, we then created side flaps on the open three edges to hold the material securely inside. Leftover flute board (corrugated cardboard) from our box orders was cut down and used as a stiffener in the base to give the

folder more rigidity and form, to help staff move these large plans easily and safely.

We also had an abundance of old archival tying tape that had been removed from book and paper material. These were repurposed as ties for the folders to hold them closed, with the tapes glued down using scraps of Heritage white paper from the conservation studio store.

Reuse and repurpose

Using this as a springboard idea we've been able to apply this principle of reuse and repurposing of materials across our collections to



Left: An example of covers for rolled items made from scrap 300 gsm card and old cotton tying tape

Below: A wrapped cover for pamphlets/volumes made from scrap 300 gsm card and old cotton tying tape

create a diverse range of packaging for no or little cost. Scraps of 300 gsm card and second-hand tying tapes have been used to create covers for rolled plans, pamphlets, dust covers for volumes and more.

Once we had established a protocol for reusing and repurposing packaging items, we started to think about what other things we could re-imagine and the possibilities were endless. From making small, covered pressing boards from boxboard scrap and left over Melinex, to creating free gift boxes for our visitors. If we conclude that the last resort for our resources is the bin, then we are forced to start thinking creatively about new ways to get multiple uses from our products.

Some of our tried and tested initiatives include:

- Our boxboard comes wrapped in plastic wrap. We give this a second life by using it to wrap and ship all our box orders. It can also be used as a table covering material for pasting out.
- Equipment is sometimes shipped to LMA in bubble wrap or with foam. This is passed onto the conservation department

to pad out items and keep them safe during transit.

- Box board off cuts can be reused for a wide variety of coverings, packaging and supports.
- Smoke sponges can be washed out and reused to clean shelves/outside of boxes and other non-collection materials.
- Melinex can be repurposed and used as a table covering for pasting out, to cover pressing boards and so on.
- Old folders/boxes or unused materials can be broken down

into component parts if they are in good condition. The main flaps and midsections can be cut into squares and these can become your board scraps to make covering materials and board supports.

- If boxes are truly past their purpose for collection items, we look at whether they can be repurposed into containing office items and for the storage of equipment and materials.
- LMA often donates leftover stock, materials, scrap and outdated office supplies to local schools, art departments and charities to maximise our use of the circular economy in the local area and reduce our waste to a minimum, even within the remit of recycling initiatives.

Our onsite, staff-led Green Group circulates an e-newsletter once a month, which helps to keep sustainability at the forefront of the mind of all staff and promote a focus consciousness. Encouraging everyone to think creatively about solutions to our waste products, across teams and specialisms, has led us to develop a really robust and diverse approach to dealing with our waste but also allows us to reduce costs by utilising materials we already have multiple times.



Alexandra Wade is an Assistant Conservator at London Metropolitan Archives responsible for collections care, packaging and integrated pest management. She is the

Archive's Green Group Lead, looking for practical and workable solutions to waste management within the conservation and archives sector.

www.linkedin.com/in/accare91

Examining the back panel of the Dynasty 12 (c.1938–1756 BCE) box-shaped coffin of Heta-user (E.67.1903) in August 2022



ON REFLECTION

Julie Dawson, winner of the 2022 Plowden Medal, talks about her work with ancient Egyptian coffins, the benefits of outreach work and improving diversity and inclusion in the industry

Q | How did your journey into the world of conservation begin?

The conservation of objects was not a career that you heard very much about in the late 1970s, but I had a wonderful opportunity to work for the Museum of Costume and Textiles in Nottingham when it was being prepared for opening to the public. As well as learning to work with and handle museum collections, I also had great fun making historically accurate undergarments and shoes

for the mannequins that would be dressed in some of the costumes. I learnt about conservation as a part of museum work and eventually chose to study archaeological conservation at the Institute of Archaeology (now part of University College London).

Q | Can you provide us with a potted career history?

I always wanted to travel so, after a short-term contract at the Ashmolean Museum and a

few months in Stoke-on-Trent conserving recently excavated metalwork, I made what felt like an epic journey in 1981, across land and sea, to take up a short internship in Japan at the Nara National Cultural Properties Research Institute.

After that I worked in a regional lab in Denmark, treating objects ranging from archaeological silverwork to dolls' prams, before running and developing the conservation lab of the old Museum of History in Hong Kong for a year. By that time, I felt I needed to come home and reconnect with conservation here in England, so I applied for a post at the Fitzwilliam Museum, which is part of the University of Cambridge. To my delight, I was appointed to the role of Antiquities Conservator and began at the Fitzwilliam in October 1984.

At the time, I thought I would be there for three to five years before looking for an opportunity abroad again, but I guess I loved the collection, my job and the possibilities it offered too much!

I retired from being Head of Conservation and Scientific Research at the Fitzwilliam in May 2021.

Q | Tell us about your involvement with ancient Egyptian material...

It developed from working with the Fitzwilliam's collection, especially a major project of investigation, conservation and redisplay from 2004–06. Also key was the opportunity to do some conservation work for the Cambridge Theban Mission in one of the Tombs of the Nobles on the Theban Necropolis at Luxor and, since 2007, the lifting, technical investigation and conservation of coffins at the site of Tell el Amarna, the city of King Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti.

In some respects, I haven't fully left the Fitzwilliam as I am now an Affiliated Researcher on the Egyptian Coffins Project, a multi-disciplinary initiative I co-lead with Helen Strudwick (Senior Curator, Ancient Nile Valley) from 2014 until I retired. I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for granting me an Emeritus Fellowship, allowing me to continue this work.

Q | What can ancient Egyptian coffins reveal about the social, cultural and religious contexts in which they were made and used?

The coffin was the most important and consistently provided piece of funerary equipment throughout the pharaonic period in Egypt. The



Left: Checking a detail of the underside of the inner coffin lid of Pakepu (E.2.1869, c.680–664 BCE) in 2018

decoration and texts on the outside give us a picture of the relative status of the owners of the coffins (usually high) and also the belief systems associated with the afterlife anticipated by these individuals. By studying technical aspects of the way the objects were constructed and decorated, we can learn a great deal about workshop practice but also about the amount of time and skill needed in coffin production, which further indicates the relative wealth available to their owners.

Recent research, including our own, has shown that coffins sometimes included reused wood from older coffins. The question of whether people who bought coffins were aware of this is both intriguing and currently unanswered. It certainly has broader implications for our understanding about the ancient Egyptians' relationship with death and the afterlife.

Q | You were involved in an award-winning 'Pop-Up' Egyptian Coffins project – please tell us about this outreach programme

The Fitzwilliam Death on the Nile: Uncovering the Afterlife of Ancient Egypt exhibition in 2016 was very successful, but the audience demographics collected at the time identified a real gap in the social and economic diversity of our visitors. This prompted development of our 'Pop-Up' museum.

The 'Pop-Up' consists of a table-top of real objects (in a suitable display case), a replica of a dog coffin (which can be disassembled) and the types of resources we use in our professional workshops including replica ancient Egyptian wood-working tools, samples of pigments and materials to make rush pens and brushes.

We provided hands-on activities around these different resources, supported by short films running on an iPad and copies of our picture book, *How to Make a Coffin: The construction and decoration of Nespawshefy's coffin set*.

Our first destination was Wisbech, a town in Cambridgeshire that has been identified as having some of the worst social deprivation and lowest cultural provision in the country. We took the coffins' project there to see if we could provide any benefit and stimulus. Over several weeks, we 'popped-up' in unexpected places including pubs, supermarkets, shopping complexes, public thoroughfares and community centres.

