

The Single Fold

Bumper edition Summer 2026
Newsletter of the East Anglia Region

the Society
of Bookbinders 

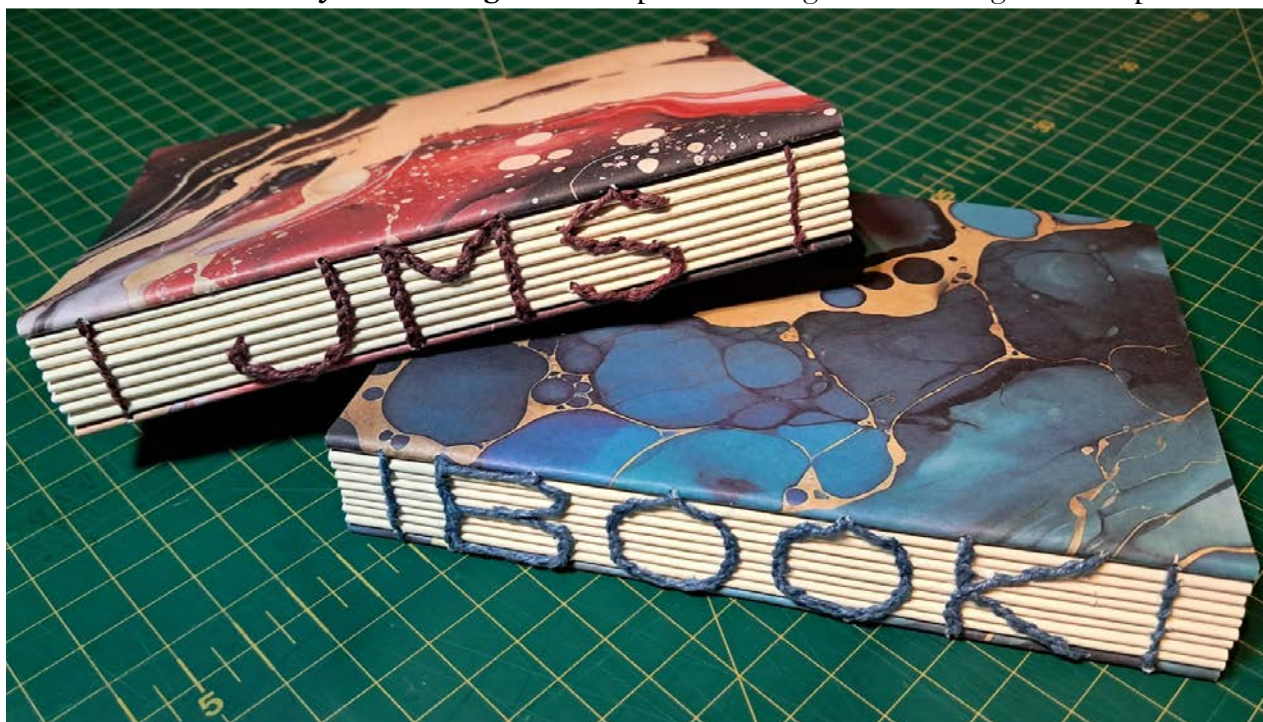
Diary dates

**Events at Linton Village Hall, Coles Lane, Linton, Cambridge, CB21 4JS
and other local events**

There are three workshops for the last quarter of 2026.

17th October 2026 **Joanna Sergeant** will be teaching cyanotypes

21st November 2026 **Joanna Sergeant** - Coptic Binding with writing on the spine



Learn to make this interesting variation on a coptic stitch book where you will be able to customise your own lettering, numbers or symbols in the sewing on the spine. There will be a variety of coloured threads and decorative, lined and plain papers to choose from. Whether you make this book as a gift for someone special or keep for yourself, these little books open flat making them great for sketching or note taking and can be customised in a multitude of ways. This workshop is suitable for beginners and experienced crafters alike and there will be hands-on demonstrations and explanations as well as detailed notes to take home with you.

12th December 2026: **Mary Pullen Deacon** will be teaching some repair techniques.

You should by now have received a booking form, but if not, please contact Maureen Tovey at the email address at the end of this issue of Single Fold.

Plans for 2027 are well underway, and include hidden foreedge painting, tree calf decoration, sharpening, artists' books, cuir ciselé (see photo on the last page), inlays, shaving foam edge marbling (really!), sewn boards binding, and a clinic/promenade day. If there is anything you think would make for an interesting workshop, or a particular tutor you would like to visit us, please contact **Paul Garcia** or **Maureen Tovey**.

