



the Society
of Bookbinders



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Out and about: York Conference and our Liverpool outing

There was a lot to take in at the York Conference, it was well organised with set sessions to attend, with so many skilled and engaging speakers, writes Lynne Connolly:

One of the highlights for me was [Kate Holland's](#) take on inspiration and creativity, ***Journey from Brain to Board***. She is a highly skilled and creative practitioner, so it was interesting to hear of her imposter syndrome feeling and perception of having a non-arts background. What came across was the strength of her originality - enhanced by this perceived lack of an arts background, and the depth of consideration, thinking and research for each book project.

Her process outlined diverse approaches and how much she uses daily observation, a mindful approach to noticing and an active curiosity. These are all elements I try to bring to my own work in photography and book arts/binding, so it was lovely to see this in practice by a fine art book binder as well.

continued on p3 . . .



Our summer visit to two Liverpool Libraries

was blessed with fine weather, and coffee to start at the Walker Art Gallery, *writes Maurus O'Donnell*. We soon made our way to the City of Liverpool's Central Library, re-built behind its imposing early Victorian facade to create an uplifting light and welcoming interior. Our guide Jake gave us a potted history as we made our way through the historic Picton and [Hornby](#) libraries, and on to the Oak Room. Here the central space contains a hermetically sealed glass case housing an opened copy of Audubon's famous 1838 edition of *Birds of America* - full colour pictures on double elephant paper. Magnificent! It came to Liverpool in 1838, after a local merchant donated £1,000 to the Library for the purchase of books, and £200 of it was spent acquiring the Audubon. The Oak Room also normally houses Faith Shannon's binding of . . .

continued on p4 . . .



We have an action-packed day planned for **our Autumn Gathering on 12 September**. The core revolves around our three talks: *Bookbinding and book arts as an aid to community engagement and wellbeing*, plus *Binding in Stone*, and an intro to the display of *Bookbinding books, hand bound*. However there is more, with the ever-popular raffle, a silent auction, and two trade stands - do check out your stock levels, and pre-order from [Hewit's](#) and [Harmatan](#) to save the postage costs. £10 for the day, book with Sue: swosol@btinternet.com



NW2 members in the news at Conference



Regional member **Glenn Malkin is our new SoB President**. Elected at the York Conference for a three-year term, Glenn has commented: *it's largely an honorary role so I get to say a few thanks and sign a few certificates etc while all the hard work is done behind the scenes by the national and regional committees*. Glenn of course is also the 2026 editor of our Bookbinder journal.

It was also announced at Conference that **Helen Golding Miller** is to be the recipient of the Maureen Duke Educational Award this year. Helen commented: *My current interest is in medieval bindings in the traditional sense and the adaption of these structures to practical modern use. The Maureen Duke Award would enable me to attend specific relevant courses that I could pass on to others in the true spirit of what Maureen Duke stood for. . . . I'm so pleased and honoured to be receiving this Award and my thanks go to Maureen Duke, along with The Norrie Trust and the Society of Bookbinders. My thanks also to all my bookbinding colleagues especially within NW2 Region who have supported me over my years of being a member. I've already got lots of things planned for the coming year and look forward to sharing what I learn with you in the coming months*. Regional members will soon benefit from Helen's studies as she has offered to run a two-day Kelsall workshop for us next year on . . . **medieval bookbinding**. Congratulations and a thank you to Helen.



Val Corrigan/Greeley deservedly walked away with the John Purcell Artist Book Award First Prize in the 2026 International Bookbinding Competition for her book **River Fragments**.

