

The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

New NW2 merch on its way!

Following the success of our 50th anniversary merch - all long gone - the committee have forged ahead and ordered a small batch of NW2 mechanical pencils for members to purchase. It's the Beck pencil with a bamboo barrel and neat chrome trims, shown opposite with our logo/info. It should first be available at the christmas social, price to be agreed. We used up the last few anniversary badges and key rings as a welcome gift to new members, and the committee are minded in future to similarly mail out the mechanical pencil.



Book now for the 30 January on-line workshop!

If you haven't booked in, do so soon - the workshop will be uploaded to the SoB website shortly enabling those outside NW2 to book. Last year our on-line workshop attracted participants from far and wide, indeed one person logged in from Canada. NW2 members get first choice of course - so book now with Sue if you want a place. Our tutor will be Nesta Davies creating a Star Book: 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.

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.

A reminder of the rest of the 2027 programme, but no bookings nor expressions of interest yet please.

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*

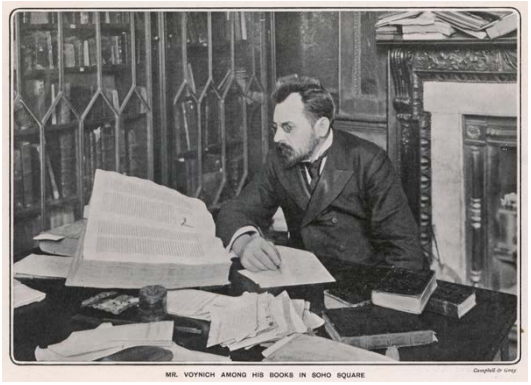
11 December: ***Christmas Lunch / Social***

There are still places available for our ***Christmas Social on Saturday 5 December*** at Kelsall. All are welcome, just let Sue know. It's £30 including the catered lunch, small making projects and the big quiz; maybe mince pies, mulled wine, nibbles too. New members will be made most welcome.
The final workshop on 14 November, the Buttonhole Stitch binding, is now full but observers are welcome and no charge.

Bookbinder's error the cause of a long-lasting puzzle over a 15th century manuscript?



Be honest, who hasn't sewn a text block with sections out of order, or cased-in back to front? New research suggests a bookbinder's error resulted in a puzzling C15 manuscript being mis-bound as a series of sections/quires, whilst it was originally designed as a collection of individual bifolia (singulions) to be stacked up and read in sequence. Consequently meanings attached to the puzzling manuscript need to be radically re-assessed.

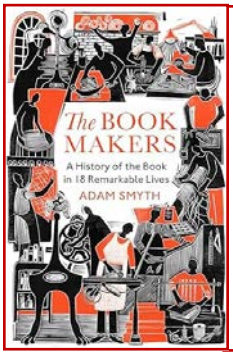

MR. VOYNICH AMONG HIS BOOKS IN SOHO SQUARE

Researchers Colin Layfield and Lisa Fagin Davies have recently shared their findings on the mis-binding in the journal *Digital Medievalist*. They have commented: *once you treat them as loose pages stacked together, all the artistic anomalies suddenly join up . . . Our hypothesis fixes a lot of problems with the stricture of the manuscripts in a really elegant way.*

However the manuscript is still a puzzling document. Known as the Voynichese, after the London-based Polish revolutionary and bookdealer Wilfred Voynich (*above right*) who purchased it in 1912, it has been called the world's most mysterious manuscript. It consists of over 200 vellum pages filled with colourful illustrations, botanical and pharmaceutical drawings, astronomical diagrams, bathing women, and over 30,000 words of indecipherable text. Carbon dated to 1404-1438, it is now thought to be the work of a number of authors each contributing short booklets.

Now housed at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, the whole book was digitised in 2004: *click here* to view; or *here* to read a thorough analysis of the manuscript.





The newsletter has previously featured Adam Smyth's engaging and entertaining book *The Book Makers*. Maybe follow it up with attendance at his on-line talk hosted by Hereford Cathedral? Titled ***What is the history of the book?*** It's at 7pm on *Tuesday 26 January*, tickets £5. For more information and booking *click here*.

Six designer bookbinders are currently hard at it to complete their shortlisted ***Booker Prize binding*** ready for the winner ceremony on *9 November*. This year the chosen six binders include our own NW2 member Dominic Riley. The design bindings occasionally get national press coverage - we'll certainly feature all six 2026 Booker Bindings in our next newsletter. For the other binders and more, *click here*.

A challenging and fun Merry-go-Round with Magalie Briand at Kelsall



Anyone remember Fry's 5 boys chocolate with the five child's expressions for desperation, pacification, expectation, acclamation and realization? If so you might have recognised similar expressions on Saturday 10 October at Kelsall - although they would have been apprehension, interest, caution, bafflement and satisfaction, as we progressed through making the wonderful Merry-go-Round book led by the equally wonderful Magalie Briand.