Flatford Mill. There are three further opportunities to bookbind for a whole week at the Field Studies Council centre at Flatford Mill this year: 31st August to 4th September, 26th October to 30th October, and 7th December to 11th December. Book online by searching for 'FSC Flatford Mill Bookbinding'.

Outreach work in East Anglia

Hazel Garrity writes:

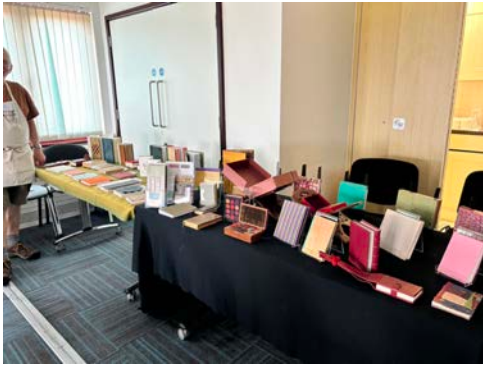
"I have been teaching bookbinding skills to 9-16 year olds as part of a Suffolk Libraries project. The free workshops take place in the school holidays and aim to provide a range of creative activities and to encourage youngsters to engage with their local library.

I usually have a group of around 15 complete beginners and the day is always a lively one! We start off with simple single-section pamphlets and then move on to concertina structures, flag books or hardback notebooks. I provide traditional tools and a range of different papers so that the young people can individualise their books and have fun with the decoration. All the children go home with at least two books and the skills and confidence to make more at home.

It has been a challenge at times, but a very enjoyable and satisfying one. I have found it humbling to see the young people leave the workshop looking so proud of what they have achieved."



Hazel Jordan, Paul Garcia, and Peter Whiteley have recently given a talk about bookbinding at Bury St Edmunds library, with a follow up workshop, and run a workshop at the Colchester Makerspace.



Bury Library



Bury Library



Colchester Makerspace

Zero to Book at Linton

The sixth and final session of the Zero to Book course tutored by **Alan Fitch** and **Mylyn McColl** took place at Linton on 11th July 2026.



The almost finished books

The course covered all the processes involved in making a library-style half-bound hardback book, from folding the sections, sewing the block, rounding, backing, lining the spine, attaching the boards, paring the leather for the spine and corners, forming the head caps, to covering the sides with decorative paper. Along the way participants learned some interesting decorative techniques for

making decorative papers, edge decoration, creating leather headbands, and making labels using a blocking machine.

Branching Out: A Weekend of Tree-Calfing

by Graham & Carole Lampard

When I bought Craftsman Binders, on a whim, the strap line of the company read 'Tree-calfing specialists'. As I knew nothing about bookbinding, this did not raise any concerns: I couldn't bookbind, so 'tree-calfing' would be part of the learning process; I assumed that all bookbinders did 'tree-calfing'. Hah! The previous owner, Michael Kinning, had learnt because he'd worked at Birdsall's of Northampton, who were one of the leading proponents of the technique in the 1900s and early 20th Century. Sadly, the technique has died out on a commercial scale – Craftsman Binders was one of the few who did tree-calfing on a regular basis, for the likes of Smythsons of London and the Royal Household.

But, having a chemistry background, it was the chemistry intrigued me as much as the technique and I happened to mention this to Dominic Riley at a SoB conference a few years ago, and he said he'd collected a number of articles and learnt the skill from Terry Buckley. I suggested that it would be a great to do a workshop, just to keep the technique alive and spread the word about the artistic opportunities. And so in early May, Jan Soendermann, Rosie Bolton, Carole Lampard and I ventured up to Dominic's studio for a weekend of Tree-calfing. The first question, before the weekend started, was from Dominic: "you'll need a smallish book, sewn on raised cords, laced into thin (1.5mm) boards, unlined. Edges trimmed. Optional: edges sprinkled red. Optional: red and white sewn headbands. Did you want to make that, or I can make one for you" – Hmm, a Dominic Riley binding vs a Graham Lampard "binding" – I decided the former would be perfect!

In the workshop we first cut out and pared calf leather and then covered the book.

Then we prepared the chemicals for the tree calfing, and made a birch twig bundle – yes it was birch twigs. The chemicals traditionally used are hydrated Potassium Carbonate (salts of tartar) and Ferrous Sulphate (Copperas). Both have been used by bookbinders for around 300 years – sources claim Zaehnsdorf started the process back in the late 1770s in the UK, from German origins. There was an opportunity to practice on unattached boards.