We then took the pop-up to Egypt; >



Left: Excavating the walls of a severely deteriorated, rare, decorated coffin at Amarna, and supporting the structure by application of cyclododecane prior to lifting

to Cairo first and then to Damietta, a city on the north coast which is the centre of the modern furniture industry and doesn't have a museum with Egyptian antiquities. The resources we took along were the same except that we didn't have the Fitzwilliam objects with us and the copies of the coffin book had been translated into Arabic.

Most importantly, we co-delivered the sessions with curatorial and conservation colleagues from the Egyptian Museum Cairo and the Grand Egyptian Museum. They were not so familiar with the very direct, individual contact at the heart of the pop-up concept and were initially hesitant. However, they gained confidence as they witnessed the high level of engagement, realising that it is the knowledge and skills acquired from their own studies and research that create this level of excitement in the public.

While we cannot make profound changes to basic issues of deprivation and poor cultural provision through this type of activity, we can sow a seed and this certainly seemed to be the case, in both the local and the Egyptian venues. The number of visitors, the levels of enthusiasm and depth of engagement in many instances, were very high. For many people, ancient Egypt feels like an alien culture, with strange and fantastical beliefs. Through showing details that reveal the very human practicalities of producing Egyptian objects, the ingenuity in use of material, practical problems overcome, mistakes made and (sometimes) covered up, we can bring these ancient people into a more relatable focus.

Q | Why is conservation-led research so important?

Given the pressure of things like exhibition and loan schedules, it is always going to be difficult for conservators to carve out dedicated time for research projects, unless there is sufficient institutional support and resource available, which is rare. It is even harder for most conservators in private practice.

One of the key things we can therefore do is get wider acknowledgement for the research that conservators tackle on a day-to-day basis in their interaction with objects. This includes their examination and technical investigation to understand the original technology of the piece, the processes of natural change and human intervention that it has undergone, and the development of new approaches to the problems thrown up.

While these activities help us to make decisions about treatment options and preservation, they are also important contributions to understanding object biography and



Left: The Cambridge and Cairo pop-up teams (and Nespawershefyt, of course) at the coast near Damietta in November 2019

context more broadly but, in many cases, they do not automatically become part of the research data. As with most things, collaboration is the key – conservation as a service, but also as an automatic and equal partner in curatorial and scientific research in museums.

Q | Tell us about your involvement with Icon over the years and what prompted you to take on this work...

I was Secretary of the old UKIC from 1994–96, because I wanted to be more involved in the development of the profession and to understand it from a range of perspectives.

As a passionate supporter of accreditation, I wanted to be part of it from the start, so I was one of Icon's first ACRs when the programme was launched in 1999. I then became



an Accreditation Assessor from 2000, before later being appointed to the Accreditation Committee (2010) and then Vice-Chair of the Accreditation Committee (2012–17). It was a huge privilege to be part of something so important to the professional development and support of conservators and it was definitely a formative experience, personally. A large part of that was the insights it gave me into conservation specialisms – such as the preservation and treatment of industrial machinery, which, on the surface, seemed a world away from my own.

Q | A number of people have commented on the unstinting support you have provided others throughout your career. Why do you think this is important?

They are being very generous making



Left: Julie Dawson with the new Plowden Medal at the presentation ceremony in January 2023

Far left: Examining the back panel of the Dynasty 12 (c.1938–1756 BCE) box-shaped coffin of Heta-user with Fitzwilliam conservator Flavia Ravaioli in August 2022

such remarks about me! I believe that providing support and opportunity is the main task you have, as soon as you take on responsibility for others, whether that is through management of colleagues or the supervision of students, apprentices or volunteers. What am I there for otherwise? What is the point of my experience? We all need to feel that the people in more senior positions are listening to us, rooting for us, helping us branch out, grow and be autonomous.

It's also worth noting that this is always a two-way process. I have learnt so much from the different people I have come into contact with and benefited greatly from the support and advice that they have given me in return.

Q | How do you feel diversity and inclusion could be improved within the conservation profession?

Developing more vocational routes into the profession is definitely key. The new apprenticeship routes are very welcome and there needs to be more initiatives of this type. Internships specifically tailored to those who have had to leave the profession for some time, maybe because of long-term health issues or caring responsibilities, would also be a small but welcome addition to improving inclusion.

Many of the ideas that have come out of the new Icon Strategy and

As a passionate supporter of accreditation, I wanted to be part of it from the start, so I was one of Icon's first ACRs when the programme was launched

the proposals of the Diversity and Inclusion Task and Finish Group seem very positive to me. Certainly, encouraging development of a broader base of membership of the professional bodies is important, to ensure that more people whose skills, work and interests overlap or intersect with conservation and heritage science can be involved in the conversation. So is raising awareness of the field amongst children and young adults.

However, we do need to look at how we can improve some of the less positive aspects of our field. The relatively poor pay and employment terms still experienced by many will inevitably continue to restrict the demographic.

Q | How does it feel to be the most recent winner of the Plowden Medal (2022), in recognition of your contribution to the conservation profession?

I am deeply honoured, delighted and astonished in equal measures! I feel highly privileged to have joined the distinguished roll call of winners since the medal was inaugurated in 1999 in memory of Anna Plowden.

Having my work singled out in this way has caused me to reflect a lot on my long career. I am immensely touched that conservation and heritage science colleagues within and beyond my own institution thought that I was worthy of their nomination and support. I am also conscious that those same colleagues are just a few of the very many who, over the years, have shared unstintingly with me their experience, expertise and time. Anything I have achieved is built on that foundation, so the award is testimony to the generosity and spirit of collaboration I have found in our profession and which makes me proud to be a conservator.

Q | How will you be enjoying your retirement when you've completed your Fellowship in 2024?

I don't think my involvement with Egyptian coffins will end completely but when I do have more time, I would like to pick up some of the crafts I have done in the past, especially pottery and woodwork. I also need to get back to the long and adventurous trips out on my bike that I used to enjoy and I would like to do more community volunteering than I have managed up to now.



Scan the QR code to read Julie's comments on the reuse of coffins in ancient Egypt; the benefits of CT scanning; the importance

of integrating conservation into all aspects of museum work; sharing collections knowledge and experience with other museums; what qualities and skills should be encouraged in the next generation of conservators; turning museum objects into cake; and much more.

In December 2022, Icon's Annual Lecture, It's Just a Dress!, was presented by Sarah Scaturro, the Eric and Jane Nord Chief Conservator at the Cleveland Museum of Art and previously the Head Conservator at the Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The lecture was excellent and discussed in detail Kim Kardashian wearing Marilyn Monroe's silk dress to the Met Gala in May 2022. I remember the event and being a little shocked and slightly apathetic at the time. The dress is privately owned, so I assumed that all sorts of protocols and protections would have been in place.

As someone rather sceptical about what is and isn't reported in the news, I also assumed there was a whole side of the story that we wouldn't see. I hadn't realised that the Kardashian reality show had filmed Kim's determination to wear the dress, her issues with fitting into it and what measures the team went through so that she could wear the dress. Sarah discussed all of this in her lecture, along with the subsequent fallout in the news, on social media and even within the conservation community.

Charlotte Owen,
Senior Architectural Paint
Researcher, reflects on Icon's
2022 Annual Lecture and the
concept of 'use it or lose it'
within cultural property



Kim Kardashian
attends the 2022
Met Gala in Marilyn
Monroe's dress

CONSERVING THE FABRIC OF A BUILDING

What particularly interests me about the event is that it highlights the depth of diversity within our profession. I now work in building conservation, where cultural property has to be used to survive.

