

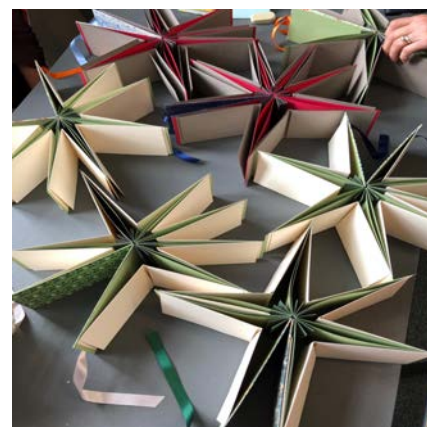


The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Book now for January On-line Workshop

We are now taking bookings for our first workshop of 2027 - an online day with Western Region's **Nesta Davies**, creating her **Star Book** structure. Enjoy the day folding, trimming, sewing and glueing paper to create this delightful Star Book with stiff boards and ribbon tie. Beautifully flexible, it's also robust enough to use as a photo album or artist's book with created content on its seven openings. A full materials pack will be posted out in advance, but Nesta comments that you are welcome to use your own coloured linen thread, ribbon, decorative and/or coloured papers.

All one-day workshops continue to be £30 in 2027, and the materials/postage cost for this on-line workshop is £20. Numbers on the day are limited to 12, however all will be recorded and available (for the following four weeks) to those who have paid. Let Sue (swoosal@btinternet.com) know when booking whether you would prefer a live on-the-day place or are happy working with the recording. It is the same price for both modes.



And for 2026

There are still places available for our 10 October workshop with Magalie Briand **The Merry-go-Round book**. Waiting list places only for 14 November: **The Buttonhole Stitch Binding** with Sylvia Waltering. And if you haven't booked in yet for our **Christmas Social / Lunch** on 5 December then please book with Sue.

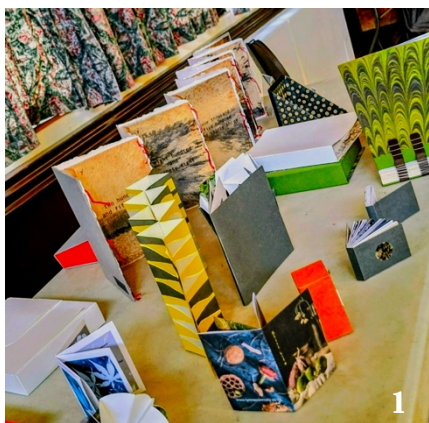
2027 Programme: dates, topics and tutors

Dates for your 2027 diary opposite. There are a few changes from the provisional programme published in our July newsletter. And we have now firmed up dates for our summer outing to Aberystwyth.

No bookings for Kelsall workshops yet please! We will announce the date when bookings open, it will not be until sometime in January 2027. This year there was a surge of early bookings - but in the end almost everyone got the workshops that they wanted. So always take a waiting list place and hold your nerve - a place is likely to become available for you. **Diary dates only for now, no bookings please!**

- 30 January: **The Star Book** / Nesta Davies (on-line)
- 13 February: **Springback** to bookbinding: **AGM** plus talks and demos
- 13 March: **Drum Leaf Binding** / Mylyn McColl
- 10 April: **Rebinding a paperback** / Glenn Malkin
- 8 & 9 May: **How to Gold Tool on Leather** / Tracey Rowledge
- 12 June: **Artist book structures and content** / Isobel Lewis
- 10 July: **A Modern Yapp Edge Binding** / Rachel Lyner
- 10 & 11 August: **Aberystwyth & Gregynog Visit**
- 11 September: **Hands-on marbling workshop** / Donna Stewart
- 9 October: **Our Autumn Gathering** (talks/demos/displays)
- 13 & 14 November: **Medieval Binding** / Helen Golding Miller
- 11 December: **Christmas Lunch / Social**

Our Autumn Gathering in numbers, images and text



Our Autumn Gathering has become a regular fixture in our Kelsall programme. Always a lively event - with speakers, a raffle, a silent auction, trade stands and many members bringing along items for sale or to take away for free.