The sample board was wet pasted a couple of times and allowed to dry. Once dry, it was sponged with the salts of tartar until the leather was thoroughly soaked and had started to brown slightly. At this point the boards were supple enough to be curled in a concave manner. away from the book block. In commercial operations this was done by using a tree calf roller. The wooden roller of the

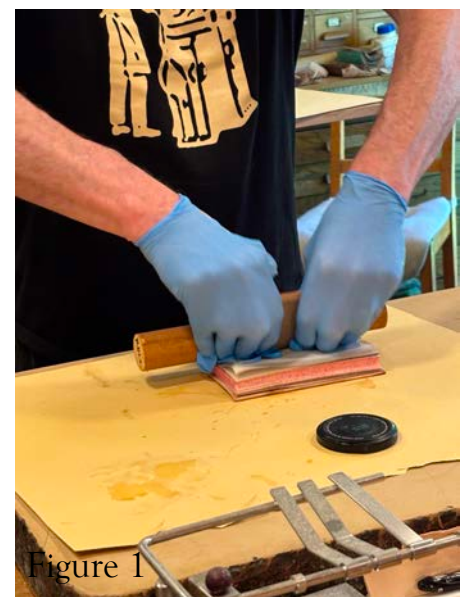


Figure 1

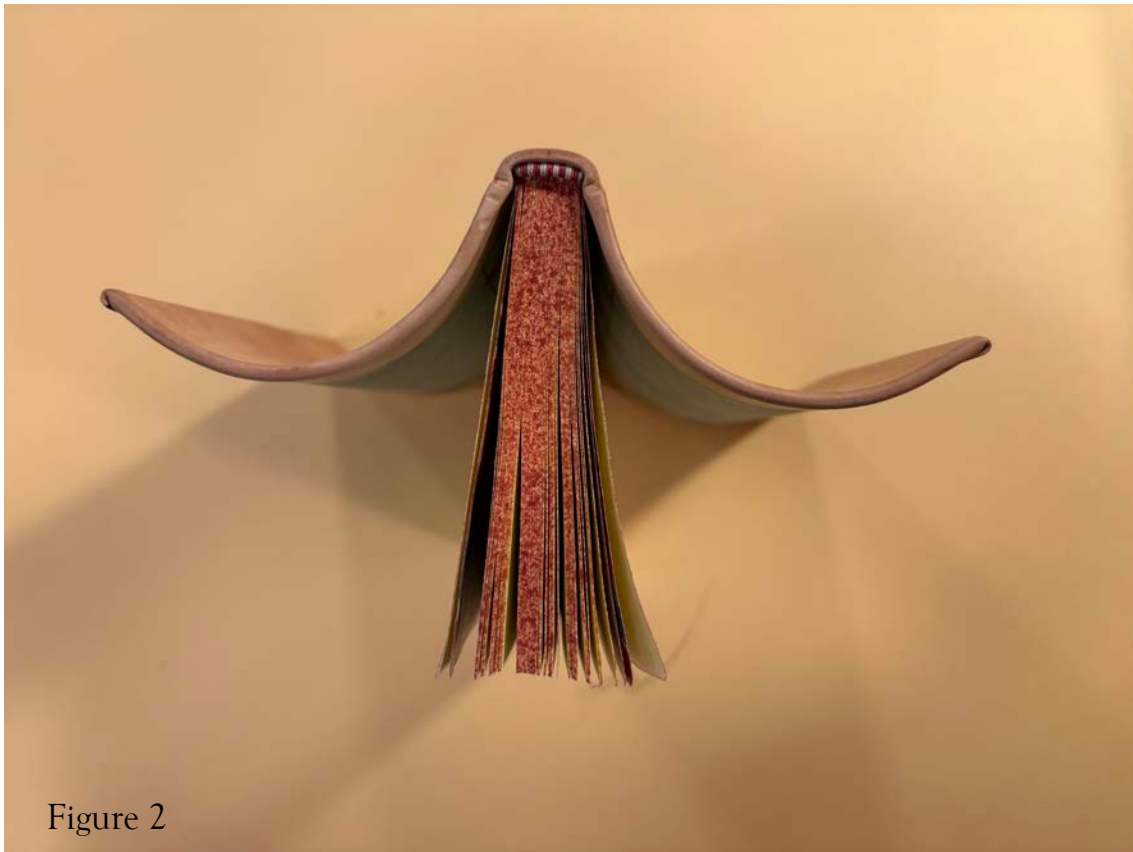


Figure 2

appropriate diameter for the book cover was placed on the board parallel to the spine. As the roller was rotated, vigorously, towards the spine the boards curved outward, figure 1. They were then allowed to dry. My book can be seen in Figure 2; the extent of the curve is clear to see.



