



Archives & Records
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Restoration
celebrates 40-
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diaries



Crowne Plaza, Chester
2nd – 4th September

Conference
2020

We ♥ Records



Welcome...



Welcome to the first issue of ARC 2020 Conservation and Preservation Edition

Happy new year! I hope all our readers had a wonderful Christmas, and enjoyed a well deserved break over the festive season. It is a good time of year to reflect and make exciting new plans for the new year ahead.

Whilst editing this edition, I have been struck by the volume and range of really important work being done to conserve and preserve our important heritage collections. It is a bumper issue! You will read about conservation work undertaken on the Gillyat Sumner collection, through to reflections on dealing with botanical material. As a non-conservator, I have been hugely impressed by the innovative and dedicated work demonstrated by our authors within this issue.

A huge thanks to Mark Allen, conservator at Flintshire Record Office, who kindly collected all the content for this edition. A further thanks to all our contributors. I have greatly enjoyed reading your articles, and I am certain our readers will too! A final thank you to Hannah Smith for agreeing to be interviewed by me for Backchat.



The officers of the Erebus and Terror, who all perished in the lost expedition (Reference: D8760/F/LIB/8/1/5). Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.

From us all here at ARC, we wish you a great year ahead! We look forward to receiving your articles on any interesting work and projects you may be involved in, in 2020.

Alice McFarlane
ARC Editor

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Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.

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Watercolour portrait of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall (Reference SH:2/M/19/1/59). Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service

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Opening lines

Karl Magee, chair of the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland, outlines plans for the board and our continued push increase diversity and representation in our sector

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Archives and Records Association. Our organisation was formed in 2010 from a merger of the Society of Archivists, the National Council on Archives and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government. Since then we have sought to fulfil our role as the leading professional body for archivists, records managers and archive conservators in the UK and Ireland.

Now a decade old the time is right for us to take a detailed look at how our association works. This summer the ARA Board will undertake a full governance review, examining how both the Board and the wider organisation operates. This work will result in a set of recommendations for improvements to how we operate which will be brought to the membership for discussion and approval.

This work will be informed by the range of support and guidance provided by the Cultural Governance Alliance, a collective of agencies, organisations and advocates working to champion, share and promote best practice in the governance of culture:
<https://culturalgovernancealliance.org/>

In November I attended their Governance Now 2019 conference. Aimed at cultural sector trustees and professionals it featured a range of talks and discussions from leading figures in the sector on the challenges of achieving good governance.

It provided practical solutions to common problems, top tips and shared experiences on how to create and maintain a high performing



Karl Magee, chair of the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland

board and an efficient and effective organisation. The tools and techniques shared at the event will provide a useful resource which we intend to put into practice as part of our review.

One key issue we will examine as part of our governance review is how we can ensure our Board is inclusive and fully representative of the sector, providing the skills, expertise and experience required to function effectively. Initiatives to confront and tackle issues of diversity and inclusion are currently happening across the record-keeping sector. The Archives and Records Association welcomes the sector-wide concern to make our profession more open and inclusive. We will continue to make our contribution to the wider efforts through the commitments we made in our #ARAGlasgowManifesto and the projects included in our annual business plan.

As a Board we will be taking as a group a training course on Understanding Diversity and Inclusion created by Future Learn, a provider of a range of online training courses. The course has already been used (and recommended) by ARA North West. Designed as an online course the Board will review and reflect on the lessons learned from the course at a face-to-face session prior to our next Board meeting in Cardiff in March.

Diversity is one of the key daily themes of our 2020 conference, which will be held in Chester from 2-4 September. The conference will look at how we can increase diversity and representation in the records we keep and what role record-keepers play in this process. The other main conference themes tackle the key issues facing our profession of advocacy and sustainability. Our annual conference provides an opportunity for us to reflect, review and debate and I hope you will be able to join the conservation in Chester.

Collecting matters

Collection care research at The National Archives

Natalie Brown, Senior Conservation Manager (Engagement) at The National Archives, shares news on the work of the collection care department, and their involvement in research projects.

The purpose of the collection care department at The National Archives is to ensure access to our collection, through its long-term preservation and display. We aim to prolong the life of our collections through established and innovative programmes of environmental management, conservation treatment, and research initiatives. Over the next five years we are working towards establishing ourselves as a centre for research excellence in conservation and heritage research. We also want to be in a position where we can advise on, and create policy around, the care and display of archival collections.

Our research areas are broadly focused around material analysis, preservation and environment, treatment procedures, imaging and computer vision. Some of our recent highlights include a project to create collection value assessments, undertaken by Sonja Schwall ACR. These value assessments will provide our conservation treatment projects with a clear structure, by prioritising them and determining the level of investment in time and resources. The National Archives holds over 250,000 wax seals dating from the 11th to the 20th century. As we hold such a large collection, our department is researching the materials, the processes used, the degradation, and housing solutions for our wax seal collection. The research into this topic has led to Dr Lora Angelova ACR becoming an advisor to the ArchHives project (sites.google.com/palaeome.org/archives/home), which aims to use beeswax as a biomolecular archive to inform the geographic origin of beeswax used to create seals, and identify the DNA of individuals who used beeswax seals.

If you are interested in finding out more about our research areas or projects, please contact me at Natalie.Brown@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Professional development news

This month **Chris Sheridan**, ARA's Head of Professional Standards and Development gives an overview of activities during 2019.



The Professional Development Programme continues to move from strength to strength. In December 2019 we had 190 candidates enrolled on the programme, an increase of over 110% from December 2018. This number includes 16 candidates working towards Fellowship, with six already qualified, 63 members are working towards Foundation Membership, with three already qualified, and 111 members are working towards Registered Membership, with 5 already qualified.

Congratulations again to:

Charlotte Berry FARA
Elspeth Reid FARA
Gillian Sheldrick FARA
Janice Tullock FARA
Margaret Crockett FARA
Sarah Wickham FARA
Natasha Luck RMARA
Christopher Cassells RMARA
Ann Chow-Thomas RMARA
Ann Cameron RMARA
Alexandra Healey RMARA
Chloe Anderson FMARA
Timothy Jerome FMARA
Rory Powell FMARA.

There are clear career benefits to qualification, but don't take my word for it. The following are just some of the positive feedback we receive from members:

"The self-assessment process is really useful. It kept me focused on the areas of my work I wish to develop"

"The programme has helped me appreciate and value what I have achieved in my career so far. It has enriched my knowledge and enthusiasm for my work"

It's also great to see employers supporting the programme, as demonstrated by another candidate who said "enrolment on the programme was a big plus for my employer. It demonstrates they employ someone with a suitable level of knowledge, and connections to a wider network of professionals".

To find out more about the programme and how it can help you progress in your career, please visit the programme website www.archivesandrecords.smapply.io/.

CPD Review

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an ongoing process of learning through experience and reflection. It is essential that Foundation and Registered and Fellows continue with their professional development, as this ensures their professional knowledge and competencies remain current. The CPD Review (the new name for revalidation) is the formal ARA process through which members continue with their development. We have 18 members who have completed their CPD Review, and 34 members currently in the process of evidencing their continuing professional development.

Updated guidance and examples

We've just published updated guidance that responds to questions raised by candidates during 2019, and the outcomes of each assessment round. We've also added example competency forms and CPD Reviews, to help members get to grips with the requirements of the programme. Please visit the programme website for more information.

Presentations, meetings and visits.

I'm lucky enough to be able to travel around the UK and Ireland, giving professional development presentations to professionals, volunteers, students and employers. 2019 included visits to Scottish Council on Archives in Edinburgh, The Mitchell Library Glasgow, University College London, Bridging the Digital Gap trainees, ARA Ireland, PRONI (Belfast), a delegation from Malaysia, Chief Archivists in Local Government Group (CALGG), University of Dundee, Museum of English Rural Life, ARA East of England, Carlisle Archives Service, and London Metropolitan Archive. If you'd like me to speak at one of your events, or visit your place of work, then please contact me at the ARA.

We're recruiting more assessors

The ARA's assessor team perform a key voluntary role by ensuring that applications for Foundation or Registered Membership and Fellowship meet the required standards. Assessors also assess the evidence submitted by members in their CPD Review - the process through which members submit evidence of their continuing professional development. We're looking to recruit more Registered members to this voluntary role. Training is provided, and assessors are invited to an annual meeting hosted by the ARA. This provides a fantastic opportunity to share experience and advice, advise the ARA on matters of concern, and review published guidance and advice. Anyone looking to develop their own governance, line management, and critical thinking competencies, for example, should find the role beneficial. It's also a great way to gain perspective and expertise, whilst contributing to the development of the profession and the next generation of the ARA's qualified recordkeepers. Please contact me (chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk) if you would like to know more.

Backchat...



Hannah Smith, Archive Digital Project Manager and Digital Archive Manager, talks to ARC editor **Alice McFarlane**, about what her work involves within the digital archive team at Historic Environment Scotland.

Hi Hannah, can you tell me a bit about what your role involves at Historic Environment Scotland?

I'm currently responsible for the management and delivery of the Archive Digital Project investment programme. This three-year project aims to significantly increase archive material accessible online, via our website Canmore (canmore.org.uk/content/archive-digital-projects-2018-2021-0). Each year the project team will create 125,000 new digital images through digitisation, in addition to cataloguing 125,000 born digital items. This project will allow for improved management and care of both physical and digital collections, improved collections knowledge, improved long term preservation of data, as well as reduction in inaccessible and invisible archives.

In April this year I also took on the role of digital archive manager as maternity cover. I am responsible for managing the day to day running of the digital archive, managing digital archive staff, and oversee the implementation of our digital repository software, provided by Preservica. I liaise with depositors to the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) archive, and look for ways to improve our digital archive service.

How did you get involved in the Archive Digital Project with Historic Environment Scotland?