This year was no different:

- * thirty five members attending
- * three speakers
- * two trade stands (Hewit's & Harmatan)
- * one silent auction of eight items
- * a raffle with too many prizes to count!
- * and a healthy surplus of £249.40



Gordon Reid writes: Our first speaker was regional member Lynne Connolly focussing on *Bookbinding and book arts as an aid to community engagement and wellbeing*. Based on the research and practical work undertaken for her PhD with the University of Chester, it reminded me of the use of occupational therapy to assist those with mental health issues. Lynne, a former resident in Belfast, is no stranger to the Northern Ireland 'troubles', in her youth having had to move house eleven times in 10 years because of rioting, bombing, and social disruption. She was aware that many remained traumatised by unresolved mental health issues relating to this challenging period, and more recently resolved to work with community groups using various book arts as an aid to reconciliation and healing. Fragmented, painful memories were often well-expressed in abstract, often beautiful but sometimes grim, book-like structures with repeated artistic page patterns and photos. This was where 'no words in print' could do full justice to what individuals and the community had been through. Lynne has also conducted similar, sombre, cathartic 'story book' exercises in other community settings, including for people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Many of the book structures created in these sessions were available for us to examine [1].

Next up, our regional chair Barry Clark talked us through a selection of *Bookbinding books, hand bound*. He used his outstanding personal collection of bindings (on display at the meeting [2]) to illustrate the range and variety of modern bookbinding. Many of the bindings examined date from the 'arts and crafts' period (1880s-1910s) and featured work by well-known binders - Zaehnsdorf, Douglas Cockerell as well as many highly competent but anonymous binders. Other bindings shown were by SoB members including William Bull, Arnold May, Paul Delrue, Andrew Brown and Graham Moss. However many of the bindings were 'unsigned', bound/rebound by amateur bookbinders for their own pleasure. We also saw some fabulous hand-marbled end-papers, beautifully designed book plates, immaculate printed pages and finely tooled leather book covers.

After lunch Richard Nichols guided us through a most unusual commission: *Binding in Stone*. Interestingly, Richard completed a GCE A Level in Bookbinding in 1973, aged just 15 years (it included a 15-hour practical!) - and went on to develop a distinguished lifetime career in book and paper conservation. Richard was aware from an early age of the trade guilds (or livery companies of London) and when the Worshipful Company of Stonemasons published their history Richard was commissioned to design and execute an appropriate binding. This facilitated a historic collaboration between a bookbinder and two stonemasons (Catherine and Richard Martin) to bind the commemorative book *Crafted in Stone* (written by Dr Ian Stone!). The covers are real Italian marble boards, and the finished binding weighed exactly one stone. Richard took us stage-by-stage through this seemingly impossible task. It involved epoxy resin adhesive, steel wire, book edges painted to look like the marble boards and silver tooling to the leather spine [3]. The marvellous completed work was placed in a heavy duty clam shell box for safekeeping. A unique binding, it is now one of the historical treasures of the Worshipful Company of Masons.

Bindings in the Press!

In the Guardian on 23 August Dalya Alberge wrote: *Unprecedented insights into the literary and intellectual life on the island of [Guernsey](#) during the middle ages have been revealed through the discovery of 17 medieval manuscript fragments (image opposite).*

Dating from between the 12th and 15th centuries, they offer evidence of wide-ranging reading tastes, with everything from an extract from a play and an Ovid poem to passages from the Bible and a travel text.

The fragments had been hiding in plain sight, having been cut up and recycled into practical bindings for rent books and other administrative records during the 16th and 17th centuries. Whoever recycled them could never have imagined their historical value today. But their make-do-and-mend approach ensured that the fragments were preserved for centuries.

They are held in the public collections of the [Island Archives](#) and [His Majesty's greffier's](#) strongroom. They were identified by Island Archives staff working alongside Dr David Rundle, a manuscript expert at the University of Kent's Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and Prof Tamara Atkin, a book historian at the University of Oxford.