Figure 3

The boards were then sponged with two to three coats of glaire, making sure the glaire was even and did not froth or streak, and the boards, again, allowed to dry. The panel was then suspended on sloping rods over a tray at an angle. The angle depends on the pattern required – it is supposed to look like a tree – and Mick, the former owner of Craftsman Binders said there were tree calfers at Birdsall's who could make the tree look like specific species. Oh to have that skill!

Anyway back to the process, with the ferrous sulphate to hand, and a supply of clean water the birch 'brush' was charged with water and another with the ferrous sulphate in preparation for sprinkling. Then water was sprinkled, in quantity, on the boards, Figure 3, running top to bottom, creating rivulets. These often flow to the centre of the board, so you can 'cheat' by using a finger to guide the water.

The pattern created at this point with the water will reflect the overall finished pattern. The water has to run across the board at the top and down the centre without soaking in, to create the tree, so speed and confidence are important at this point – along with a lot of luck! While the water is still running we sprinkled on the ferrous sulphate with the filled brush, Figure 4.

Apparently, standing further away from the book and sprinkling releases smaller droplets, results in a finer pattern. Once the pattern has appeared, it is a matter of how long you wish to leave the ‘picture’ to develop – too long as the image blackens too far; too little and it is faded. Once we were satisfied, the boards were sluiced with clean water to “fix” the image and prevent the pattern from becoming too dark.



The next day the process was repeated ‘for real’ on the boards attached to the book block, which was covered with a protective paper, – no going back; the board is attached to the book so any pattern is the ‘one I wanted’!

The results were, how shall I say, ‘varied’. Mine looked more like cork than a tree, while Carole’s was more ‘tree’ like, but dark, Figures 6 and 6a.



Tree calf a fascinating fusion of chemistry and art: do it well and as Figures 7 and 8 show the results are amazing – both ‘Seven Sonnets’ by Cyril Edwards.



Figure 7



Figure 8

We would like to thank the East Anglian Region for a grant that enabled both myself and Carole to undertake this training course, and I would be delighted to come along and give a talk or demonstration sometime. This is a technique that needs to thrive.

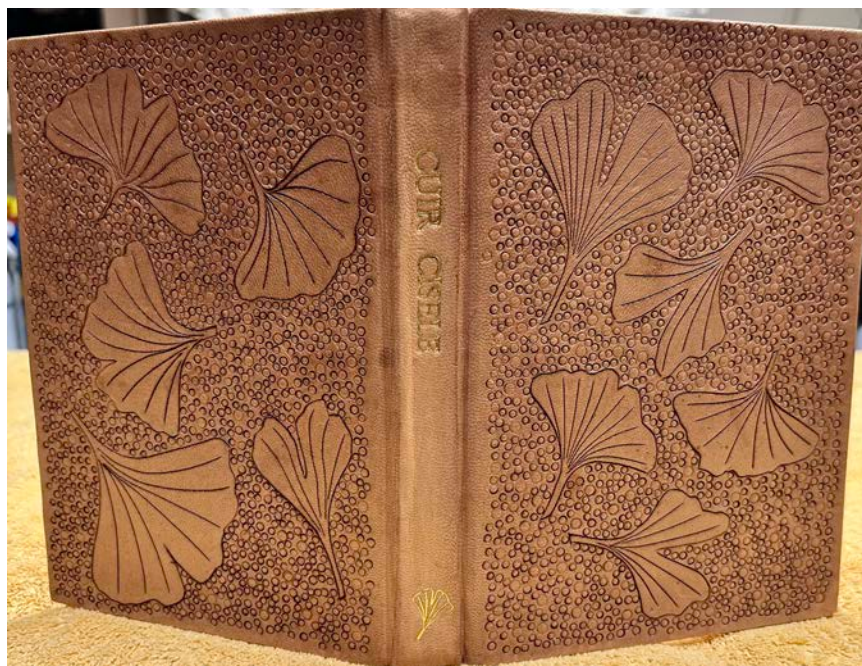
(Editor's note: as mentioned above, we are currently preparing the 2027 programme, which will include a demonstration and talk by Graham & Carole)

More outreach.

We continue to have a presence at the Long Melford Book and Postcard Fairs held in the village hall, and they have proved a valuable recruiting ground for new bookbinders.



Display at Long Melford Book fair



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