I moved into the digital archive in HES from the data management team, having come from a background in archaeology and information management. I started as digital archive officer and then took on the manager role in 2017 for maternity cover. I was then successful in interview for the management of the Investment Fund Archive Digital Projects 2018-2021. However, I have also taken on the digital archive management for a second maternity cover at the same time. My experience in the digital archive over this time has really solidified my intentions to remain working in this sector, using my archaeological background to provide the fundamental understanding of our data here at HES.

“My experience in the digital archive over this time has really solidified my intentions to remain working in this sector”



A diving archaeologist conducting a metal-detector survey on the Adelaar wreck-site. Copyright: Courtesy of HES (Dr Colin and Dr Paula Martin Collection)



View of Vere Gordon Childe with a group of workmen during the excavations at Skara Brae in 1930. Copyright: RCAHMS

What was the path that took you to your current role?

I studied archaeology at Glasgow University, and then went on to complete a masters in professional archaeology there as well. As a student, I volunteered as a placement supervisor on the Hungate site in York, with York Archaeological Trust. Working with York Archaeological Trust gave me the best crash course in field archaeology I could have asked for. Although, I think the biggest thing I took away was that I preferred to work indoors! On graduating, I began an information management workplace learning bursary, from the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists at Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). From there I spent around six years on various fixed term posts within RCAHMS. Subsequently, I gained HES experience in survey and recording, data management, geographic information systems, aerial photography, as well as archives.

Who or what has influenced you in your career?

In the beginning, I wouldn't say I thought of myself as having a career. I had five jobs in as many years, due to the nature of fixed term contracts. It meant I couldn't really plan out my career, or where I wanted to be in five to ten years, because just getting and keeping a job was the priority. Fortunately, my varying experience

“We have the most incredible architectural drawings that look like works of art”

provided me with a well-rounded understanding of everything that goes in to making and maintaining the national record for the Historic Environment. At the time, I might not have known exactly what I wanted to do as a career, but by the end I knew what I didn't want to do.

What advice would you give to someone who is interested in a career in archives / records management sector?

Volunteer as much as you can. Say yes - even when you're in a job. Say yes to everything that comes your way. Keep at it. Jobs are often few and far between. Lots of people expect their dream job (with dream pay) instantly. Qualifications in the sector start you off right, but you must put the work and the time in, and gain experience. For me, this meant taking jobs that

“Digital preservation is a big pressure for archives”

weren't exactly what I wanted to do forever, but it gave me a foot in the door and relevant experience.

What has been the most surprising or interesting find within any collection you have worked on?

The digital archive never fails to surprise me. We have the most incredible architectural drawings that look like works of art, demolition footage of buildings long forgotten, and archaeological survey photographs of sites no longer visible. I spent some time a few years ago editing and uploading clips of some of our maritime dive footage, from various protected wrecks across Scotland. The videos are filmed by underwater divers as they inspect shipwrecks, and watching the footage can feel quite immersive.

What would you say are the biggest challenges for the archives / records management sector in 2020?

Digital preservation is a big pressure for archives. Archive material deposits are becoming increasingly more digital. However, many organisations still have backlogs and legacy digital material. I spend a lot of my time advocating for more staff and resources with the necessary digital skills to process and archive this material. It's been a hard push to move minds away from the opinion that digital is easy, and can be archived and preserved at the push of a button. The way technology is developing is also proving a challenge. We are moving from relative stability in archival practice to one of continual change. New technologies are often utilized without universal agreement of preservation and access. We will continue to struggle to play catch up, particularly if we don't have the level of resources we need.

What would you say are the main challenges ahead for working with and preserving digital material, in particular?

For us, it's the speed of growth of the digital archive, along with the fast-paced technological advances in archaeological survey methods. Our digital archive has grown steadily over ten years. However, within expected trends we estimate our archive will double in as little as two years. Our main priority now is to improve our technical infrastructure, and the capacity for which we can continue to archive digital material.

For more information on the work that Hannah and her team are doing at Heritage Environment Scotland, email: Digital.Archives@hes.scot

Testing a Tengu – is it a paper tape or a tissue on a roll?

Zoe Reid, Senior Conservator, National Archives, Ireland shares her thoughts on using Tengu Japanese paper tape on two conservation projects

I am a pushover for new conservation products. I love flicking through conservation catalogues or checking out new products online. Often purchases are a real find, but occasionally others end up at the back of the drawer, rarely seeing the light of day.

I thought that it might be interesting to share some thoughts on a new tissue I purchased earlier this year, and have had the opportunity to use on very different types of paper.

Tengu Japanese paper tape

The tissue is sold as Tengu Japanese paper tape. It's not really a tape as it has no adhesive, so the name is a bit misleading. It is sold on a roll, which might give it cause to be thought of as a tape, like washi paper. The tissue comes in two widths 30mm and 60mm, and the rolls are 50m in length. The tissue is a machine made 100% kozo paper, and is a nice weight at only 7.3 gsm. It comes in two colours - natural and white. According to the online catalogue it "is ideal for hinging repairs support and many other uses. It also has a 'deckled' (feathered) edge on each side" (www.preservationequipment.com/Catalogue/Conservation-Materials/Paper-Board/Japanese-Papers/Japanese-Paper-Tape-Deckled-edge-feathered).



Tengu 30mm wide tape and the verso of one of the Yeomanry Returns 1798. Image reproduced with kind permission from the Director of the National Archives.

I purchased the tissue because I was looking for tissue of a suitable colour and weight to repair a series of 66 large format forms, printed on handmade late 18th Century paper. The next application was an urgent repair of a small series of propaganda material printed on newsprint from the early 20th Century, where again colour and weight were primary considerations.

Yeomanry Returns, Co Carlow, 1798

This collection of large printed forms, completed with iron gall ink manuscript information, had been folded and slightly fire damaged and scorched at the edges. The forms were printed on handmade paper, with the laid and chain lines clearly visible. After surface cleaning and gentle humidification to reduce creasing and historic folds, the sheets were repaired with the Tengu tissue. Sections were used and applied on both sides of the areas of loss and damage. Due to the light weight of the tissue, the small sections (approximately 10mm -15mm in length) were difficult to handle when wet and pasted with the wheat starch paste. Creasing and folding would easily occur when they were lifted and handled. Providing a support layer for the tissue when pasting was an easy solution. Mylar (stretched polyester film) was quite stiff for these small sections, so instead rectangles were cut from plastic document pockets. This polyester was both light and flexible, and easy to curl back and remove once the tissue section was in place. Alternatively, dry sections



Setting up for repair with Tengu tape and wheat starch paste. Image reproduced with kind permission from the Director of the National Archives.

“After surface cleaning and gentle humidification to reduce creasing and historic folds, the sheets were repaired with the Tengu tissue”

of the tissue were placed on top of the areas of damage, and the glue pasted through the tissue. Any excess was easily and quickly removed by blotting off.

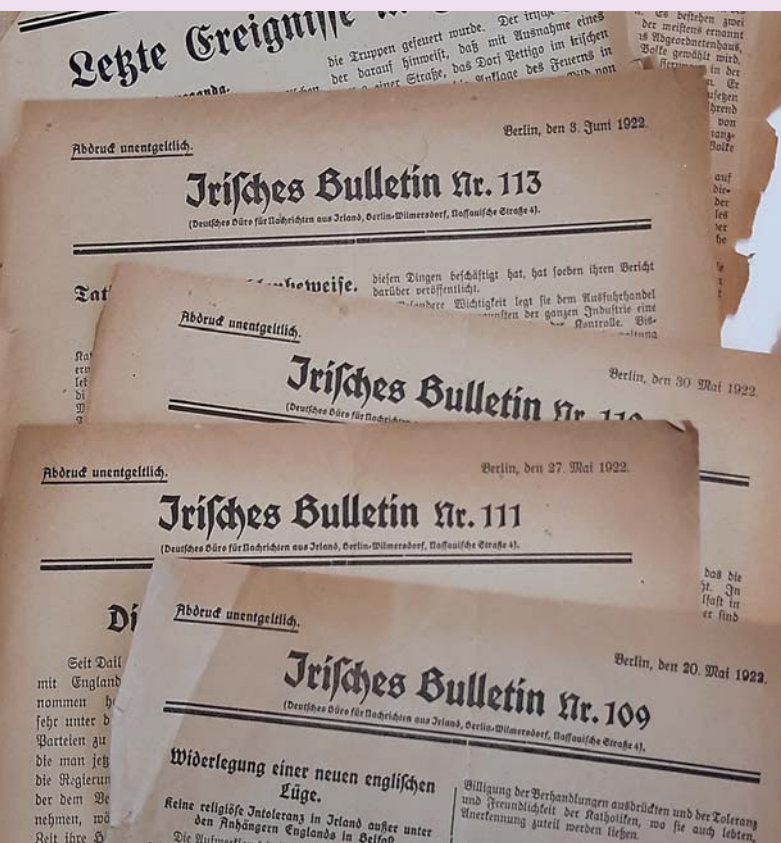
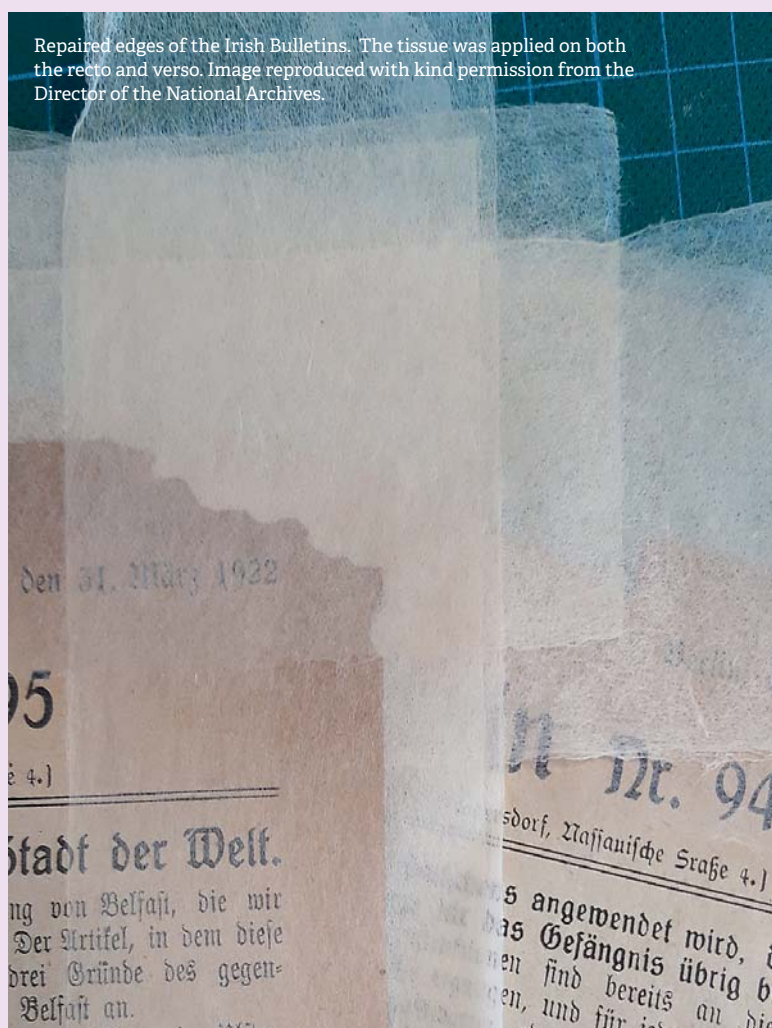
The application of Tengu paper in these areas was really successful. The natural toned tissue was extremely complimentary to the colour of the aged paper. The light weight of the tissue meant that an application on each side of the fractured and scorched areas did not result in a thickening of the document in these areas, and only under close inspection could the tissue be seen.