Research by Callum Tostevin-Hall, an archives assistant at Island Archives, led to these discoveries. He said: "This first began when I was asked to track down a 16th-century copy of Edward III's 1331 Extente of Guernsey and I noticed that the shelf mark contained reference to a vellum cover with Latin text that had been removed from the notebook in a previous round of conservation. I checked this cover and was astonished to find that it was clearly a reused bifolium from a medieval manuscript".



And, below, on the Business pages a few days later Lauren Almeida had a full page story on the growing demand for training in the heritage crafts. The article featured three apprentices at Ludlow Bookbinders.

For that story [click here](#).

AI-proof? Younger workers desert the digital world for traditional crafts

In a disrupted job market people are turning to heritage crafts such as bookbinding, metalwork and boatbuilding



Do you know your onions from your quinions?

These letters are doing my head in. I think I'll go and sit quietly to engrave a small piece of whale ivory.

Lynne Scrimshaw

London

I would have liked to succeed in the nominative determinism game (Letters, 9 September), but too few people know a rare bookbinding term. I folded.

Michael Quinion

Thornbury, Gloucestershire

I shouldn't contribute to this topic – as I will only spoil it for everyone.

Alexander Marr

Gosport, Hampshire

From the Letters page of the Guardian, 10 September 2026

In his letter published in the Guardian on 10 September the well-known etymologist Michael Quinion submitted a humorous pun referencing his own name and a rare bookbinding term. Responding to a thread on *nominative determinism* (the theory that people gravitate toward areas of work that fit their names), Quinion wrote:

"I would have liked to succeed in the nominative determinism game (Letters, 9 September), but too few people know a rare bookbinding term. I folded."

Ha, many bookbinders will be aware that a quinion (or *quinternion*) is a gathering consisting of five sheets of paper folded together to form 10 leaves (20 pages). And by adding *I folded* Quinion delivered a double entendre, referring both to giving up the game and the literal process of folding sheets to create a bookbinding quinion.



Last month we featured Val Corrigan/Greeley's *River Fragments* awarded the John Purcell Artist Book Award First Prize in the 2026 International Bookbinding Competition. Above and below we show fellow regional member Isobel Lewis's book **FOUND**, another award winner in the Artist Book category.

Isobel writes: During lockdown my friend Rosemary Everett and I each made two identical prints every day for 100 days using found objects. The prints were made using an ink stamp pad and objects from celery stalks to Q tips! In 2025 I finally bound my set of prints into a book: Japanese stab binding with thick felt and decorative stitching, housed in a clamshell box covered in book cloth. As can be seen from the images it can be displayed in a variety of ways.



Isobel will be running an Artists Book workshop for us at Kelsall next year.

York Conference re-visited

Heather Dewick writes: I made it to the York Conference, a big win for me and my uncooperative brain, and glad I did.

I enjoyed Kate Holland's talk on her creative process, and how much effort, experimentation and time it can take to get something to just be "right". We have remarkably similar camera rolls it seems, though I never get to do much with the images on mine. At one point Kate said *play is NOT time-wasting* (and I thought: *take note, H!*). Gillian Stewart's demonstration of using tiny magnets for closures on boxes was fun. I was impressed at how all the boxes she showed us all fitted into each other . . . certainly saves on luggage space when travelling to give presentations at conferences.

Conservator Anne-Marie Miller, with her curator sidekick Emma Wright, gave a fascinating talk on the unique family archive of a Lake District farmhouse, Townend. In an attempt to get some kind of control of 400+ years of documents, and make them presentable in the farmhouse library, two members of the family had taught themselves how to bind books. Anne-Marie's particular focus was one of these volumes, and its issues: poor structure, wonky sewing, poor materials, way too much adhesive, mould, poor opening, delamination . . . it certainly ticked my boxes, as someone who would have loved to have had the opportunity to really get into book conservation, and as a bit of a social history nerd.

Speakers aside, it was good to catch up with people, enjoy the trade fair and the food. I appreciate the help towards all this given by the NW2 bursary. I hope everyone who travelled to York by train managed to get home. If you know you know*!