I trained as an objects conservator and spent the first seven years of my career working in historic house museums before working with ethnographic textile collections in Cambridge. As a Collections Assistant working for the National Trust, I was a strong supporter of 'don't touch' and 'don't lean' or, to quote a former colleague, "we'd prefer it if visitors could walk on their eyelashes when entering our beloved houses". Yet now, I would prefer to see a building used than forgotten about. Does this represent a deep chasm between collections and building conservators? I believe this is about how we assign significance.

THAT dress

The dress worn by Kim Kardashian to the Met Gala was designed specifically for Marilyn Monroe. It was designed to mimic Monroe's skin tone and give the illusion of her naked body dripping in diamonds. One article I read not long ago described the dress as "the most



significant dress in the world". Whilst I'm not convinced by this, who am I to question the cultural significance placed on this dress by Americans and other people?

Attending Sarah's lecture, I learnt that Kim Kardashian wore the dress for mere minutes at the event; the rest of the evening she wore a replica of the gown. Many questions thus ensue. Why not just wear a replica? Why not emulate the intention of the dress by having one made to match Kim Kardashian's skin colour, in spirit of the original design? Why? Because it wouldn't be THAT dress. It wouldn't have the same significance. But some will now say that the dress has lost its significance and risks being known as the Monroe-Kardashian dress. It no longer just has Marilyn Monroe's fingerprint on it.



Left: Grimsby Town Hall, Lincolnshire, showing partial restoration of the 19th century decorative scheme following paint research and on-site investigations – before (left) after (right)

Above: Charlotte taking samples of exterior paint from Oxburgh Hall

Discovering a building's history

Are buildings more complex? Often designed for a specific purpose, the significance is less simple to define. They are rarely associated with a single person or event, though works of a specific architect or patron can be identified as a significant factor. It's the layers of history that are woven through the masonry and decorative schemes of a building that increases their significance. The patina of age can be what fixes them into our collective appreciation.

The night after the Icon Annual Lecture, I watched a video about a project we are involved with at Hirst Conservation. One of the architects on the project noted that it was their job to identify "how significance can be enhanced to continue to serve the community". As conservators involved in the project, our role as a team has been to survey, record, conserve and preserve that significance. As I've noted after seeing various images of the interior, we have helped the building to sing again. Like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, the removal of overlying dirt and later interventions has enabled us to see more of the original architect's design intention.

The project has included approved modifications to the building to increase access to it, such as the removal of previous alterations that once made the building more functional at a given time. Joyfully, the removal of some of these earlier modifications has revealed previously unknown detail by the original architect.

We do a lot of work with town halls and many of these have seen all sorts of modifications over the years – some of which are kept and some removed, as the building is again remodelled to make it usable and more relevant.

Many publicly accessible buildings have generations of modifications added to them. When we visit historic buildings, we are rarely faced with an untouched original design. Each generation will have added to that building. We do not enter

historic houses, for example, and read a single period; there will often be elements that have been added or adapted by different generations, each one adding to the layers of history and significance placed on a building or space.

Remodelling is done to ensure the building is usable for the future, to make it viable in a changing world. As an example, in public buildings, lifts can be added to open up spaces to people who may have physical limitations. Investigations and surveys are undertaken to record the fabric of the building – not just to make sure it is structurally capable of the alteration but to investigate and record what might be hiding under layers of paint or behind suspended ceilings. It is not uncommon to see past decorative schemes being revealed following the removal or loss of later interventions. A debate about how to record and preserve significance often then ensues.

Protecting the past

One fundamental question is how far can the client take the renovation to achieve their aim to make the building relevant and enhance social value, while still maintaining its original character and significance? Is it okay to remove a later decorative scheme if the original survives beneath layers of paint? What are we removing by doing this? How has the space altered since and does this alter the original scheme to a point where it no longer works? What condition is that scheme in and how much restoration might be needed? How much can and do we remove to record a scheme and how much do we recreate? These are all considerations my colleagues and I face as a team, that we know fellow conservators also face when working with artefacts made of many different materials.

Stencil decorations, wall paintings, ornate floors, fine carvings and intricate plaster mouldings are just some examples of our built heritage that have been ‘found’ following the removal of past interventions. Buildings don’t stand still. They



Top: The former Billiard Room at Delapré Abbey, Northants, before renovation works

Above: After renovation works

cannot afford to be frozen in time. As a collective we do not have the luxury of carefully wrapping them away. How, as buildings conservators, can we justify against using a building because it might accelerate deterioration when use is what keeps it going?

Historic dress is, in the most part, significant because of a person, community or an event. If it is reused, we risk physical deterioration and altering what made it significant. When religious congregations move away from their place of worship, when buildings are abandoned and become derelict, they risk being lost entirely because their social value and therefore significance has diminished. For these buildings to survive, a new purpose must be found. It is accepted that this will more than likely include

modifications.

There are so many discussions that spring from the ripples of that event in May 2022, but Scaturro highlighted in her lecture that as conservators, we have a unique voice. We are the experts and we should find a way to use our voices to educate others about conservation. Ours is a fascinating profession with a minefield of complex layers but one thing that unites us all is that we know each object, or building, should be assessed on its own individual merit. After all, one size does not fit all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Charlotte Owen is the Senior Architectural Paint Researcher at Hirst Conservation in Lincolnshire (www.hirst-conservation.com) and a Committee Member of Icon's Historic Interiors Group. She trained as an objects conservator at Lincoln University before joining the National Trust as a Conservation Assistant and Project Conservator (2009–13). She also worked for English Heritage and Cambridge University Museums before joining Hirst Conservation in 2016.



It's Just a Dress!

Watch the 2022 Icon Annual Lecture, including a Q&A session chaired by Ksynia

Marko ACR, scan the QR code and log in.

NEWS FROM ICON'S GROUPS AND NETWORKS

TEXTILES GROUP ANNOUNCES AUTUMN EVENT



The Textiles Group is planning a one-day event for students and emerging professionals in October or November 2023 (date TBC) at the University of Lincoln.

Textile conservation is a diverse discipline practiced in institutions as well as private studios. The scale and size of textiles work is also hugely variable and may be carried out on small objects, such as gloves, or vast objects, such as rugs and upholstery. A textile conservator therefore needs to be proficient at stitching and benchwork, but also needs to know how to handle large objects.

As textiles are more vulnerable to certain agents of degradation compared to other materials, textile conservators are often involved in collections care and integrated pest management (IPM) programmes. They may even need to be skilled in how to safely build and work from scaffolding for certain projects.

The event is intended to illustrate the breadth of textile conservation and the information shared on the day will support students with their studies, particularly those who are not on a specialised course. It will also offer an insight into the various routes into textile conservation and the variety of careers available within the discipline. Conservators from various museums, the National Trust, Historic Palaces and private




Above and left: Kelly Grimshaw and Louise Shewry at The Landi Company studio supporting the edge of a late Victorian curtain using laid couching

practice will be discussing their own experiences and will offer insights into the skills they feel are most useful for the job. Students will also be given the opportunity to network and talk to the conservators speaking on the day. The event is expected to be

minimal cost, if not free, and it will be possible to apply for travel funding through the Anna Plowden Trust. More details will follow later in the year, so please keep an eye out for information via Icon's newsletters and the Textiles Group's section of the website and social media.

With thanks to Melinda Hey

HERITAGE SCIENCE GROUP SHARES ODDY TEST RESEARCH

 The Oddy test is used worldwide to determine if a material can be used in the storage or display of heritage objects. The test involves a visual evaluation of the level of corrosion on coupons of silver, copper and lead.

While there have been efforts to standardise the test with image libraries and protocols, evaluating the results is a subjective and manual process. On the other hand, machine learning models can learn from thousands of images and the expertise of many Oddy test evaluators.