German edition of the Irish Bulletin, 1921-1922

The Irish Bulletin was a small series of leaflets, published by the first Dáil Éireann (Assembly of Ireland) 1919-1921 (www.dail100.ie) in an attempt to secure international recognition for Irish independence. It was produced in various languages.

Printed on A4 newsprint, the leaflets were discoloured

Repaired edges of the Irish Bulletins. The tissue was applied on both the recto and verso. Image reproduced with kind permission from the Director of the National Archives.



Copies of the Irish Bulletins published in October 1921 (Reference DFA/Early1/9/64). Image reproduced with kind permission from the Director of the National Archives.

and had become very fragile as they aged. The edges were particularly vulnerable to damage, where the paper was brittle and weak, and easily damaged when handled. Conservation treatment included washing, to remove some of the discolouration and reduce the acidity of the paper. A 2% calcium hydroxide solution was added to the bath, increasing the surface pH of the sheets from pH 4.7 to pH 6.

After air drying overnight on silk screen material, the bulletins were repaired using a method that had been designed for another key project, but had been adapted and used on many collections. This wet-to-wet technique was devised for its simplicity, speed, excellent reversibility, good elasticity, and great strengthening effect to vulnerable areas of damage.

Repair to the damaged edges was undertaken using long strips of the Tengu tissue, and a 4:1 wheat starch paste thinned to a milk-like solution. The strips were pasted on a table top, and then lifted with the aid of a bamboo spatula, ensuring that the long strips did not twist, before placing them paste side down along the damaged edges of the sheet.

Once dried, pressed and trimmed, the tissue repairs are visible on the original document, but the tone of the tissue blended well with the aged newsprint. The

“Once dried, pressed and trimmed, the tissue repairs are visible on the original document, but the tone of the tissue blended well with the aged newsprint”

increased stability to the edges of the sheets ensured that handling would no longer cause extreme damage to these documents.

Review and reflections

The positive of Tengu Japanese paper tape is the colour of the natural tissue. For aged papers it is more sympathetic than white tissue, meaning that there is no need to hand colour the tissue in advance of use. I have found that both available widths are useful dimensions, reducing time spent on preparing tissue strips. Although both widths of strips have a build-up of fibres, rather than the feathered edge as described in the catalogue, the hard edge is easy to remove by teasing the fibres away when dry, before pasting up. The tissue was easy to layer up, and the long fibres adhered easily to the paper document.

I would like to try using the tissue to make up re-moistenable tissue strips, along with different adhesives, such as gelatine, wheatstarch, and Klucel G. It is an advantage to have a natural or toned tissue, that both visually and physically blends with the documents being repaired. It is easy to store, the small roll fits easily in a drawer, and the cost is reasonable.

I would say that it is a great addition to my toolbox!

Harwell Restoration celebrates 40-year anniversary

In December Harwell Restoration celebrated its 40th year of document and book drying. Harwell's **Emma Dadson** shares its history and projects over the years.

From our very first project - rescuing large leather-bound rare books in a library in Oxford after a burst pipe in 1979 - Harwell has developed from a team of two researchers to a team of 35 in 2019, with multiple industry accolades, and the largest specialist restoration facility in Europe.

Since the first project in 1979, Harwell's chemical engineers have conducted extensive research and development into optimal drying conditions for paper, with the operation continuing to grow incrementally each year. After the launch of the priority user service in 1990, interest in emergency planning and disaster response snowballed, particularly after a major fire at Norwich Library in 1994, where freeze-vacuum drying was used to dry thousands of archive boxes.

Today there are almost 1100 institutions signed up to the priority user service. Projects ranging from the 2016 Boxing Day floods affecting central government departments, through to the fire at Glasgow School of Art, have highlighted the important role Harwell plays in major incidents.

Kathryn Rodgers, Harwell's Managing Director, says, "We are thrilled to reach the milestone of our 40th year. The growth of the company since 1979 has been incredible, and I know the whole team today at Harwell is proud of the achievements in that time, and the work we have done to preserve such historically significant collections.

This year has been distinguished by a number of records for Harwell – we have completed our largest ever UK based restoration project involving a major mould remediation project for a museum in the Midlands. In addition, we have commissioned and built our biggest drying chamber, named McKenzie after Ken our late Managing Director. This new unit has been used on one of the largest document restoration projects ever, in restoring over 10,000 boxes of French government records after flooding in Paris."

Many ARC readers have attended training sessions hosted by Harwell, designed to feed back some real-life insights into what emergency situations are really like, and lessons learned from fires and floods, so that conservators, archivists and curators can maximise the effectiveness of their disaster plans. The training and consultancy work we do with priority users is always hugely rewarding. Sharing the insights we have as a result of our unique perspective, helping to root emergency plans in the practical constraints of salvage operations, whilst maximising the effectiveness of response, is such an important aspect of what we do.

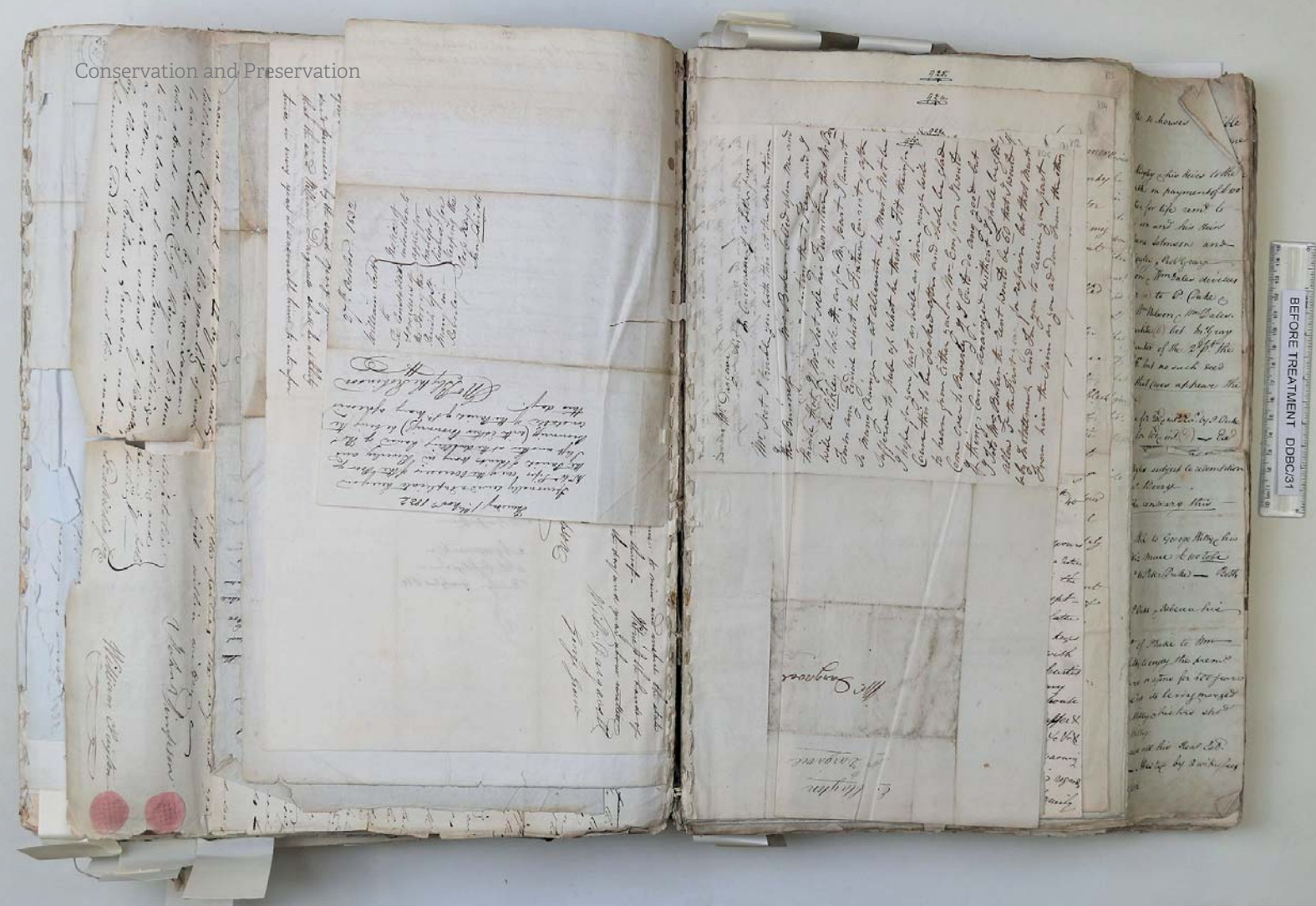
Awards

In November 2019 Harwell Restoration was named winner of both the Setting the Standard Award, and Specialist of the Year, at the BDMA (British Damage Management Association) Awards 2019. For any further information about Harwell, contact info@harwellrestoration.co.uk.