* Trains were chaotic on the Sunday coming home, it took me four hours from York to Sheffield. More chaos at Sheffield station, as police had closed it after a nasty incident. It's all coming back to me...aargh!

My Bookbinding Beginnings: Alison Farquhar

I feel my only significant offering is that I have done everything “back to front”. It makes me wary about contributing to the newsletter, but our editor did ask very nicely! So here’s my bookbinding story . . .

I came to bookbinding in 2015, when my sister-in-law took me to Higham Hall [1] to do a course with Doug Mitchell, making a simple portfolio folder. Doug’s calm and patient teaching style, which he sprinkles with real enthusiasm for a restoration project, had me hooked . . . but it was almost 10 years before I could get on another course with him. I have bound four books at Higham - an ‘alternative’ Glazier Codex [2], a quarter leather binding [4 right] and two Bradel bound books [3]. And Doug also helped me restore a much-loved cookery book for a friend, using a case binding technique [4 left]. I have subsequently learnt a limp vellum binding from Glenn (Malkin) at Kelsall with our NW2 region and have made a clamshell box with Simon Goode at the LCBA [5].

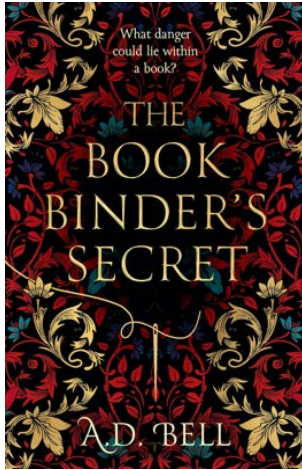


I am keen to learn in a more structured way, to understand the ‘anatomy of a book’, how all those pastes and glues work, what all those tools are for, as well as becoming more fluent in all things *bookbinder*. Enter an exciting opportunity from the Western Region, a space on a post-Intermediate course introducing Fine Binding. I spoke to Nesta (Davies) who put a very positive spin on my sparse CV and agreed to take me on. The course started in February and ran for one weekend a month over six months at Monkton Heathfield, just north of Taunton. We started by ‘pulling’ a book, reducing it to individual sections and thinking about paper repairs with Japanese tissue and the potential need for guards especially on the first and last sections. I learnt about making end papers and the need for a nipping press. In subsequent months, we were taught how to use a sewing cradle, use a plough (who knew it wasn’t an agricultural machine?), laminate millboard, sew headbands, rebate the pliestre tapes and sand our edges to get a smooth and even curve. We were taught to pare leather checking with a micrometre gauge, to make a hollow. We have been shown techniques at every step of the way as well as sharing knowledge with each other. All the classes were followed up with a video call. I missed the penultimate weekend, but I am confident that I have enough information to take the book to its completion, raising the grain, relaxing the leather.



What next? I have put my name down for the Western Region’s Full Leather Binding course in November. Nesta has asked Dominic (Riley) to teach me to sharpen my tools properly and pare a larger piece of leather and it will be on his say-so that I can do the weekend course. I have also put my name down for their intermediate course next year but would dearly like to do a Beginner’s course too. The latter would give me an understanding of the different types of bindings, and the former would look at one binding in more detail. I have a couple more courses at Higham with Tom McEwan in the pipeline.

Three - very different - books that may have slipped under your radar

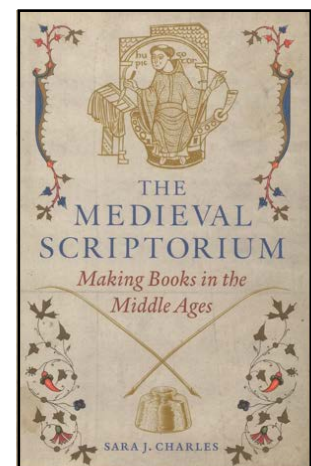


John Cooper-Poole writes: I wonder whether members have come across the recently published novel *The Bookbinder's Secret* by A.D. Bell? I came across it prominently displayed in my local library recently, and decided to give it a go, in spite of my general support for Rumpole's contention that after a certain age one should not read anything which one has not previously read . . .