In a study recently published in *Heritage Science Journal*, a convolutional neural network (CNN) was used to detect the corrosion level of the metal coupons in Oddy test images. Over 2,000 high-quality and standardised Oddy test images were provided by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) to train the model. The trained CNN correctly identified the metal and corrosion level of 98% of the coupons in a test set of images.

The full paper, which can be accessed via the QR code below, explores the method of training the CNN and evaluates its performance on the Met data and images from the American Institute for Conservation's Oddy test wiki page.

The next phase of research would involve gathering more images, improving the model and deploying the model in a tool that can help train Oddy test evaluators.

With thanks to Emily Long

Scan the QR code to read the open-access paper published in *Heritage Science Journal*.



Reference: Long ER, Bone A, Breitung EM, et al. (2022). 'Automated corrosion detection in Oddy test coupons using convolutional neural networks'. *Heritage Science*, 10, 150.




CNN Predictions for Metal Types and Corrosion Levels



Above: The trained CNN correctly identified the metal and corrosion level of 98% of the coupons in a test set of images

Left: Emily Long

BOOK & PAPER GROUP GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM A SUCCESS

 The Book & Paper Group Graduate Symposium 2023 attracted its highest number of attendees yet, with the presenters and audience totalling 116.

What is most striking about these symposiums is the shared motifs that run through the presenters' work, despite the diversity of projects and international research locales.

Josefa Orrego Trincado highlighted how her research on sustainability in Latin America revealed a lack of useful sustainability resources in Spanish, while Yuhong Zhang was stimulated to conduct her thesis on Chinese book publishing practices due to the lack of literature on the subject in English. Yuhong suggested that collaboration with Chinese-speaking communities is the key to understanding correct binding terminology and nuances.

Josefa's research also emphasised the weighty responsibility we all hold



Scrapbook by unknown person on early 1950s UFO sightings, University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections, TL789.3 .S37 1950z

in minimising our environmental impact. Emma Guerard, in turn, shared a video of migratory pelicans on the Iowa River, which inspired her change of treatment to avoid using solvents toxic to aquatic life, opting for a treatment approach sympathetic to the river and the material history of the 1950s UFO scrapbook she worked on.

Uncovering unseen elements in

samples was another theme. Fenna Engelke's research on the degradation of optical brighteners in paper unexpectedly revealed the migration of brighteners from the white plastic clips used in the accelerated ageing chamber into her samples. Luca van der Zande's work on the discolouration patterns of papers in Arabic doublure manuscripts investigated the idea that this discolouration came from finishing oils in the leather tanning process, though, in a twist, XRF analysis revealed these areas unexpectedly contained mercury.

These symposiums provide a platform to showcase the high-quality research that MA students produce in their final year projects, which alone is worth celebrating. They also lend insight into the trends, concerns and hopes of the incumbent generation of conservators.

With thanks to Zoe Voice

STAINED GLASS GROUP WELCOMES A NEW CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

 After 20 years at the forefront of stained glass conservation in Scotland, **Moira Malcolm** was elected Chair of the Icon Stained Glass Group (SGG) at the annual AGM in October 2022.

Moira began her studies at Edinburgh College of Art before training in stained glass conservation. In 2001 she started her own business, Rainbow Glass Studio, with her husband, Stephen, which undertakes large-scale conservation projects in historic listed buildings, as well as contemporary design.

Having always seen Icon as a beacon for best practice in conservation, Moira will ensure the SGG continues to uphold the same ethos.

Moira is joined by



two other new committee members, **Chris Chesney ACR** and **Roberto Rosa**.

Chris has been an accredited conservator (ACR) since Icon's Accreditation framework began. He is also the Director of Iona Art Glass, which he established with his wife Sarah in 1986. Chris has lectured at numerous Icon and CVMA symposiums and published relevant peer-reviewed papers. He is also a mentor and assessor for Icon



Accreditation. Having been a former Chair and Treasurer for the SGG, Chris will be an immeasurable fount of knowledge and encouragement for the current Group.

Roberto also firmly believes in Icon's philosophy and his international involvement in conservation is a dynamic addition to the SGG. He has been a conservator for 34 years working at Serpentino Studio, where he is a

Principal, and has conserved glass by the likes of La Farge and Tiffany, which present unique conservation issues. Roberto was the first stained glass conservator to be awarded

Recognized Professional status from the Association for Preservation Technology. He is a Fellow Member of the American Institute for Conservation, a board member of the American Glass Guild, and Chair of its Education Committee.

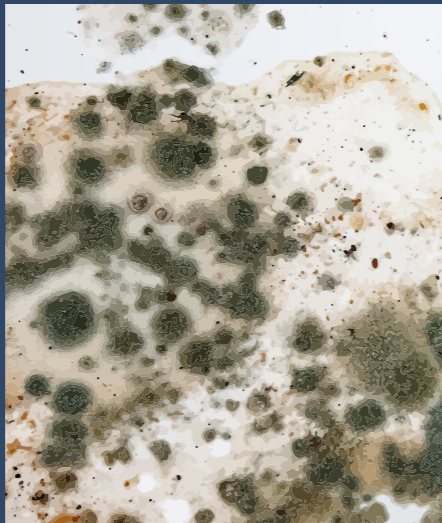
With thanks to Vivienne Kelly

CARE OF COLLECTIONS VIRTUAL AGM TO SHARE MOULD PREVENTION STRATEGIES



With the sharp rise in heating costs squeezing already tight budgets of many heritage organisations, the difficult decision of where and when the heating can be switched off is becoming increasingly necessary. When this is then compounded by the current legacy of reduced routine building maintenance and inspections over the past three years, the perfect circumstances for mould growth are created.

Areas that are unheated, have poor ventilation or have experienced water ingress in the past are



susceptible to both condensation issues and active mould growth. This will create issues for both the building and collections, as active mould spores will grow on organic material such as plaster, wallpaper, leather or textiles, which causes damage, loss and staining that

can be difficult to remove. If active mould growth is detected, it is also a potential health and safety issue and caution is essential as some mould spores can cause serious health issues for humans.

Identifying the cause of the mould growth is the first step in resolving the issue and dealing with these outbreaks in a timely manner is the best way to keep down costs and reduce any lasting damage.

The Care of Collections Group AGM on Wednesday 26 April will look at how different professionals in the field have developed strategies to prevent mould taking hold of buildings and collections, and how to deal with mould issues when these do occur.

With thanks to
Kerren Harris ACR

Scan the QR code for
more details.



EMERGING PROFESSIONALS NETWORK PROVIDES AN ACTIVITIES UPDATE AND INTRODUCES THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS



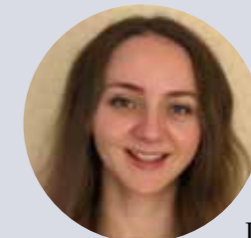
The Emerging Professionals Network (EPN) is currently creating short videos featuring introductory interviews with committee members from different Icon Groups. Visit our



pages on Icon's website to watch these and learn more about the Groups and their activities.

We would also like to introduce our two Social Media Managers: **Katica Laza (left)** and **Anna Crowther (above)**. Katica and Anna create and share content posted by emerging professionals on all the EPN's social media platforms (see the end of this news item for handles), aiming to build an online community where members can share their work, research and activities. If you would like to connect with the EPN, please tag us in your posts.

We also regularly host social media takeovers by members. If



anyone is interested in sharing their work or raising their profile in this way, again, please get in touch with us through the EPN pages on Icon's website or connect with us via social media.

Finally, West Dean students are organising a summer conference and are seeking speakers to discuss themes of repatriation and decolonisation in the heritage sector (email s21cy@westdean.ac.uk for more information).