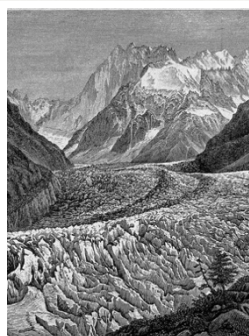


Val writes: *The book is based on the river Thames and features a short poem inspired by the wildlife in and around the river, also its connection to human activity and the treasures washed up on the foreshore. The pages are deckle edge [Khadi paper](#), which I stained and painted with watercolour. The calligraphy is in walnut ink and the miniature illustrations are watercolour with gold powder sprinkling and black ink. I bound the book in individual sections sewn directly onto a paper cover with a decorative leather spine. The cover features a painted strip of [Wasli paper](#) with hand-made leather buttons, designed to resemble coins. The fastener is a decorated strip of Wasli paper cut from the deckle edge and secured with a hand-made cord. The book is housed in a clamshell box. The colours chosen for the project reflect the brackish nature of the river, sometimes muddy and full of silt, other times golden and sparking in sunlight. This was my very first entry into a bookbinding competition and I was surprised and honoured in equal measure.*

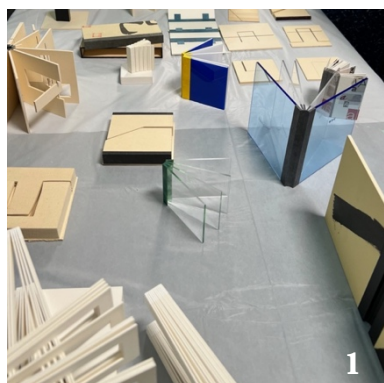


Lynne Connolly continues:

Kate Holland's presentation gave a snapshot of her creative process, it was by no means a 'how to' session, more of a thoughtful foundational approach to finding your own way, creating something that comes from within. Her work engages with the concept of the books rather than as a visual representation of the title alone.



Kate gave many examples of her working process and ideas and then images of some final pieces. One example was [Frankenstein](#), where the cover (*above, top*) grounds us in the physical and geographical setting of the book, a sense of isolation, extremes of climate and the human condition. The front endpaper (*above, left*) shows the condition of the Mer de Glace glacier in the 19th century from a woodcut engraving, contrasted with the rear endpaper (*above, right*) which is a photograph of the glacier today; predicted to disappear this century. A visual allegory of man's interference with nature in both the interpretation of the book itself as well as the contemporary issue of climate change.



Han Fleet offers us a quick overview of the presenters/demonstrators:

It all got off to a flying start with Dominic Riley's talk on **The Tudor Style** binding. Animated as usual, he outlined its history and method, making it seem easier and more straightforward to create such a binding ourselves.

Kate Holland's delightful talk, on her process of designing a book in **Journey from Brain to Board**, explained what one can do whilst still being constrained within the walls of the *rules of design*. I really liked her attitude of being more intuitive and *feeling your way* in the design process.

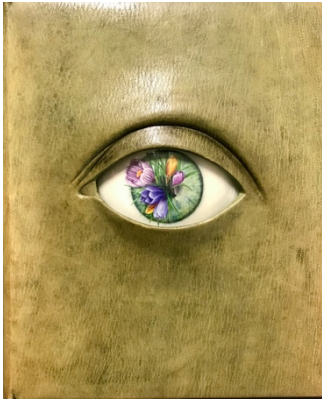
Articulated Architecture by Suzanne Schmollgruber was an eye-opening feast of radical artistic design [1], features that would be very useful for any unusual commissions. With an underlying basis of architecture books also become sculptures.

Ann-Marie Miller and Ann Wright gave a lovely talk, **A Legacy of Letters**, on the conservation of a collection of 400 years of letters and items telling the story of one family and of their painstaking efforts and techniques to conserve these items.

Gillian Stewart's talk and display of **Magnetic Closures** for books and boxes was an inspiration for any commissions with a difference offering a variety of techniques and designs.