“The training and consultancy work we do with priority users is always hugely rewarding”

Flooding in York 2015. Image courtesy of Harwell Restoration

Fire damage to legal records repository. Image courtesy of Harwell Restoration



Before treatment. That's a lot of damaged paper. Image courtesy of East Riding Archives

Gillyatt Sumner collection

Katherine Saunt, Conservator at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, outlines her treatment of a volume from the Gillyatt Sumner collection.

Gillyatt Sumner (1793-1875) was an antiquarian and collector (and apparently something of a local character) from Beverley in the East Riding of Yorkshire. His collection was auctioned and split up soon after his death, but a number of documents have returned to Beverley, and many items are now held in the East Riding Archives. His collection centred on local history, and is a rich historical resource.

Gillyatt Sumner chose to have many of his collected documents bound into books. These large scrapbook-like volumes contain anything from printed handbills and advertisements, to other peoples' correspondence, copies of property deeds, and other legal documents.

I will briefly outline the treatment I undertook to disbind and make available one particular volume of documents,

explaining the reasoning behind the approach taken. This volume (reference DDBC/31) consists of paper and parchment items from 1684-1844.

Treatment

To create the book block from the odd-sized and folded documents, the original binder had stabbed and overcast sewn them into sections. Some folded items were sewn and could not be opened! The sections were sewn onto cords, with liberal application of animal glue, and then bound in a half-leather tightback style. This probably looked quite smart, before it collapsed under its own weight! Interestingly, the pattern of dirt on some of the items suggests they were already dirty when they were sewn. Although this particular book came to the archive minus its boards, we had similar volumes to use as a comparison.

The book, having structurally failed due to its unusual composition and unwieldy size, was unsuitable for production. Any handling or trying to open the book block to read the documents risked further mechanical damage. After discussion with archivist colleagues, we decided that preserving the bound structure was not a necessity.

“Gillyatt Sumner chose to have many of his collected documents bound into books”



After treatment. Protected and easy to handle. Image courtesy of East Riding Archives

“the optimum solution for both access and preservation was to put the individual documents into fascicules”

The individual items within the book started out as flat documents, and the book format, though an interesting part of their history, is not integral to their meaning. In addition, the wear and tear on the item had already started the disbinding process, therefore I didn't feel too presumptuous by undoing the binder's work. Of course, the whole volume's condition was documented, with written notes and photographs, before and during the conservation process.

On balance, I felt that the optimum solution for both access and preservation was to put the individual documents into fascicules (system of storing loose single-sheet items of dis-similar size and format). Happily, I found that making and filling the fascicules turned out to be a fairly rapid process when done in batches. Rather than have completed fascicules ready to be filled, I folded and pierced the leaves, then hinged on the documents, before pamphlet stitching them all together. By the time I'd hinged the last page the rest are dry and ready for assembly.

The materials used for the support papers were Fabriano Palatina Avorio archival 85gsm paper, and Klug folder board was used for the covers. The documents are hinged on with solvent-activated Archibond tissue, which I think is visually unobtrusive. It also has the benefit of rapid application time and introduces no moisture to accelerate ink and paper degradation.

The benefits of adopting fascicle for storage are:

- Each fascicule of approximately 14 pages can be produced individually, therefore minimising handling.
- The pages can be turned without having to directly handle the document - only minimal repair is needed to stabilise the most torn or fragile papers.
- The fascicules look appealing. That they have clearly been custom-made highlights to users the care we take in looking after the collection.

The downside, however, is that the total size of the volume has expanded significantly. Some larger outsize items had been damaged, where they were folded to fit into the book block. After treatment I decided to leave them unfolded, which meant storing them in a separate folder. In addition, the cost in time and materials needed to make the fascicules and insert the items had to be justified, although this was offset by less invasive repair required.

It is not a solution I would choose for every bundle of flat paper, however I felt it was right for this particular item, where frequent handling was anticipated.



Specimen features different mounting techniques of strapping and loose leaves, as well as inappropriate historic use of pressure sensitive tape. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Rogue plants: unexpected botanical material

Aimée Crickmore, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew shares her thoughts on what to consider when working with botanical material

Have you ever come across something in your collection which took you by surprise? In my case, this was finding botanical material in the Miscellaneous Reports volumes at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It may appear strange in being surprised when finding botanical material at a site well known for its world leading research in botanical science, but the huge collection of herbarium specimens are stored separately from the collections in the Library, Art and Archives collections. Originally the documents found within the volumes were individual flat items, arranged together sometime in the 20th century. This was when a programme of binding was undertaken to address issues of space, and make the items easier to handle. I wanted to make this collection more accessible, both by cataloguing and through conservation, with the ultimate aim of digitising the material. For several volumes, this meant disbinding was necessary.

When prioritising items for disbinding, those containing botanical material were selected. These items posed an interesting ethical question, as they were not intentional exsiccata (collections of pressed plant material displayed in a volume). They had more in common with herbarium specimens, which are displayed on flat single sheets.

On close examination, it became clear that the material was being actively damaged in the volume format, due to the tight bound structure of the volumes, and the high throw up of the page. This was not helped by the oversewn sewing structure, and inconsistent mounting techniques used for attachment. Therefore, the decision was made to return the botanical material to a more sympathetic herbarium sheet format.

I'd not had the opportunity to work with much botanical material before this project, and so my aim in this article is



Bespoke four flap enclosure made to secure fragments of specimen, this enabled it to be kept securely in the original storage context (the envelope also shown in the image). Reproduced with the kind permission of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew



This specimen shows how elements of the leaves may be manipulated during preparation to expose the underside for examination. This specimen was very delicate, and was secured using Japanese tissue strapping (Usumino 16gsm). Reproduced with the kind permission of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

to highlight three key topics which are useful to consider - in case any rogue plants may be found in your collection!

Health and Safety

Plant specimens may seem innocuous, but should be approached with caution. Some can be inherently hazardous. Many historic specimens have often been treated with pesticides, which may be difficult to detect – some of these can pose serious risks to health. Date of material origin can be a guide, but as material may have been retreated, it isn't always indicative. In absence of records of any pesticide treatment, consult MSDS (safety data) sheets, assess the risk, and use appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).

“Have you ever come across something in your collection which took you by surprise?”

“I wanted to make this collection more accessible”

The material I worked on had been treated with mercuric chloride, and I had a variety of approaches for safety during treatment depending on the context. Close up work was undertaken in a well-ventilated area or in a fume cabinet, and I wore an apron and gloves to prevent potential contamination.

Major risks were dermal exposure and ingestion, so I used a product called DermaShield® which is a barrier cream. You can combine this product with gloves, and it persists after hands are washed, so you don't need to apply it as frequently.

Techniques of mounting and preparing specimens

Broadly speaking, specimens may be mounted using a combination of adhesives, used to varying levels, strapping

“*Plant specimens may seem innocuous, but should be approached with caution*”

or stitching, and may also just be kept loose. Having a basic awareness of the methods at play can be very informative when developing a treatment plan.

Ethical guidance would suggest retaining original features, but this is not always possible when considered on balance with other priorities. An example of this is in the specimen shown in the image above, which had loose elements, to aid in examination of the plants features.

As the context of the specimen had changed since their original preparation, it was appropriate to rehouse the loose elements and keep them with the herbarium sheet. To leave them loose would have put them at risk of dissociation.

Some options for repair

Adhesive choice is really key, as well as controlling the amount in use. Limiting direct adhesive contact with specimens is important for DNA analysis, which provides information about genetics and specimen lineage. This should factor into decision making.

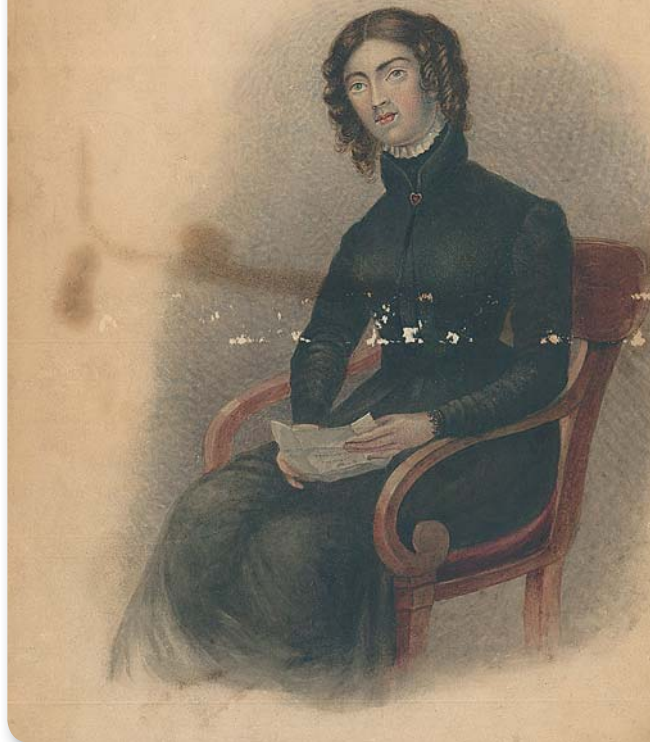
Key research has identified common adhesives used in repair as including wheat starch paste, and gelatine. The adhesive I've had best success with is methyl cellulose (applied at around 4% concentration).