[@IconEPN](https://twitter.com/IconEPN)
[@icon_emerging_professionals](https://www.instagram.com/icon_emerging_professionals)
[ICON_Emerging_Professionals Network](https://www.facebook.com/ICON_Emerging_Professionals_Network)

With thanks to **Carola Del Mese**

PRESENTATION AT HISTORIC INTERIORS GROUP AGM PROMPTS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT 3D SCANNING AND VIRTUAL REALITY SOFTWARE



In early February, the Historic Interiors Group held its AGM online with guest speaker, Rhiannon Clarricoates ACR, presenting her research on the investigations of the wall paintings at Stowe House.

The discovery of the wall paintings at Stowe began with treatment of the Fame & Victory ceiling over the East Staircase at Stowe in 2016. Rhiannon briefly took attendees through the development of the building, resulting in alterations to the staircase. Further investigations revealed a scheme of wall paintings described in a 1756 guidebook but thought to have since been lost.

The talk detailed targeted phases of paint and archival research that included access to the Stowe archive at the Huntingdon Library in California. Stylistic comparisons of works by Francesco Sletter, who the



Above: An 18th-century wall painting of the figure of Truth to the East Staircase at Stowe House during uncovering

wall paintings are attributed to, and William Kent were presented.

The research is ongoing with Rhiannon noting she still had information from the Huntingdon

Library to review and it is hoped that a future visit to Stowe House will enable Group members to appreciate the scale of the works in-situ. A question about the intention to reveal more of the wall paintings highlighted an interesting concept about the use of 3D scanning and virtual reality software when considering representation versus practical use of the building - something we will watch with interest.

If you are interested in a future visit to Stowe in relation to Rhiannon's talk, please get in touch via our Group's pages on Icon's website, where there is also information about a series of online lectures we have lined up for 2023. Please also get in contact if you are working on a project that you feel may be of interest to our Group's members.

With thanks to **Charlotte Owen**

SCOTLAND GROUP TOUR OF THE BURRELL COLLECTION



In early February, the Scotland Group enjoyed a conservation-themed tour of The Burrell Collection museum, which was led by four Glasgow Life conservators: Tarn Brown, Hazel Neill, Maggie Dobbie and Ann Evans.

The museum was designed to house the Burrell Collection of around 9,000 artworks and artefacts and opened in 1983. By the 2010s the building was in dire need of upgrading and in 2016 Glasgow Life embarked on an ambitious project to renovate the building and reimagine the collection displays inside the building, creating new gallery spaces and increasing the number of objects on display.

The building was given a Grade 1 listing shortly before the project



Above: The Group discuss the challenges of open display

began, which had a major bearing on decisions made during the project, for example, in the design of the show cases and the replacement of the glazing. The decision-making around whether to place objects on open display or inside cases was interesting: public consultation established a strong preference for open display, particularly of textiles, and so this was the default choice, but cases were used for objects which were considered particularly

vulnerable. Objects on open display were monitored once the museum had opened to establish the levels of unwanted touching and some objects were subsequently moved into cases or had barriers introduced.

Key to the design of the building is the vast expanse of glass in the outer walls, which offers fantastic views to the woodland outside but make the control of light levels quite challenging. A lighting consultant was used to model the light exposure of the various spaces across a year, allowing each space or part-space to be categorised as high exposure (red) or lower exposure (green). The room layouts were then designed so that the more light-sensitive objects were in green areas.

The visit, which covered much more, was greatly enjoyed by all the attendees, and we were very grateful to the Glasgow Life conservators for sharing the highs and lows of the project so engagingly and honestly. With thanks to **Isobel Griffin ACR**

PLUGGING THE SKILLS GAP

Diana Davis ACR on the lack of specialist conservators working in industrial heritage and their reliance on volunteers at the NMRN

Industrial heritage and large objects conservation seems to be a field that is heavily dependent on volunteer efforts with relatively few specialist conservators at work here in the UK. This is problematic since it generally requires co-ordination of multiple conservation specialisms on a large scale. Is this because people with the skills and knowledge in these types of objects have greater earning power within industry and only gravitate to heritage after retirement? Or is there a general lack of formal training and a pathway into the sector? Perhaps both are true and compound the issue.

At the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) we have an extensive collection that includes some very large objects including historic ships and aircraft, as well as associated collections of almost every material but largely textiles, metals,

plastics, rubber, wood, art and paper/books. We are also concerned with intangible heritage, such as the traditional skills it takes to maintain historic ships and their rigs, and the context of our ships within their historic dockyard settings.

Recruiting new team members

Finding the right people to care for all of this can be difficult at NMRN, especially when it comes to the larger and industrial heritage objects. People can feel daunted by the scale and nature of the collections and filling the roles within our conservation team can be challenging. Logically, this can be attributed to the lack of dedicated training courses in this field, which means emerging conservators have very limited experience with these kinds of objects.

Large object conservation requires the knowledge and understanding of how those objects were constructed and operated, and can often stray into working objects, large-scale disassembly and maintenance regimes. Conservation of the collection requires a wide range of skills and we have a diverse team for this reason as no one member could do everything needed to look after all our objects.

When it comes to recruitment, we therefore often find ourselves in need of someone who doesn't exist! So instead we recruit people who have some of the skills we



Above: A Fleet Air Arm Museum conservator working on paint archaeology

need and, crucially, the ability to fit into a collaborative working environment. Once we have found a suitable candidate who is adaptable and willing to learn, we then use inductions and continuing professional development (CPD) to help them into their role as part of the NMRN conservation team.

Learning through collaborative working

We have a lot of technical expertise in the team including traditional shipwrights, riggers, engineers and archaeologists as well as conservators. As not everyone in the team comes from a museums background, we use inductions

and working structures to put everyone on the same page in terms of conservation principles and approaches. New starters have an induction that covers what conservation is (and isn't), our team aims and the ethical considerations in our decision-making processes. We tend to find that people from non-museum backgrounds appreciate this, as it sets out our expectations from day one. For those who have come from museums conservation we have in-house CPD, so they can learn from their colleagues with traditional heritage craft skills or industrial experience. People from the different backgrounds often come with assumptions about each other, which can only be challenged by those people working together and this is where the collaborative relationships in the team are key.

It takes significant effort to make sure that CPD is given enough priority in a busy workplace and that people are given the time to learn and to mentor others. We are still a relatively young team at NMRN so the system is not perfect but by adding structure to our CPD processes and recognising collaborative working we are improving all the time. This is only sustainable as long as people continue to enjoy teaching, learning and mentoring, which is why we put so much emphasis on attitude at recruitment stage.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Diana Davis ACR is Head of Conservation at the National Museum of the Royal Navy (www.nmrn.org.uk) and a trustee of Icon. Her current focus is on professional development and how collaborative working with other disciplines can enhance skills in conservation practice.



Above: HMS Victory main lower mast removal - installation of upper lift support with riggers

Support from volunteers

Despite being fortunate enough to have quite a large and diverse team, we are still indebted to the amount of volunteer support we receive. Often this provides us with the capacity to achieve things at scale and to share our work with our audiences in more effective ways – for example, our volunteers working alongside our conservation engineers at our Fleet Air Arm Museum site who create video and photographic records of the projects in the workshop. Or our annual 'deep clean' volunteers in Belfast who have just helped us reset



Above: HMS Alliance conservation cleaning of submarine engines

HMS Caroline ready for reopening the ship for the first time since the pandemic closures.