Glenn Bartley's talk and screen show on the **Miniature Bindings of the Queen Mary's Dolls' House** was a joy to behold. Seeing the fascinating (large!) dolls' house and the magnificent rooms and decor within it, especially the miniature books bound by the top binders of the 1920s. This dolls' house even has electricity and running water! The level of detail and expert rendering of tooled and gilt bindings perfectly made at such a small scale was a thing of fascination, admiration and respect. There were 600 of these mini books made, mostly by Sangorski & Sutcliffe, from atlases and bibles to train timetables and the poetry and literature of the top writers at that time [2]. He finished his talk by showing some of the modern bindings, some of which he himself had bound, created in 2024 as part of the dolls' house centenary celebrations.

And more from Liverpool . . .



Maurus O'Donnell continues:

The Oak Room also normally houses Faith Shannon's binding of George Maude's 1886 edition of *The Genus Crocus* (left) . . . but on this occasion it had been removed to our next location: the Archive Floor/Search Room (right) where we would spend an hour or more examining an eclectic selection of fine bindings, bookplates, and bookish ephemera. Here are a few:



Clockwise from top left: *Les Malheurs de Sophie* by Comtesse de Ségur, a story from a grandmother to her granddaughter, bound by [Sybil Pye](#) c1930. A poignant poem *Do not stand by my grave and weep* from the Irish troubles of 1989, bound by Andrew Brown and David Parry (with an accompanied 'allegory of life' explaining the binding in a textured box). A [Sangorski & Sutcliffe](#) peacock binding of Thomas Moore's *Paradise and the Peri*, 1910, a medieval-style illuminated manuscript with gold-leaf embossed illustrations adorning the pages. A [Mark Cockram](#) binding of *The Mersey - the river that changed the world* - one of the many library binding commissions celebrating Liverpool's European Capital of Culture in 2008*. A collection of *Liverpool Public Libraries Bookplates*.



The library's roof garden gave us a panoramic view of Liverpool and on to the low hills of The Wirral Peninsula and the higher Clwydian mountain range. However, lunch beckoned: a buffet at the Quaker Meeting House, conveniently located just round the corner from The Athenaeum Club and its subscribers' library. Still a Proprietors' Club (owned by its members), it was founded in 1799 as a bankers', merchants' and clergy newsroom and the subscription library was added in 1800; it all re-located to its current building in 1928. Our guide, librarian Heather, led us upstairs to the Reading Room where she had laid out a selection of books and bindings. The Library does not have any design bindings, so Heather had selected a range of items with unusual printing, illustration, decoration or binding for us to view and handle. *One example opposite:*



***** a future newsletter will showcase all seven bindings commissioned from SoB members (two NW2) as part of the Liverpool European Capital of Culture celebrations *****

Programme Organiser Sue Wood writes: My intention in going to York was to speak to as many events organisers from other Regions as possible, to see how they run things. I did manage to speak to somebody from each Region although not always their programme organiser.

London and South are the only Region that take online bookings with payment, this is done by using Ticket Tailor. Some regions still have a *pay on the day* approach. They meet in central London at Kentish Town Congregational Church, which has very little parking. Most people have to use public transport, which can be difficult for attendees bringing cutting mat and other tools to a workshop; they are currently looking at on-site storage.

I spoke to Peter from the Scottish Region. Most of their workshops take place in Dunblane, about 6 events a year, and their AGM is via Zoom. It's rare that workshops are over-subscribed.

I have previously spoken to Ayla, from the Midlands Region, and we had a catch up again. They are still struggling to fill workshops. Some of our members have been down to the Midlands workshops. We agreed that we will try to ensure that we don't run workshops on the same dates. Their workshops are run in one of two venues: Leek Wootton and Hampton-in-Arden.

Maureen handles the bookings for East Anglia Region. The workshops are in the same venue and are mostly full - so they hold back two places for very new members to enable them to get on to workshops. They also ran a series of six progressive workshops called *From Zero to Book*, using two tutors.

Western Region handle things in a slightly different way. The programme is put together by the whole (large) committee at a full day meeting, and each committee member is expected to organise /do the admin for one workshop in the year, using the templates that programme organiser Margaret has devised. They ran a progressive beginners' series of workshops and are now running an intermediate one.