In general, 'spot adhesion' is favoured - a series of small (2mm) dots of adhesive can be applied locally to the substrate during repair. Another sympathetic approach is to utilise strapping, by preparing small splints to which adhesive may be applied locally. This is used to anchor the specimen, so adhesive need not come in contact with it at all.

If you are faced with a fragmentary specimen, consider making an enclosure or capsule for storage.

The topic of herbarium conservation is a challenge, which may seem daunting at first glance. Botanical specimens can crop up even in a collection to which they seem unrelated. But with research, strategies for treatment can be developed, and a methodology can be built.

Watercolour portrait of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall (Reference SH:2/M/19/1/59). Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service

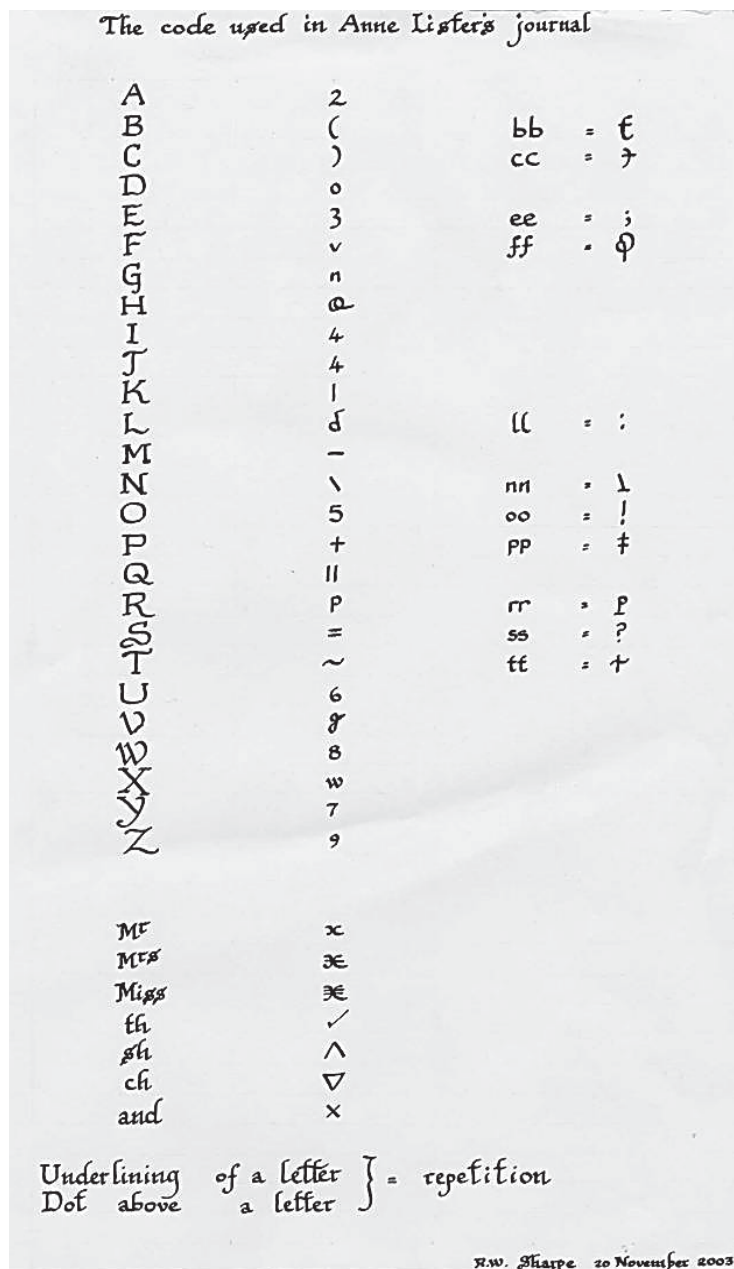


The Anne Lister diaries

Katie Proctor, West Yorkshire Archive Service, shares her experiences of working on an exciting project involving the diaries of Anne Lister.

In December 2017 screenwriter, Sally Wainwright, of 'Last Tango in Halifax' and 'Happy Valley' approached West Yorkshire Archive Service. She was researching a potential drama series documenting the life of Anne Lister of Shibden Hall, drawing directly from Anne's diaries housed at the Calderdale office of West Yorkshire Archive Service.

Anne Lister was born in Halifax in 1719. She inherited her uncle's estate, Shibden Hall, after the death of her four brothers. Anne was a formidable character, who ensured she was heavily involved in the running of the Shibden estate, including its business affairs such as rents, and mining rights on the land. She planned improvements of the property, and was also an avid traveller - she was the first person to climb Mount Vignemale, the highest summit in the Pyrenees.



Cipher of the code Anne created to hide the more salacious aspects of her life. Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service



Some of the diaries in various stages of repair. Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service

“With planned exhibitions, talks, and an Anne Lister weekend to be held in Halifax, the long-term stability of all the diaries became of paramount concern”

Dating from 1815 to 1838, Anne's diaries total 26 volumes of nearly 7800 pages. Many sections were written in code. Anne wrote diary entries from the age of 14, until her death while travelling in Georgia at the age of 49. Today they offer invaluable insight into her life as a landowner, business woman, traveller, mountaineer, and lesbian. Anne wrote about the more salacious aspects of her personal life in a code of her own design.

The collection of diaries were discovered by a distant relative of Anne's, John Lister, in 1854, behind a wooden panel in one of the walls at Shibden Hall. It was in 1890 that John Lister and a friend finally managed to decipher Anne's code, and translate the coded parts of the diaries. John's friend encouraged him to burn the diaries due to their content. However, John was uncomfortable with this, and again hid the diaries behind the panel in the walls at Shibden.

Following John Lister's death in 1933, Calderdale Council took ownership of Shibden Hall estate. Anne's diaries were rediscovered after an itinerary of their contents were found in the Hall. Following their discovery, the diaries were given to West Yorkshire Archive Service for safe-keeping.

Conservation and Digitisation

Through collaboration with Calderdale Museums and Sally Wainwright, funding was secured from the Wellcome Screenwriting Fellowship. This funding was used to carry out conservation and digitisation of 26 diaries, 14 travel diaries, and Anne Lister and Anne Walker's joint passport. Anne Walker was Anne Lister's wife. They took communion together in 1834 in Holy Trinity Church, York, and thereafter considered themselves married, without legal recognition.

The project was divided into two distinct phases. Firstly, conservation was carried out in January 2018, prior to digitisation by Townsweb in May 2018. Secondly, conservation work on the diaries was undertaken to improve physical access, long



Cloth covered boxes made to re-house the diaries. Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service

term stability, and preservation of the original material. This was completed in February 2019.

The 26 diaries are stationary bindings of various types. The three earliest diaries are paper covered bindings. Two are single section notebooks with simple plain paper covers. One is an unsupported multi-section sewn binding, with marbled paper covers adhered to a heavyweight cardstock, front and back. The later diaries are a mix of nine tight back and 14 hollow back.

The diaries had suffered the common deterioration issues, through handling, biological, and chemical deterioration. The sewing had failed due to the embrittlement of the vellum sewing supports. The adhesive on the spine had become embrittled, and the acidity of the adhesive had started to break down the paper substrate on the folio folds. The leather, particularly in the board joints, had become weak causing the boards to become detached and loose. This led to the damage of the text block edges. The text block pages themselves, including the iron gall ink writing, were in good condition. This was probably due to the good quality paper used in the bindings. The diaries had been previously microfilmed at the West

Yorkshire Archive Service. Thus, the originals were rarely produced in the search room (unless the quality of the microfilm required production of the originals).

Stability, rather than condition, was a major concern. In their current state there was substantial risk of further deterioration, especially with the release of the television series 'Gentleman Jack' on BBC in May 2019. Demand to see, consult, and interact with the diaries grew rapidly following the release of the drama. In the drama, Anne is shown writing in the diaries, and pages from the diaries are shown in the opening credits. With planned exhibitions, talks, and an Anne Lister weekend to be held in Halifax, the long-term stability of all the diaries became of paramount concern.

The diaries were treated in batch, as many of the volumes had similar issues. The bindings were pulled, and the spine adhesive was removed using a SCMC (Sodium Carboxymethyl Cellulose) poultice. Any folios that had become embrittled due to contact with the acidic boards were consolidated, prior to digitisation, using Klucel G. Following digitisation, folios were repaired along the folds with Tonosawa

“Hidden away, revealed today, loaded words in the diaries found, wants exposed in a baffling code, lusty letters all leather bound.”

(O'Hooley and Tidow. End credits of *Gentleman Jack*)



Handmade Anne Lister Merchandise. Image courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service

Japanese paper and wheat starch paste. Only a small number of pages required edge repairs. This was also carried out using Tonosawa Japanese paper, and a toned 2gsm Koso tissue. Following the repair of all folios, each text block was resewn, this time replacing the vellum tapes with linen tapes. Spines were then lined with calico and provided with a manila hollow. The tapes were then used to reattach the boards under the lifted board papers and leather. Repair leather - which was dyed to match the original leathers - was pared and used to cover the hollows and create the new spine of the volume. Some of the volumes also had original spines. They were consolidated with Klucel G, lined with a 2gsm Koso tissue and re-adhered onto the volume.

In total, conservation work on the diaries spanned from February 2018 to January 2019. They are now re-housed in cloth covered boxes.

Outreach

Following on from season one of 'Gentleman Jack', we have been very busy at the archive service engaging in all manner of Anne Lister related activities. Two of the diaries have been on display at Calderdale Central

Library, and one diary was on display at West Yorkshire History Centre. We have provided five sold out talks on the collection and its conservation, with more to follow. We are planning an Anne Lister exhibition at the West Yorkshire History Centre, to coincide with the release of season two of 'Gentleman Jack'. We have even produced Anne Lister merchandise, that's proving very popular with fans.

We have also had a very successful Twitter campaign, to recruit a team of 70 volunteers. The volunteers will begin transcription of the pages of Anne's diaries, using the digitised images.