Sometimes we have volunteers who want to apply their contextual knowledge, such as retired naval personnel, who might have maintained ships, submarines or aircraft in their working lives and now want to spend time with the collections. In these cases, we often find that our ideas of how to care for the collections diverge. We always ensure that volunteers are supervised by conservation professionals, but their knowledge and guidance on how things operated or were used can be invaluable. To manage that delicate balance, in conservation we now only recruit volunteers on a project-by-project basis rather than maintaining long-term volunteer roles with regular hours. The exception to this is in the public-facing, hands-off roles where we really do benefit from that lived knowledge of the navy to bring our stories to life for our audiences.

We know we're not alone

This issue is not unique at NMRN. Regional network meetings and links with other institutions in industrial and maritime heritage are crucial to try to keep communication flowing. The sector is heavily dependent on volunteer knowledge and effort, and there is a growing issue of a lack of succession planning for those skills. While volunteers are clearly important, it isn't appropriate to rely solely on volunteer efforts to keep these collections maintained – the sector is crying out for apprenticeships, education and on-the-job training opportunities to keep these skills alive. At NMRN we are trying to support student placements, research and apprenticeships, but like most museums we are limited by the resources we can commit to this. The recent announcement that Icon has secured funding from the Heritage Innovation Fund, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to investigate industrial heritage skills shortages is particularly welcome in this context.

ADDRESSING HERITAGE SKILLS GAPS WITH WORK-BASED LEARNING

Michael Sheppard ACR looks at how work-based placements and apprenticeships offer an in-road for the budding conservator, stonemason, joiner and traditional craftspeople

In 2022, out of the 349,190 apprenticeships in the UK only 70 were in stonemasonry, 5,390 in carpentry and 30 in general construction work. A skills shortage was reported by the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) in 2005, which stated that the condition of five million pre-1919 buildings could be at stake because repair and maintenance workers were not equipped with the necessary skills. This was reinforced in 2018 when the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and NHTG reported that 87% of contractors working in conservation and restoration had no formal conservation qualifications relating to traditional buildings.

It is therefore no surprise to hear that the skills gap continues to grow, following the pandemic, successive economically difficult years since the 2008 financial crash and now another economic downturn with record high



Above: CWF carving module assessment

inflation. Apprenticeships are strongly supported by SMEs, but they are struggling in challenging economic times and are developing remote technology to support employment issues following the pandemic. So what can be done to attract new talent to practical conservation roles to help close the skills gap?

Work-based placements and apprenticeship schemes are one route. Providing an employed position alongside a validated undergraduate qualification is a sustainable solution and commitment which will address these skills gaps in the medium to long term.

We are fortunate to have key organisations in the UK such as Icon, Historic England, the National Trust and the Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship (CWF) working on apprenticeship schemes to improve the training offering and address the demand across the sector. With the help of key funders such as the Hamish Ogston Foundation, the Benefact Trust and the Worshipful Company of Masons, to name a few, there is currently the awareness and funding available to reduce the skills shortage and create new work-based placements over several years.

The underpinning philosophy of the CWF is that the cathedrals' own master craftspeople are best placed to determine how to develop the knowledge and skills of the next generation, and that the best place



Above: Apprentice joiner, Durham Cathedral

to learn and develop those craft skills is in the workplace. The CWF approach enhances the traditional apprenticeship model with access to experts from all the cathedrals, not just their own. In this way, all the apprentices can benefit collectively from the expertise of individual practitioners who they wouldn't ordinarily encounter and gain in-depth knowledge of many cathedrals and historic buildings.

The answer to the skills gap is simple in essence. By creating training provisions that enable people to move into the profession while still earning in this difficult economic climate, we will facilitate the acquisition of traditional skills and retain them in the sector. Alongside conventional academic learning, workplace apprenticeships will strengthen the construction sector and begin to address the desperate need of our built heritage assets.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael Sheppard ACR is Deputy Director, Developments & Projects, at the Cathedrals' Workshop Fellowship (www.cwfcathedrals.co.uk). He has worked with numerous conservation contractors and on notable projects including his recent role as Director of Works and Property at Lincoln Cathedral.

ANNA PLOWDEN TRUST SCHOLARSHIPS AND CPD GRANTS

Have you ever considered applying for a Plowden Scholarship or CPD Grant to learn new skills and further your career in the field of conservation?



The Anna Plowden Trust was established in 1998 in memory of Anna Plowden CBE, a pioneering conservator in the private sector who was a passionate advocate of continuing professional development (CPD).

Through various activities, the Trust is committed to supporting the development of skills in conservation and helping to raise awareness about the sector. It also seeks to prevent financial reasons from being an obstacle to entering the profession and is committed to ensuring its support reaches all under-represented groups.

Since it was established, the Trust has distributed over £1 million in grants. Two key programmes offered by the Trust are...

Plowden Scholarships


The Plowden Scholarship programme provides grants towards the fees for attending a full-time conservation training course in the UK.


Applications are considered from those who wish to embark on a career in conservation or from existing conservators who need to broaden the base of their formal training by attending a course for at least one year.

 **Application deadline for 2023/24 academic year: 5 June 2023**

Anna Plowden/Clothworkers' Foundation CPD Grants

Thanks to a major partnership with The Clothworkers' Foundation, the Trust now offers greatly increased support for CPD opportunities for practising conservators in the UK towards the cost of short courses and of attending conferences. Applications are welcome for both in-person and online CPD events.

 **Application deadlines for 2023: 5 June and 9 September 2023**

 **For more information** and to apply, visit the Anna Plowden Trust website by scanning the QR code



For more information about Icon's Board of Trustees, please scan the QR code

MEET ICON'S NEW TRUSTEES



Left: Nic Boyes ACR
Below: Michelle Rheeston



In the previous issue of *Iconnect* magazine, we introduced you to three of Icon's new Trustees - Charles Morse, Professor Anita Quye and Mark Ross. Here we introduce two other Trustees who joined Icon's board in November 2022.

Nic Boyes ACR

Location: Edinburgh
Work status: Private practitioner

Nic has been a conservator since completing his Post Graduate Diploma in Architectural Stone Conservation at Weymouth College in 1991. He is an Accredited Consultant Conservator, having

conservation," Nic told *Iconnect* magazine. "This includes my recent participation in the reading of John Ruskin's writings, interpreting his 19th-century prose as meaningful instruction to a 21st-century audience about architectural and sculptural conservation, and the importance of maintenance and authenticity within a climate emergency context."

Michelle Rheeston

Location: Southwest England
Work Status: Employed/private practice

Michelle is a paintings conservator who graduated from The Courtauld Institute of Art in 2019. Before this she was a professional artist and lecturer in fine art for 10 years. Michelle works predominantly with private studios, working on a range of projects within the private and heritage sector. In 2020 she set up her own studio, Rheeston Paintings Conservation, which is based in Cornwall, and has undertaken a range of projects including for the National Trust, Westminster Palace and the Church of England.

Commenting on what attracted her to the role of Trustee, Michelle comments, "As an emerging and relatively newly qualified conservator, as well as a conservator working predominantly in the regions, I felt I could give a different insight and represent those conservators who may have a similar background or situation to myself."

fulfilled this role since 2016. Prior to this Nic was Director of Nicolas Boyes Stone Conservation Ltd from 1999, leading a team of 20 staff. From 1993 to 1999, he worked as Conservator and Higher Conservator within Historic Scotland's Conservation Centre, Edinburgh, working throughout Historic Scotland's estate. From graduation in 1991 to 1993, he worked at St Blaise Ltd.

"I'm a passionate advocate of conservation in presentations to audiences outside the field of

A TRIBUTE TO FORMER ICON TRUSTEE, MEL HOUSTON ACR (1967-2023)

Mel Houston's death on 1 January 2023 is a personal tragedy for her partner, family and friends, and marks the loss of a highly regarded colleague within the conservation profession.