Apprehension, as we had been warned we would be starting early to help the challenge of completing this in one day. We had also received very comprehensive notes in advance, which convinced me this was a binding I needed to see being made rather than try to work from instructions.

Interest, as we handled the beautiful examples Magalie had brought and saw the potential for rotating displays of artwork, calligraphy, poetry, quotations, photographs and others I haven't thought of.

Caution, as after thorough demonstrations stage-by-stage we returned to our desks to cut then assemble some beautiful materials provided, in the knowledge that inaccuracy or errors might result in an unworkable binding.

Bafflement, when after assembling the first three boards under step-by-step instruction we confidently went to repeat the process for boards 4 to 7, only to realise we still were unsure of where to go next. One by one we were given reassuring and good-humoured guidance from Magalie.

And Satisfaction, when we surveyed the resultant display of fantastic working bindings (*opposite*) completed in time to depart before 5pm as usual. We all made four section Merry-go-Rounds with rectangular boards from superbly colour-coordinated kits prepared for us. Our learning models all had blank display panels we could adhere artwork to. It was suggested that if we made further versions we could try more sections; a square format; add closures to the external covers; play with pattern and colour and all with the warning to prepare artwork panels to size (formula provided) in advance for best results.





A magical and playful, rotating book structure inspired by the Continuously Convoluting Carousel by Graham Patten. This sculptural structure unfolds in 360 degrees to form a circular display. As the structure is rotated, panels change to reveal new content. Based on the Jacob's Ladder mechanism, it folds up into a more traditional book form. Its true magic is best seen in motion *here.*

More seriously, this was a binding that I wasn't sure was 'one for me', but having missed some recent workshops decided to book anyway. I am so pleased I did. Magalie made sure we kept to her planned timetable for progress, but with good humour throughout so I didn't feel hassled. Indeed, there was a lot of laughter amongst the sighs and exclamations! I am today making notes of ideas to try on my own versions. As always, I came away with some good general tips applicable to many bindings. I also bought some lovely papers and threads that were available for sale from Magalie and other members.

Kelsall is a really such a good venue for workshops and it was great to meet some newer members and to be reminded of further opportunities arising in our region soon. I feel very fortunate to be a member of such a supportive society.

With thanks to Jane Sheppard for this workshop review

Rare early bookbinding manuals feature in Forest Books latest catalogue

Every now and again unusual bookbinding items feature in the regular catalogues issued by the antiquarian bookdealers. These three gems showed up in the Autumn Catalogue of Forest Books; all descriptions are theirs.

The first printed technical manual on bookbinding:
ZEIDLER (Johann Gottfried) *1708*



First edition. This notable rarity is the cornerstone to any collection of bookbinding literature. Early technical manuals devoted to bookbinding are exceptionally rare. Bookbinding was - and remains - a practical craft, traditionally transmitted from master to apprentice through hands-on instruction rather than through written texts. The few manuals that were published were, like many workshop guides, used intensively until they were worn out and discarded. German craftsmen were the first to produce such manuals, and this volume is the earliest known example. It provides a comprehensive account of the trade, covering the collation of texts; pressing, folding, sewing, and trimming sheets; the preparation of boards and leather; and the use of tools, stamps, and gilt for decoration and lettering. It includes the first illustrations of a type-holder for lettering. Other engraved plates show a screw press, sewing frame, and finishing tools. In addition, there are 16 woodcut illustrations within the text.

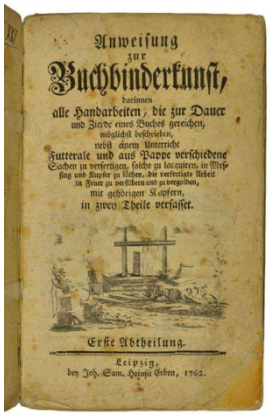
The first 3 volumes of 4, volume I & II first editions, volume III second edition. A key work in the history of early bookbinding manuals. Pollard & Potter list this as their no. 22, with the following note: *Vol. I is an exhaustive manual of bookbinding and box-making, with tables showing the cost of materials, the time taken over the various processes and the cost of different styles of binding. The other three volumes deal with more specialised work such as the binding of school books, and there is inevitably a good deal of repetition*. Richard Wolfe in his Marbled Paper gives a good commentary on this book and states almost as an aside that *Prediger's manual is also remarkable as the first exhaustive and technical work on bookbinding and slipcase making to appear anywhere in the world*. Volume one is the single most valuable of the four volumes from the point of view of information imparted. Also, since the complete work was published over a 12 year period, complete sets are very rare. Volume three is also of particular interest, as it contains over 150 near contemporary paper impressions of bookbinders' stamps, rolls and finishing tools. A fourth and final part was published in 1753.