If you are interested in finding out more about Anne, seeing the diary pages, or getting involved in the transcription project visit: wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/exhibitions/anne-lister/

Anne's diaries are inscribed on the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register (www.unesco.org.uk/portfolio/memory-of-the-world/) in recognition of their cultural significance to the UK. They are considered a treasure, giving an incredibly detailed account of the life of a woman in the early 19th century.

“Anne wrote diary entries from the age of 14, until her death”

Water damage workshop at Berkshire Record Office

On the 3rd October 2019, eight archivists attended a half-day workshop on water damaged papers held at Berkshire Record Office, organised by the Catholic Archives Society. **Sue Hourigan**, Senior Conservator led the workshop, and provides an account of the day.

The first part of the training, held in the meeting room over a welcoming cup of tea, was an opportunity to get to know the archivists. This enabled us to get some background information about their disaster plans (if they had one), before moving on to the theoretical session. This session dealt with writing a disaster plan, testing the plan, and keeping it up to date. Also included was a demonstration on salvaging different documents, with some tips on the do's and don'ts of handling wet volumes and papers.

For the second part of the training, the archivists went to the conservation studio. They were presented with a large tray, full of documents swimming in water, waiting for the salvage operation to begin. The salvage materials and equipment were already laid out, with the multi-sorb blotting paper neatly stacked by size. Bone folders, palette knives, and polyester sheets were ready for use, and a row of bandages with safety pins close by. After a few words of encouragement, the operation began.

In teams of two, the archivists, dressed in aprons and gloves, removed the archives from the water and carried them in a tray to the recovery area. They spent a good hour applying their quickly learnt knowledge to recover open books, closed books, ledgers, pamphlets, photographs, bundles, folders, plans, and fiche. Throughout this practical session, more assistance and tips were offered to develop their newly acquired skills, as the dripping archives were removed from the tray of water. The archivists were instructed to handle as many of the different formats as possible. This enabled them to become familiar with the salvage process and build confidence in their abilities. After the session one archivist remarked, "That was not as scary as I thought it would be".

The next day the piles of interleaved drying archives were sorted and arranged to speed up drying, as the archives were to be re-cycled for the next workshop. The volumes were removed from the crates, unwrapped and left in the sink to drip dry. Only a couple of the volumes were not worth saving for the next disaster training event.

Thank you to Annaig Boyer, a member of the Catholic Archives Society, for arranging the workshop.



Salvage operation. Image courtesy of Sue Hourigan



Separating photographs. Image courtesy of Sue Hourigan

Creating a book model of The Dormont Book

In July 2019, a small group of conservators gathered in the beautiful conservation studio at Cumbria Archive Centre in Carlisle, to attend a two-day workshop on tacketed stationery bindings. **Fiona Johnston**, Conservator at Lambeth Palace Library, tells us about the workshop.

Our instructors over the two days of the 'Tacketed Stationery Bindings' workshop were Tony King (Senior Conservator - Cumbria Archives), Fay Humphreys (Conservator - Cumbria Archives), and Richard Nichols (Senior Conservator - Staffordshire Record Office). The course had been organised in collaboration with ARA's conservation training coordinator, Annie Starkey (Liverpool Record Office).

During the workshop we made a book model of The Dormont Book, a rare binding held in the collections at the Cumbria Archive Centre. The Dormont Book is a semi-limp leather bound secondary tacketed binding, dating from 1561. The purpose of The Dormont Book was to record information, such as the rules of the city of Carlisle, and important civic events. Therefore, it was a high-status object.

We learnt during the course that the tacketed binding style originated in Italy and Spain in the 15th century. After which, this style of binding spread throughout Europe on trade routes. As a result, examples of tacketed bindings in English archive collections are predominantly from the 16th century, and have common features particular to English 16th century ledger bindings. These common features include large format text block (folio), a central strap to fasten the cover, patterned lacing, a flat spine, and twisted secondary tackets. The flat spine of the binding is created by placing rigid supports, such as wood or metal, under the sewing support. The rigid spine support prevents the spine from becoming concave. Tony and Fay showed us a painting by Jan Lievens, 'Still Life with Books'. The painting beautifully illustrates the difference between flat and concave spines.

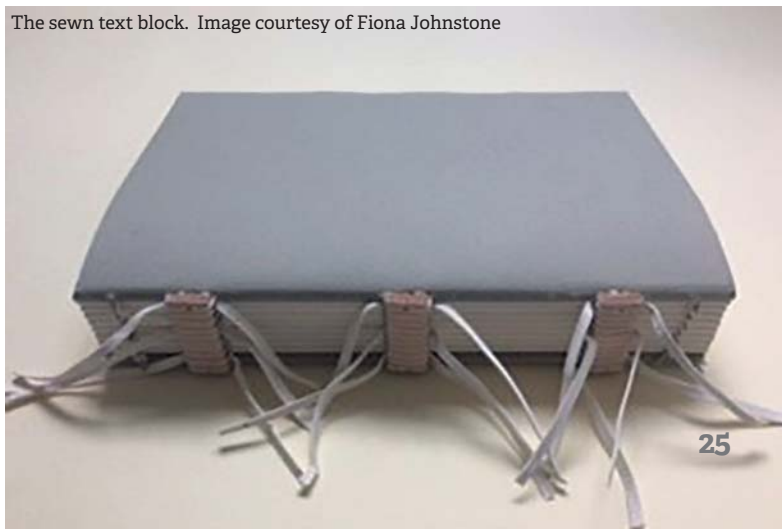
“The Dormont Book is a semi-limp leather bound secondary tacketed binding, dating from 1561”



The Dormont Book. Image courtesy of Fiona Johnstone



Models of various tacketed bindings. Image courtesy of Fiona Johnstone



The sewn text block. Image courtesy of Fiona Johnstone

“Richard expertly demonstrated blind tooling of the cover”

The binding and text block of The Dormont Book comprise the following component parts:

- The text block: Ten gatherings made from pot handmade paper. Pot sheet dimensions were 12.5 inches x 15 inches
- Parchment manuscript waste hooked endleaves
- Leather sewing supports, plus small pieces of wood inserted behind the support, to prevent the spine becoming concave
- A parchment wrapper between the text block and cover
- Semi-limp cover - leather and laminated pulp board
- Laced overbands - vellum
- Secondary tacketts - alum-tawed leather

Recreating The Dormont Book

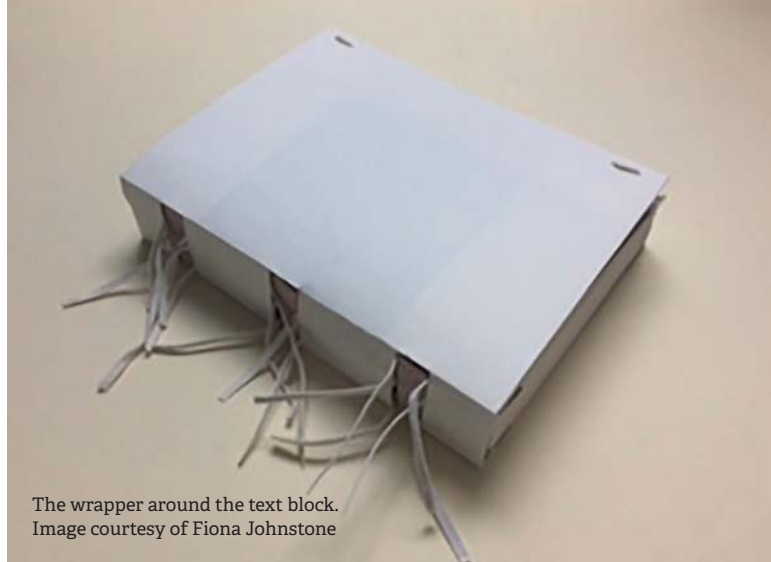
We were guided through the sequence of steps to create our own book models of The Dormont Book. We started with sewing the text block around alum-tawed sewing supports. We then placed a wrapper around the text block. The wrapper sits between the text block and the semi-limp cover. There was some speculation regarding the purpose of the wrapper - was it originally a temporary cover, or to protect the text block from the parchment lacing?

After completing the sewing of the text block and making the wrapper, we moved on to making the book covers, by adhering calfskin to cardstock to create the semi-limp cover. Richard expertly demonstrated blind tooling of the cover, using tools especially bought for the workshop. Tooling found on early ledger bindings, such as The Dormont Book, is blind tooled using straight lines in geometric designs.

The next stage in the process was to lace on the overbands. The overbands are the straps of leather placed on and around the cover, to allow the binding to be fastened closed. The decorative design, known as lacing, is carried using parchment lined with paper, cut into narrow strips, and threaded through holes pierced through the straps and cover. Lastly, the text block was attached to the cover, using alum-tawed secondary tacketts.

Thank you very much to Tony, Richard, Fay, and Annie for teaching such an interesting and insightful course. All the course participants benefitted hugely from the scholarship of our instructors. In addition to very clear instructions, Tony, Richard, Fay and Annie were always on hand to help. Thank you for your expertise!

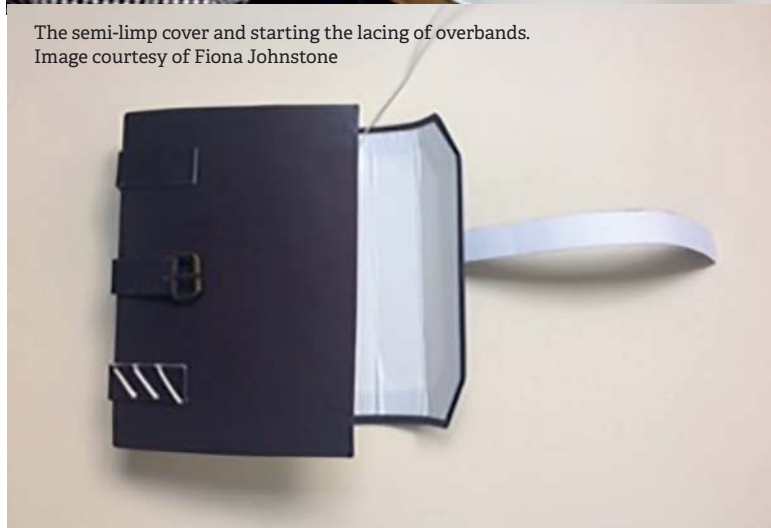
Thank you to Icon for the Book and Paper Group professional development bursary that enabled me to attend this excellent course.