North East Region mostly meet at the Lit and Phil, in the centre of Newcastle and handy for the railway station. However sometimes the venue gets booked out to other groups (and it's not available on Sundays, so any two day workshops have to be Friday and Saturday). They don't have an annual programme; Ian tends to organise and advertise one workshop at a time.

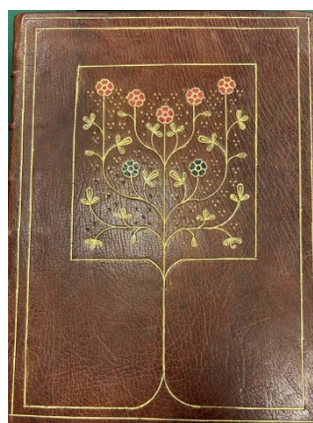
On money and costs. All regions charge members somewhere between £25-£40 for a one-day workshop (usually plus a materials charge). We are the only Region following the national policy of paying tutors £350 for a one-day workshop (most are paying £300).

It was a great opportunity to compare notes with all the other regions, even if briefly with some. Although I didn't pick up any '*we must do that in our region*' ideas I still came away feeling positive about the opportunity to exchange notes on how we all do things.

The SoB International Bookbinding Competition/Exhibition 2026: one of the many *additional attractions* at Conference is the announcement of winners following the AGM and the display of all the entries throughout the weekend. We feature Val Corrigan's winner *River Fragments* on p2, and below we show three more bindings that caught **Jacqueline Payne's** eye:



Above: Fenneke Wolters-Sinke; a case binding featuring a paper dustjacket hand cut with a scalpel with designs inspired by the book's leaf illustrations. *Opposite:* Mike Steel; hand-dyed goatskin gold leaf finishing and goatskin onlays. *Below:* Eduardo Gimenez; a case binding in beige calfskin decorated with a suede mosaic design, suede endleaves.

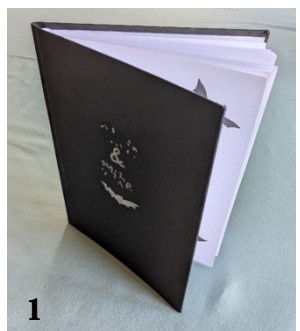




Stephanie Brewster shares her, very recent, *Bookbinding Beginnings*

I've always been keen on all crafts involving paper, fabric, glue, paint, needle and thread . . . imagine my delight when a magazine article drew my attention to a traditional craft that involves all of these materials! Following semi-redundancy I was open to a new challenge and with the help of the internet, I came across the SoB and signed up last year to one of Barry Clark's beginners' workshops at the Portico Library in Manchester.

After a bit of a slow start, I've been thrilled at how swiftly I've progressed. I'm already making fairly convincing hard back books, and my lucky family and friends are receiving these as gifts. Below [1] this bat-themed wedding anniversary notebook, for friends who volunteer for bat conservation, and [2] these two Japanese stab-bound notebooks decorated with maps - graduation gifts for two young geography students. The used stamps decorate a book [3] lined with washi paper I bought in Japan when on holiday last year (a birthday gift for a man who has everything!).



I'm so keen on themes, I've also bought a length of fabric patterned with *books* to cover some *notebooks* for members of my *book* group, so that they can make notes about the *books* they read.

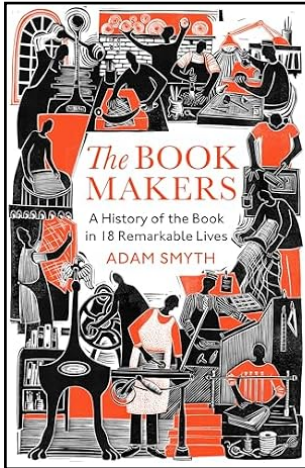
A number of things have contributed to what I regard as my success: attending Barry's *Eco Sketchbook* workshop . . . purchasing a copy of *Making Books* by LCBA (on Barry's recommendation) . . . Val Corrigan's very enjoyable workshop on pattern-making, and the mixed roll of papers and fabrics I picked up there for free. These materials and some patterns I created on the day were pressed into immediate use (*below*).