In 2016 Mel wrote, "I came into conservation after a career change a decade ago, which has turned out to

be one of the best decisions I've ever made" as, in 2006, she embarked upon the third of what she described as her working 'lives', each rooted and evolving in Scotland. Each 'life' was underpinned by academic rigour and marked an approximate decade or so of Mel's 55 years.



Born in Belfast in 1967, Mel left Northern Ireland aged 18 and, having enrolled on the second year of Heriot Watt University's BSc Biochemistry, graduated with the first of many degrees and qualifications. Her BSc was followed swiftly by a Diploma in Biomedical Sciences, also in Edinburgh, and methodologies learnt as a student and then a lab technician later served her in good stead as a preventive conservator.

In the 1990s Mel's ambitions shifted to photography and film, with a Diploma in Photography and Art which she studied at the Edinburgh College of Art, followed by a First Class BA Hons in Photography at Napier University, Edinburgh. Short contracts followed: cruise ship photographer (detested), Edinburgh Dungeon's photography team manager (enjoyed) and working with an established Edinburgh photographer (instructive).

Moving to Glasgow she chanced on an advert for a National Trust for Scotland (NTS) Tenement House Visitor Assistant. A new world opened leading to Northumbria University's MA in Preventive

Welcome, new members!

We would like to wish a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in November and December 2022 and January 2023. We look forward to seeing you at an Icon event soon.

Student

- Marta Artigas Coll
- Sydney Betancourt
- Alikei Boutzia
- Zélia Brandt de Oliveira
- Liberty Caithness
- Olga Calvo-Diaz
- Amy D'Alwis
- Jo Dwyer
- Maia Henderson-Roe
- Gillian Hogan
- Emma Hornsby
- Susan Hull
- Tara Johnston
- Rebekka Katajisto
- Carolyn Keene
- Vanessa Kirana
- Chloe Kong
- Lydia Lutz
- Alessia Marzanni
- Duncan McCall
- Leonie McKenzie
- Justyna Medon
- Sophie Nimmins
- Elena Novkovic
- Sophie Percival
- Hannah Priest
- Kishanthi Saman
- Lindsey Sartin
- Louisa Stark
- Ayako Tanihata
- Guy Taylor
- Katerina Theodoraki
- Victoria Ward
- Danielle Winser

Associate

- Jessica Baldwin
- Ian Campbell
- Martina Catinelli
- Kusi Colonna-Prete
- Carlie Deans
- Erinn Dunlea
- Aquila Evill
- Rikke Foulke
- Emily Franks
- Roisin Hancock-Thompson
- M Reed Higgins
- Kate Jennings
- Caitlin Kelly
- Sophie Lamb
- Deborah Magnoler
- Jane Maguire
- Melanie Martin
- Eve Menei
- Charles Morse
- Petra Nirmaier
- Louise O'Connor
- Sarah Owens
- Kate Perks
- Katharine Richardson
- Laura Romero-

- Perez
- Marie-Luise Ronsch
- Mark Ross
- Isabella Rossi
- Maria Sanchez Carvajal
- Callum Scobie-Youngs
- Ching-Wang Shao
- Simeon Tsvetkov
- Elizabeth Willetts
- Veronica Wilson

- Gordon Maiwald
- Kelly McCauley Krish
- David Morris
- Kay Saunders
- Catherine Walker
- Kathleen Cormack
- Jolanda Crettaz Chandler
- Brenda Keneghan
- Steph Knight
- Judith Lee
- Emma Miller
- Cristina Prella Ros de Souza
- Michael Sentance
- Allison Valdivia
- Tracy Jeffreys

Conservation (2006-08) and her appointment in 2008 as NTS' first HLF/Icon preventive conservation intern.

From this point, Mel's trajectory encompassed National Preventive Conservator, NTS (2009-20); Project Conservator, Robert Burns Birthplace Museum NTS (2010); Pest Odyssey IPM (Integrated Pest Management) Network Steering Committee (2013-); Icon Accreditation (2014); elected Trustee, Icon Board (2016-22); elected Chair, Icon Professional Development & Standards Committee (2017-22) and, throughout, supervisor of Icon interns and Icon mentor. A cherished Bat Survey Licence (2012) was also in that mix.

In her NTS years Mel implemented a Trust-wide IPM programme, delivered annual IPM training, reviewed and upgraded environmental monitoring systems, led the digitisation of the Canna House lepidoptera collection and film archive, presented papers at the third and fourth International IPM conferences, and delivered memorable training sessions at NTS annual Collections Care Workshops. In September 2020, Mel was appointed the National Library of Scotland's first Preventive Conservator working, once more, alongside Julie Bon (also



ex-NTS) who recalls, "Mel made an immediate impact and was excited at the prospect of building a preventive conservation programme from scratch." Nothing could have better played to Mel's strengths as the natural order of her enquiring mind was to put every project – professional or personal - through extensive research, analysis and evaluation.

Mel's sparky wit and calm voice of reason have been captured in many tributes: "She brought to every discussion her incisive mind, clarity of thought, good nature and sense of humour"; "She was a guide and a mentor and also one of the funniest conservators I've ever

met"; "Mel became a key member of the Pest Odyssey IPM Network [...] her clear sight and dry sense of humour helped keep the group focussed"; "A great inspiration through her unbelievable levels of hard work, ability to make things happen and her good humour." Mel was a voracious reader with an exceptional ability to crystallise and communicate the complex and with (when she chose to let rip) a colossal sense of the absurd.

At their home in the Tweed Valley, Mel and Kath – Mel's partner of 27 years – kept geese, ducks, chickens and cats. Together they planned and nurtured a garden out of rubble with a pond, orchard, vegetables and huge greenhouse. Mel's enthusiasm for new projects saw beekeeping next on their 'to-do' list; hives were finished a few weeks before she died. And if all that wasn't enough, home-brews (wine, limoncello, vodka or amaretto) were made for her friends.

The respect and affection in which Mel is held became clear with news of her death. She would have been astonished. She might just have heard you out... and then got on with cleaning the geese, duck and chicken sheds.

With thanks to Clare Meredith ACR, a colleague (NTS 2008-13) and friend of Mel

CONGRATULATIONS, NEW ACRS

Congratulations to the following Accredited Conservator-Restorers (ACRs) who were approved by Icon's Accreditation Committee in December 2022.

- Sandra Allison
Preventive
- Adrian Attwood
Conservation Management
- Ruan Bester
Conservation Management
- Cassandra Crawford
Architectural Paint Research
- Emilia Kingham
Objects
- Sarah Klopf
Objects
- Paulina (Nicky) Lobaton
Objects
- Dana Melchar
Furniture/Wood
- Nada Miedema
Paintings and Painted Objects
- Tiago Oliveira
Ceramics and Glass
- Flavia Ravaioli
Organic Objects
- Jon Readman
Objects
- Monika Stokowicz
Books/Manuscripts

WHO GOT THE JOB?

In this regular, we look at who has successfully filled a work opportunity advertised through Icon's e-bulletin, *Iconnect Jobs*

Name: Catherine Fairless

Position: Collections Conservator
(full-time, fixed-term contract)

Employer: The King's Own Scottish
Borderers (KOSB), Berwick-Upon-
Tweed Barracks

Tell us a little bit about your background...

After gaining a degree in the History of Art, I completed an MSc in Conservation Practice. I then worked in stained glass conservation at Lincoln Cathedral followed by York Glaziers Trust in York, with the assistance of the National Heritage Training Group. I then hopped over to the National Railway Museum, working across their York and Shildon sites. Last year I landed a contract with the National Museums Scotland, which led to my relocation 'north of the wall'.