The wrapper around the text block.
Image courtesy of Fiona Johnstone



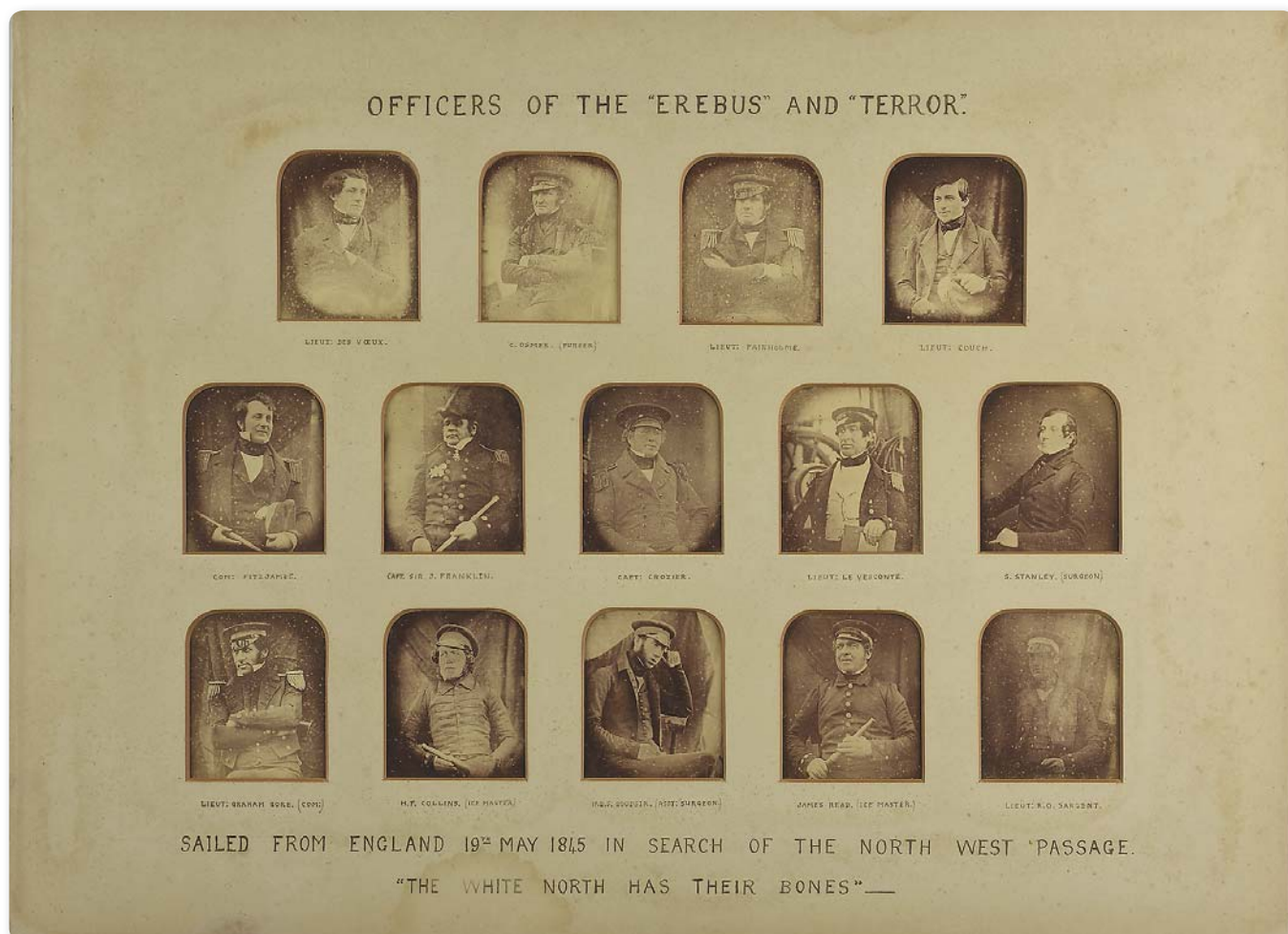
Richard demonstrating tooling. Image courtesy of Fiona Johnstone



The semi-limp cover and starting the lacing of overbands.
Image courtesy of Fiona Johnstone



Participants and instructor showing off their Dormont Book models.
Image courtesy of Andy Wright



The officers of the Erebus and Terror, who all perished in the lost expedition (Reference: D8760/F/LIB/8/1/5). Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.

Lady Jane's Museum - an adventure in crowdfunding

Lien Gyles, Senior Conservator, and Clare Mosley, Assistant Conservator, from Derbyshire Record Office attended a training session on crowdfunding, as part of The National Archives training programme Fundraising for Archives.

They explain how the training gave them confidence in trying out this new approach in generating income.

As part of The National Archives training programme 'Fundraising for Archives', we attended a training session on crowdfunding, which clearly set out the different stages involved in setting up a crowdfunding project, as well as showing examples of successful campaigns. This excellent session gave us the confidence to try out this new way to generate income. After rejecting various potential projects, we found a box of small objects linked to arctic explorer, Sir John Franklin, which we felt would be the perfect pilot project.

Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) and his crew went missing in 1845, while trying to discover the Northwest Passage

“This discovery has added to the interest in Franklin and his lost expedition, compelling us to re-evaluate the Franklin material in our collection”

- the sea route to the Pacific Ocean through the Arctic Ocean and North America. His second wife, Lady Jane Franklin (1791-1875), organised searches financed



The objects in their original box. Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.



Clare re-packaging the objects. Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.

“Social media plays a vital role in any crowdfunding campaign”

through contribution lists. We like to think of her as a crowdfunding pioneer! Unfortunately, the ships were never found, and all the crew perished. In 2016 both ships, the Erebus and the Terror, were discovered on the seabed off the Canadian coast. This discovery has added to the interest in Franklin and his lost expedition, compelling us to re-evaluate the Franklin material in our collection.

Franklin's only child, Eleanor, his daughter from his first marriage, married into the Gell family from Hopton Hall in Derbyshire. Derbyshire Record Office hold the Gell family archive. Approximately 15 boxes within the collection are records relating to Eleanor, her father, mother (the poet Eleanor Porden), stepmother (Lady Jane) and other close family members. Realising the importance of our records, we received funding from Archives Revealed (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/archives-revealed/) to have the collection catalogued. We also secured a grant from the Pilgrim Trust, through the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, for the re-packaging of the archive. This still left us with our box of small objects, some of which we knew Lady Jane Franklin had kept on display in her home. We called this collection of objects 'Lady Jane's Museum'. We decided to crowdfund in an attempt to improve their packaging, and to have museum quality photographs taken.

Crowdfunding

When we received permission to go ahead with crowdfunding – no one else in Derbyshire County Council had attempted this before – we chose our platform provider. There are many crowdfunding websites, but in the end, we chose Crowdfunder (www.crowdfunder.co.uk/), as other local authorities had used them. The next step was to write the content of our crowdfunding page. We remembered the mantra we learned from our training that 'people fund people', so it's a good idea to show the people involved with the project. We used this principle when shooting our video (an exciting and very steep learning curve for us!), ensuring we showed the volunteers involved in the cataloguing project. With our page set up at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/ladyjanesmuseum, we were ready to run our campaign.

Social media plays a vital role in any crowdfunding campaign. Therefore, we had partly chosen our pilot project on the basis that we already had a Twitter account for the Franklin project (@FranklinArchive), and were members of a now closed Franklin Facebook group. We felt confident that being able to reach over a thousand potential supporters straight away would ensure we would comfortably reach our relatively modest target of £1000. However, we soon realised that although many people liked our project, very few actually donated. We had to actively keep tweeting and posting on our blog (www.recordoffice.wordpress.com/), in an attempt to reach more people who may donate. We did reach our target in the end, but the project took up a lot more of our time than we had anticipated.



The objects in their new trays. (Reference: D8760/OBJ). Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office



Lady Jane's Museum, photographed thanks to the crowdfunding project (photograph by Nick Lockett).

“Let's work together”

Repackaging of Lady Jane's Museum

When we first discovered the objects that make up Lady Jane's Museum, they were all lying loose together in an archive box. Our challenge was to improve the packaging, while still making it possible for researchers to easily view the objects in our search room. In the end we decided to buy an archival quality storage box system, with inner trays stacked inside. The trays had various options for configuration of their compartments, so we could work out exactly what we needed for our objects - four individual trays which fitted nicely into one box. We also bought a clear viewing lid, which can be fitted to an individual tray before it is produced in the search room.

A professional photographer took some wonderful museum quality photographs of the objects. We have shared these photographs in an online exhibition, on Derbyshire Record Office's new Google arts and culture page (artsandculture.google.com/partner/derbyshire-record-office), thereby fulfilling our crowdfunding promise to share the objects with the world.

As much as we enjoyed this project, we've realised that for small organisations like us – with no dedicated fundraising staff - it's very difficult to reach large numbers of potential donors. The only way to do that is through working together with other archives and museums. We all need to support each other's fundraising activities. Let's work together and give heritage enthusiasts the opportunity to support our projects!