And the first comprehensive manual by a practicing bookbinder:
PREDIGER (Christoph Ernst) *1741-1751*



For full details of titles, condition etc (and other titles in the Forest Books' *Miscellany Twenty One* catalogue) *click here*. All three books may still be available. Priced individually, together they add up to a handsome £10,440.

And another German manual: **Joh. Sam. Heinsii ERBEN**, a little later - *1762*



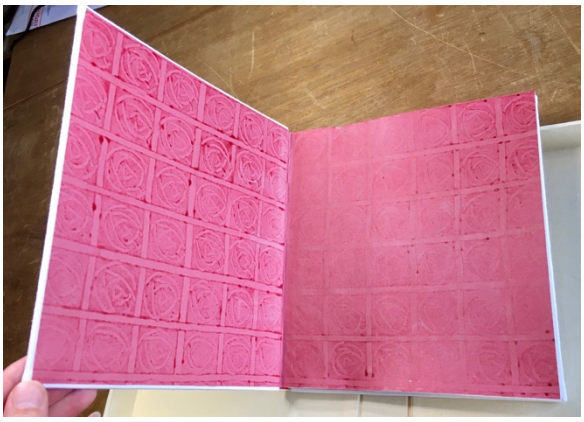
First edition, 2 parts in one. This is among the earliest German manuals devoted to the technical side of bookbinding, preceded only by Johann Gottfried Zeidler (1708) & Chrisoph Ernst Prediger (1741-1753). The engraved vignette on the title-page illustrates a sewing frame; other plates illustrate a screw press, a type holder, a geometric diagram for an ornamental cover design, etc.

When we re-launched our members' regional newsletter at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 we had a regular page featuring members' work. We showed all sorts - artists books, fine binding, repair projects, unusual printing processes, fancy notebooks and sketchbooks, and more. The column seemed to fizzle out once we started going out and about, and returning to Kelsall. Yet, most of us are still making at home! Let's share some of that in the newsletter again. Just a few photos, enough words so that the reader can understand the images, is all that it needs. E-mail your latest to the editor as soon as . . .

Meanwhile East Anglia member Pamela Birch shares her binding of what was our 2025 regional binding project. There were 100 unbound sets available, and whilst NW2 members accounted for 35, the remainder went to members in other regions.



***Pamela comments*:** it is a long time since I had bound a proper book and this binding project gave me the chance to play with different craft activities. I enjoyed doing it and was relatively pleased with the result.



Paste paper endpapers with a repeat linocut rose design - fun to do but I found it hard to get the colour consistent over the two sheets required and I only had just enough paper for one attempt!





Having by now got carried away with the embroidery I added an embroidered title to the spine. Almost certainly too many ideas, and too many techniques for which I lack the necessary skills thrown at it, but that's me all over!

I had long decided it would be a simple case binding and having gone down the textile route the next idea that came to mind was to cover it in a white cotton to represent the Manchester cotton trade. Fortunately I had a random piece of cloth in my fabric stash just right for the job - no idea where it came from (possibly a long deceased great aunt), or what it had previously been. Meanwhile the book was forwarded and the top edge given a graphite edge gauffered with little taps of a hammer to give a nod to Arts and Craft tin or pewterwork.

When it came to it the patchwork panel on the white cloth it looked too disconnected and plain, so I introduced the appliqué patches with Morris-type patterns on the pinky theme introduced in the endpapers. These were a nightmare as the fabric frayed at the slightest touch even after lining with interfacing! Then to connect it all together an embroidered bee for the symbol of industry and a couched embroidered line for its flight path around the flowers.

It's that time of year when all and sundry bombard us with suggestions for christmas gifts. Here we feature a couple of very small scale independent makers of gorgeous book-related items.
Yes, of course you make your own thank you - but still lovely to look at . . .



In our patch the ***Paper Foundation*** at Burneside near Kendal have been creating their own range of paste papers. And using these as the decorative covers they have now launched a range of notebooks, filled with 64 pages of 135gsm James Cropper cartridge paper. The cover incorporates a recessed letterpress label.



Click here for more information.

CAMBRIDGE IMPRINT
PATTERNMAKERS

A little further afield, the ever-inventive ***Cambridge Imprint*** are adding new decorative paper designs and indeed new products using them. How did they think up the idea of labelled pattern paper seed envelopes for the keen gardener who has everything?



For their latest blog that tells much more, *click here.*

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SOCIETY of BOOKBINDERS 1974 50 2024 FOUNDED in MANCHESTER



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