What attracted you to this position?

After living and working in Edinburgh I decided I wanted to stay, so seeing a job that was full time, easily commutable and well paid was a no-brainer. As a role it presented a golden opportunity to level up professionally by forcing me to step up out of my comfort zone and do what I knew I was capable of but didn't have the scope or confidence to do before. It's also created a bridge between my Northumbrian roots and my new adoptive home in Scotland.

What does your job involve?

As my current work is primarily a decant project, on top of packing and logistics, my role also includes translating and applying



museum practices and ethics, grant application work, exhibition design consultation and preventative conservation. But I'm sure as things crop up over the course of the project I'll diversify even more!

What are you currently working on?

As part of the living barracks project, which is seeing the renovation and redevelopment of the barracks into a more locally integrated site, I'm working with English Heritage colleagues gathering intel to plan and implement temporary storage facilities on site for the KOSB. A colleague and I are also currently auditing the collection, ensuring the complete assessment and documentation of the collection, so

we can obtain appropriate packing supplies and get that under way.

What do you like the most about your new job?

The team has a great dynamic and working alongside veterans of the regiment adds an invaluable dimension to understanding the collection.

What top tips would you give anyone looking to apply for a similar job?

Just go for it. You can never be certain exactly what it is about you as a person that might just swing in your favour, or what might make this work opportunity more than 'just the job description' from your point of view.



PRESERVING YORK

Dr Duncan Marks, Civic Society Manager at York Civic Trust, talks about preserving York’s heritage and the benefits of public engagement



Tell us a little bit about York Civic Trust...

York Civic Trust (YCT) is one of the leading local amenity societies in the UK. It was founded in 1946 to preserve the heritage of the city and shape York’s future. Alongside our City Enhancement work programme, we are also responsible for the city’s 150+ plaques (including the first ever rainbow plaque) and a busy events programme for our 1,000+ members.

What is your role at YCT?

I am responsible for YCT’s heritage projects and responding to planning applications affecting one of the UK’s most historic cities. My role is varied but a real highlight includes engaging with different communities about their heritage. City Enhancement projects are key to this.

Who does YCT’s conservation work?

We work with a range of trades, craftspeople and professional conservators. Dr Alaina Schmisser of Rook Heritage



Consulting has become one of our ‘go-to’ conservators due to her diverse range of professional skills and knowledge frequently matching the varied nature of our work. It has helped a working relationship develop across projects, rather than needing to start the process each time and tender anew.

Alaina has worked on YCT projects since 2015. This has mostly involved stone and copper alloy conservation work, including Victorian stone troughs on village greens, public park gateposts, statues, historic brass plaques and war memorials.



Top left and right: Statue of William Etty, before and after restoration

Above: Alaina working on a statue

Tell us about a project Alaina has worked on that is particularly significant to York and its people...

Alaina has now conserved all three of York’s historic stone statues – a full house!

Each statue has its own environmental challenge, be this vegetation, car pollution or a nearby fountain. As a result, they can quickly discolour.

Perhaps because York had a different historical evolution in comparison to big industrial centres such as Leeds, Manchester or Birmingham, we have less Victorian and Edwardian ‘civic patron’-type figures to celebrate. The scarcity of public statues in York enhances their heritage importance.

As well as caring for the city’s objects, what other benefits does conservation work offer?

Our public conservation projects can risk being misattributed to the local authority. Alaina’s work with YCT, which was entirely in the public realm, resulted in her becoming the *de facto* ‘public face’ and even ‘voice’ of the Trust. She is great at engaging with and educating the public about her work, and through this, the work of YCT. This is a great way to publicly promote how conservation work helps to enhance the city and protect its cultural heritage. It’s not something we initially looked for in a conservator, but we now value it and factor in public engagement possibilities with contractors.



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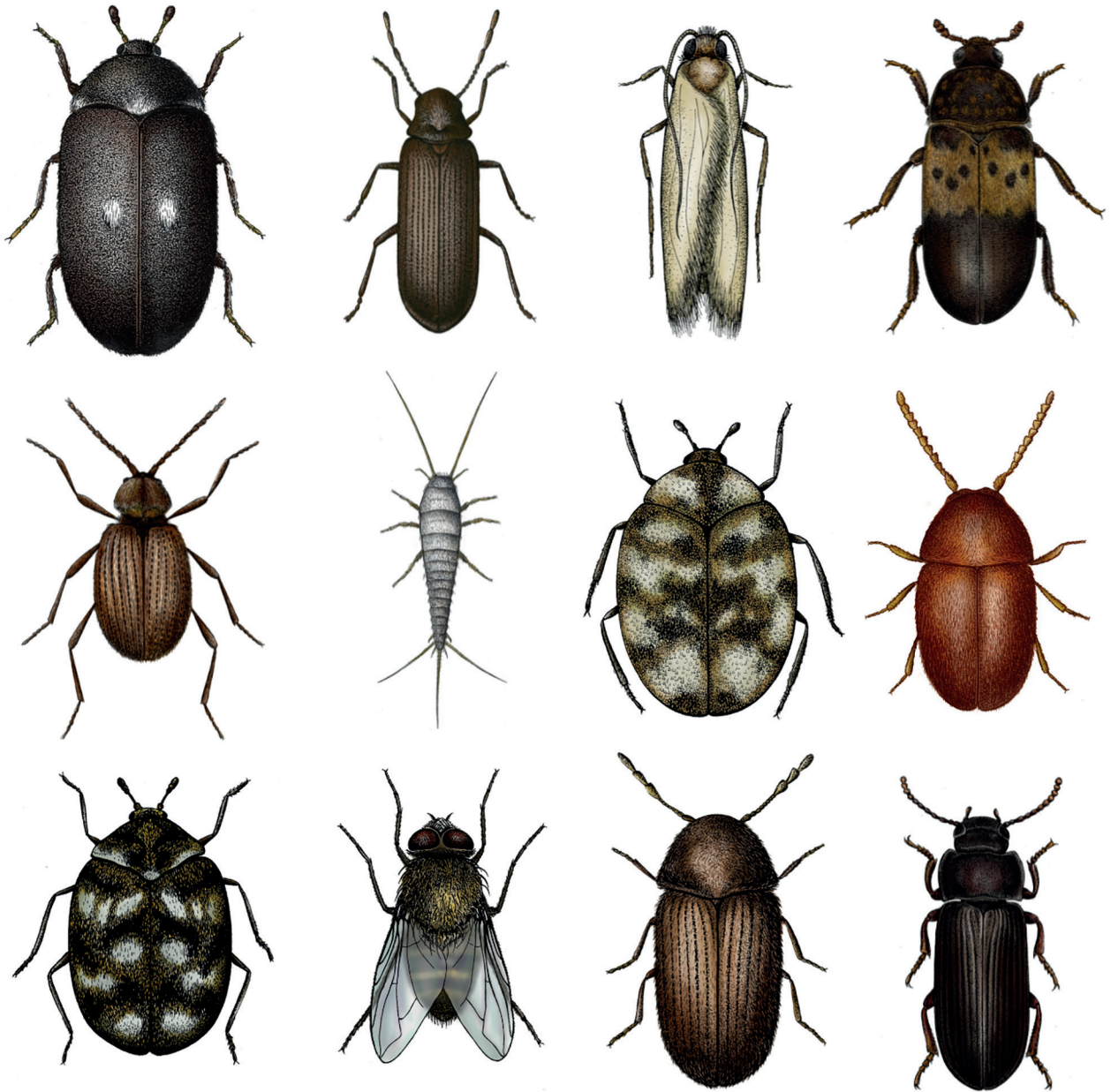
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