To find out more about our project, please contact us at Lien.Gyles@derbyshire.gov.uk and Clare.Mosley@derbyshire.gov.uk

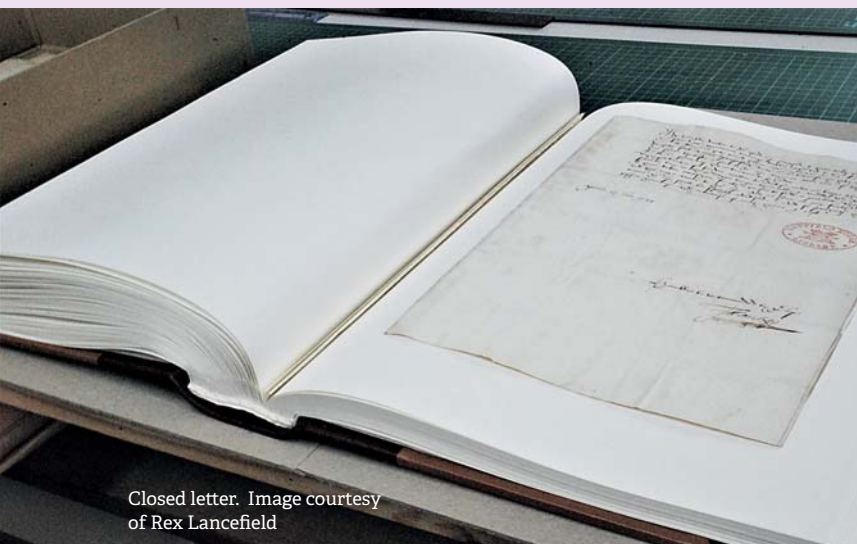


Documents in original covers. Image courtesy of Rex Lancefield

A long-term project: the Cecil Papers

Rex Lancefield of Lancefield Paper Conservation and Book Restoration shares with us the conservation work undertaken to re-house and treat a historically significant collection of manuscript letters

In 2004, we started conservation work on a variety of maps and plans for Hatfield House in Herts. Four years later the archivist, Mr Robin Harcourt Williams, asked if we could take over a project which had already been ongoing for a number of years. This was a project to treat and re-house the Cecil Papers – a collection of over 30,000 manuscript letters of William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley (1521-1598) Lord Burghley, and his son Robert Cecil, the First Lord Salisbury (1563 – 1612). The collection also included letters from Queen Elizabeth I, and Sir Walter Raleigh, dealing with such matters as the trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, and information from servants of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators. The importance of these documents had long been recognised, and in 1883 the Historical Manuscripts Commission began to publish them – a project which took until 1976 to complete.



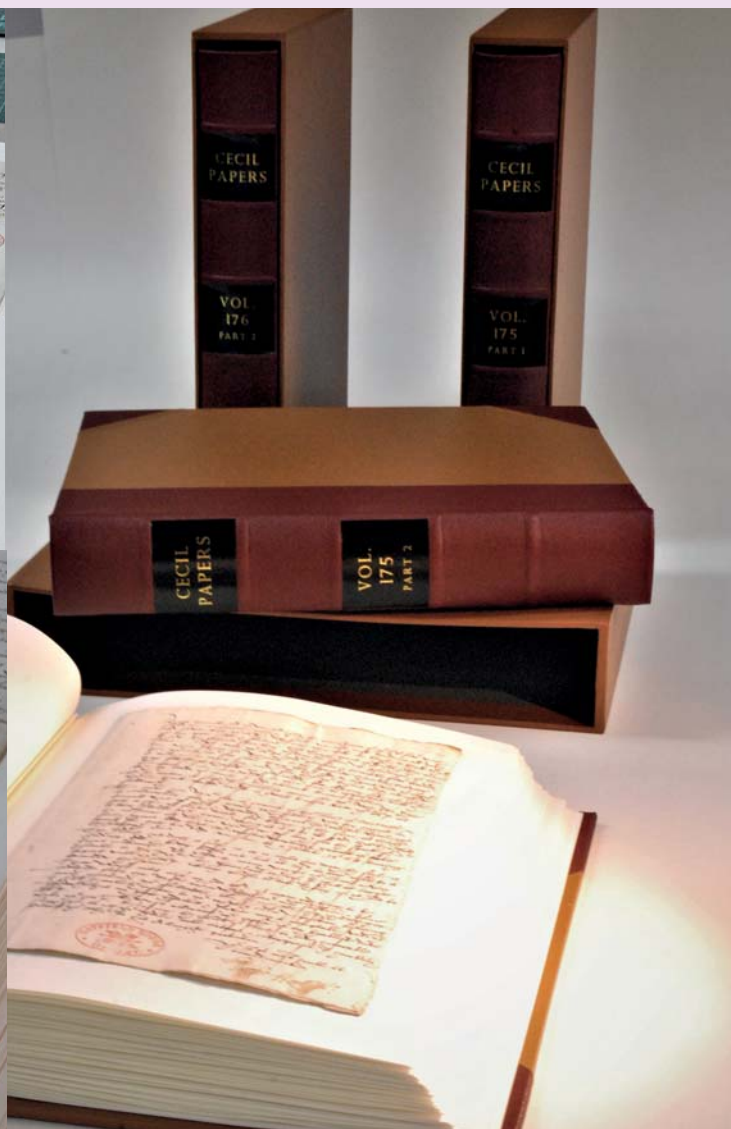
Closed letter. Image courtesy of Rex Lancefield



Open letter. Image courtesy of Rex Lancefield

In the early 20th century the manuscripts had been tipped onto paper guards and tightly bound in a long series of volumes, some in half-vellum and some in leather. Many of the letters had the fore-edges folded over as they were too large for the format of the books - these had deteriorated considerably as a result. There were also some which had suffered from damp, and which required sizing to restore their strength and flexibility.

Our remit was to take off the old covers, and carefully remove the paper guards from the manuscripts. In addition, we would carry out any necessary de-acidification, strengthening and repairs. Finally, we were required to hinge the documents into new volumes of half-leather, with archival tissue and wheat starch paste – a process known as fasciculing. This method of hinging allows the letters to float on the page with no visible signs of fixing. A minimal intervention approach was taken - only carrying out repairs to the documents where absolutely necessary. As the documents had already been put into print, the originals were not likely to be subject to a great deal of handling by researchers, therefore more extensive repairs were not required. The new volumes were made to a wider format than the originals, so that the manuscripts would not need to be folded at the fore-edge again. The paper used was



New bindings. Image courtesy of Rex Lancefield

“The collection also included letters from Queen Elizabeth I, and Sir Walter Raleigh”

160gsm archival book white, and headbands were hand worked with unbleached linen thread. Each of the original volumes had to be divided into two, and sometimes three, new books to reduce the stress on the bindings, and make it easier to use with less bulk, and help the pages lay flat when open. As an addition we made slip-cases to house the individual books.

The final volume requiring treatment was brought to us last year by Mrs Vicki Perry, successor as archivist to Mr Robin Harcourt Williams. Conservation work has been completed on this final volume, bringing to an end a very interesting and enjoyable project.

For more information on the project, contact Rex at info@lancefieldconservation.com or visit the website at www.lancefieldconservation.com



The 1725 - 1795 volume before conservation. Reproduced with kind permission of Berkshire Record Office

An alternative application method for leather dye

Aimée Crickmore, Newbury Churchwardens Archive Conservator talks about another project she has been involved in at Berkshire Record Office, where she developed a tool for repair work on the Newbury Churchwarden volumes.

The Newbury Churchwarden volumes were two manuscripts, one from an earlier period (between 1602-1726), and one of a later date (1725-1795). Both had accumulated significant damages over time, and required extensive remedial work in order to be stabilised for use. The overall structure of the early volume was stable, but had significant paper damages and loss, with several sections which required reattachment through sewing extensions. The later volume, however, was not stable. Initial documentation noted that most of the sewing was either damaged or broken, and the supports were in need of reinforcement. The exposed spine had minimal remnants of linings which no longer supported the structure, and the remnants of the cover leather suggested it had been bound in reverse calf.

In discussion with the Senior Conservator, Sue Hourigan, it was agreed that because the leather remnants were heavily soiled, damaged and insubstantial, these should be removed from the volume. The volume would be rebound retaining as much of the original structure and binding features as possible. As we wanted to keep

“The overall structure of the early volume was stable, but had significant paper damages and loss”



The set up area before spraying; cardboard barrier, washable tray, and polyester sheet to protect the area. Reproduced with kind permission of Berkshire Record Office

the original boards, this proved quite challenging when it came to resewing the volume. However, the most challenging aspect of conservation unexpectedly proved to be dyeing the leather.

As we were doing a full rebind using new repair leather, it was important to retain as many of the original qualities as possible. To that end, we wanted to replicate the appearance of reverse calf, and selected an appropriate repair calf to match this using the suede side. Paring of the skin was focused on the joints and turn ins, and kept to a minimum to retain the strength of the skin.

During initial tests on small offcuts of the repair leather, we identified two issues - application method, and controlling the impact which the fixative had on the colour. Application with a sponge was an issue as the porosity of the suede meant the overall effect was



The Wilson and Gregory® Garden Supplies 1 Litre Pressure Sprayer. Reproduced with kind permission of Berkshire Record Office

“This was a great solution for a skin which required a very consistent and fine application”

uneven. The additional coat of fixative also proved problematic, as even a very small amount used as directed darkened the colour substantially.

We considered two alternative application methods – a bath, or via a spray. Immersion of the skin in a bath would have required a larger quantity of dye than could easily be made, so ultimately we settled on use of a spray. Sue sourced a plastic ‘Wilson and Gregory® Garden Supplies 1 Litre Pressure Sprayer’, which was essentially a plastic dahlia sprayer, and we began to put it to the test.

Starting with small samples, we found that the tool created a fine mist, and could be easily directed. The only drawback was that the trigger was quite sensitive and had no locking mechanism. After some experimentation, during which we successfully trialled incorporating dilute fixative with the dye, this was applied to the new repair skin and left to dry.

This was a great solution for a skin which required a very consistent and fine application, and produced good results. The design of the tool is not perfect, but it limited the amount of dye required. This made the solution economical, and suitable for use in a small studio space.



The final result after treatment. Reproduced with kind permission of Berkshire Record Office



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