It is a rather lurid whodunnit, supposedly taking place in 1901. But the main protagonist is a young female bookbinder and some of her bookbinding activities are described in some detail - the story hinges on letters which she finds hidden in the bindings of some books, with descriptions of how she lifts the endpapers to reveal them. Either the author has done a bit of binding herself, or she has mugged up on it from some manual or friends pretty well. The tale told by the protagonist does say something about the position of female binders of that period, and is interesting to that extent. It will never enter the ranks of great literature - it is not particularly well written and contains too many anachronisms. The protagonist herself is one big anachronism, portraying as she does a young woman with very free early 21st century ideas in an early 1900's setting.

But if a binder is stuck for something better to read, they could do worse.

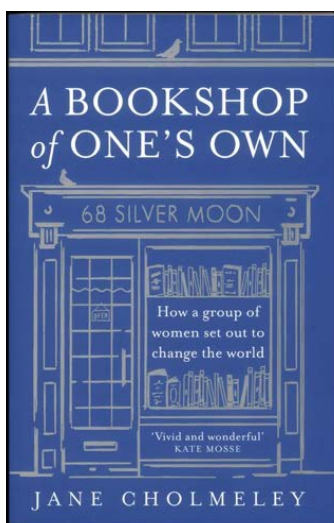
Sara Charles' *The Medieval Scriptorium* (Reaktion Books, 2024) book takes the reader on an immersive journey through medieval manuscript production in the Latin Christian world. Each chapter opens with a lively vignette by a medieval narrator - including a parchment-maker, scribe and illuminator - introducing various aspects of manuscript production. She poses the question *What actually is a scriptorium?*, and explores the development of the medieval scriptorium from its early Christian beginnings through to its eventual decline and the growth of the printing press. With the written word at the very heart of the Christian monastic movement, we see the immense amount of labour, planning and networks needed to produce each individual manuscript. By tapping into these processes and procedures, we can experience medieval life through the lens of a manuscript maker.



What was it like to start a feminist bookshop, in an industry dominated by men? How could a lesbian thrive in Thatcher's time, with the government legislating to restrict her rights? Silver Moon was the dream of three women - a bookshop with the mission to promote the work of female writers and create a much-needed safe space for any woman. Founded in 1980s London against a backdrop of homophobia and misogyny, it was a testament to the power of community, growing into Europe's biggest women's bookshop and hosting a constellation of literary stars from Margaret Atwood and Maya Angelou to Angela Carter.

A Bookshop of One's Own (Harper Collins, 2025) is a fascinating slice of social history from the heart of the women's liberation movement, from a true feminist and lesbian icon. Written with heart and humour, it reveals the struggle and joy that comes with starting an underdog business, while being a celebration of the power women have to change the narrative when they are the ones holding the pen.

Just in case you're thinking this book may not be for you, bear in mind this on-line review: *I am a heterosexual male and definitely was not Silver Moon's target audience . . . Okay, with that caveat out of the way I ADORED this book . . . I really cannot praise this book highly enough. Suffice to say that this is one of those books that I will never part with and have already bought another copy to give as a gift.*



An autumn outing perhaps?

SPECIAL EXHIBITION

The Forgotten Library:
Enriqueta Rylands and her books
Until Saturday 31 October

Enriqueta Rylands founded the John Rylands Library to remember her husband. She also filled her home with books.

Explore the personal book collection Rylands kept at Longford Hall. See books of all shapes and sizes: old and new, beautiful and plain, luxurious and useful. Discover another side of this book-lover's legacy through her forgotten library.



www.ludlowfinebookfair.co.uk

LUDLOW FINE BOOK FAIR



17th-18th October
10am-4pm
Free entry

Booksellers
Bookbinders
Private Presses
Book Arts Suppliers
Cafe

Ludlow Racecourse, Shropshire, SY8 2BT

Do you know of an upcoming exhibition, book fair etc in our region? Share with your fellow NW2 members by e-mailing the details to the editor.

The Committee for 2026

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