An unexpected bonus has been the rediscovery of my father-in-law's old tools stored in our garage. Many of which, with a bit of cleaning and sharpening have proved perfectly useable for my amateurish book-binding purposes. I've also enjoyed bringing his old workbench back into use, which means I can keep everything together and readily to hand.



And finally, the friendly encouragement of the NW2 group has also spurred me on to keep going with trying new techniques. I'm in awe of the many beautiful things I see you creating! *Thank you SoB.*



Han Fleet writes: This delightful book tells a carefully selected history of books, detailing not only the boo/codex format and process but also it fleshes out the people involved and makes them come to life. From the advent of printing in the West through a journey of how the people of the past treated and regarded books; how they used and adapted books to their own needs and fashions.

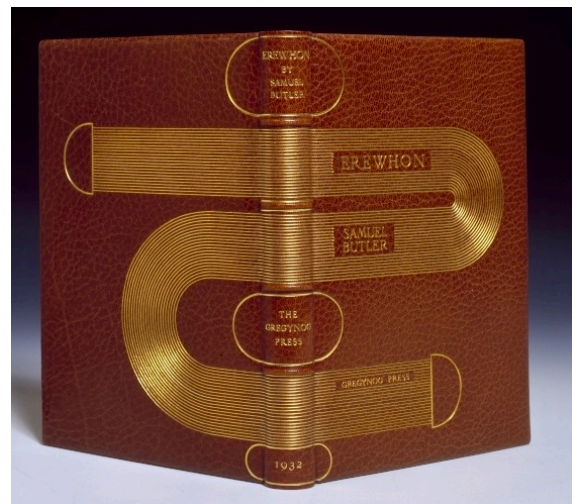
With the necessity of typefaces and distribution, through experimentation of different library systems, to the control of the printing presses and the emergence of private presses, to zines, with a quick reference to digital books of today. This book portrays characters known and some characters new (to me), including Wynkyn de Worde, John Baskerville, Benjamin Franklyn, bookbinder Thomas Cobden-Sanderson, Nancy Cunard, Edward Mundie and many more throughout the ages.

A lovely book, a memorable book, a gentle book with stories of the books and people that made and used them instead of a dry book of facts and figures.

News from Gregynog

Our August visit next year is to National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and to [Gregynog Hall](#) in nearby Newtown. Many will know of Gregynog through its private press established by the Davies sisters in 1922, unique at the time for creating everything under one roof - design, typography, illustration, printing and binding. Gregynog Hall is now run as a charitable trust, and is also shortly to take full ownership of both Gregynog Press 1922-1940 and its successor Gwasg Gregynog 1975+. Trustee Robert Meyrick comments: *We have a complete collection of ordinaries and specials as well as various designs for bindings and part-completed bindings used for demonstrations. I recently found two letters from Paul Nash to [bookbinder] George Fisher explaining in detail how he wanted his designs for Shaw Gives Himself Away to be executed. Lots for us to see in 2027!*

Meanwhile Gregynog is embarking on an important project, *Raise the Roof!* which will realise essential repairs to Gregynog Hall and deliver new activity for visitors and communities. They are keen to understand more about the views of visitors and communities to inform their planning: [click here](#) to complete their survey.



Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (Gregynog Press, 1932). One of 25 copies bound in brown goatskin by [George Fisher](#) to a design by [Blair Hughes-Stanton](#) (the book also includes 28 of his wood engravings). This copy is in the Ryland's [Anthony Dowd](#) collection.

The Committee for 2026

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Images clockwise from top left: Amber White, Heather Prescott, Wits End Books, Kelpie Press, Rock-Tree-Landscape

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