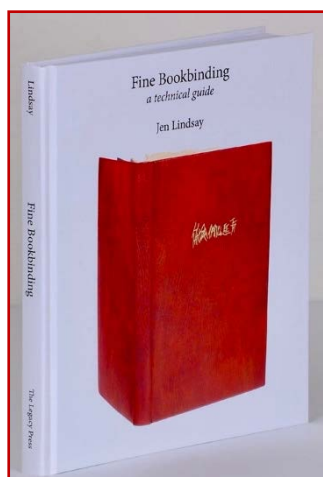




## The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region



You would be lucky to find even a second-hand copy of Jen Lindsay's 2009 *Fine Bookbinding* for less than £600! At last there is now a second edition, published in the States by The Legacy Press, available in the UK only from Hewit's. And even so you won't get much change out of £100, once you pay the shipping cost. However complete your binding of our NW2 2025 Binding Project, *The Northern Art Workers' Guild and the Arts and Crafts movement in Manchester*, and you could have **your own copy for free**. The committee recently decided that all members who bring along their binding for display at our **Autumn Gathering in September** will be entered into a free draw - and the first name out of the hat walks away with a copy of Lindsay's superb, and much acclaimed, revised and updated modern bookbinding manual. Do you need that encouragement? Of course not! But what a bonus!!!

### Local Clusters coming soon . . . .

One of the ideas discussed at the recent regional AGM was how to enable members living in reasonably close proximity to keep in touch and support each other. We have members from Cockermouth in the north down to Oswestry in the south, from Matlock in the east across to Aberystwyth in the west, yet members living just a mile or so away from another member may not even realise that a fellow SoB member is living in their neck of the woods. Many members do frequently make the journey to Kelsall, Cheshire for meetings but in addition maybe we could facilitate more local groupings? Secretary Jacqueline Payne is studying the membership lists and the maps - with the intent of identifying a series of **local geographical clusters**. Members will be able to opt in, or not, to their local cluster. More details to come.

**More follow-up from the AGM:** arising from the discussion of options for further outreach work in 2025, Maurus O'Donnell has had a positive response from the Warden and Librarian at **Gladstone's Library** ([click here](#); we have a regional visit on 6 August). Maurus and Catherine, our Outreach Lead, are now exploring how to take this forward.

Some readers will be aware that regional members **Graham and Helen Moss** have been imaginatively creating ways of financing their and the **Incline Press** re-location to Scotland. News is: *it's happening!* They have bought this property (*image right*) in Creetown, Dumfries and Galloway - previously a much-loved ice cream parlour, café and shop - to be their new home. Fortunately they can continue to be NW2 regional members! We'll cover their move in more detail in a future newsletter.



The next national Wednesday Webinar, on 16 April at 7pm, features Gillian Stewart: **Craquelure - dyeing leather in controlled chaos!** For more info, and to book (for free) [click here](#).





# Bound Together: Modern British Bookbinding



Probably the best UK bookbinding exhibition of the year has opened in Petersfield, Hampshire. Close to his home and bindery the exhibition offers an overview of the life and work of Roger Powell, 1896-1990 (*above right*). The Gallery website explains: *Powell's remarkable career spanned over five decades from the 1930s, initially working with leading bookbinder Douglas Cockerell (1870-1945). Powell established his own bindery in Froxfield in 1947 and over the years, Powell and his business partner, Peter Waters, worked numerous important commissions from prestigious institutions, libraries, and collectors worldwide, including the conservation and re-binding of the Book of Kells for Trinity College Dublin. In 1966, when the River Arno in Florence flooded and caused unprecedented damage to thousands of books of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Roger Powell and Peter Waters were closely involved in the conservation of thousands of valuable books. This project transformed the technical knowledge of book conservation for future generations. Respect for traditional techniques and materials combined with a sensitive response to the text continues to inform bookbinders today.* Our SoB late patron Bernard Middleton described Powell as *one of the most important and influential bookbinders of the last hundred years and, arguably, of any period.* The exhibition also features a selection of rarely seen fine bindings by Douglas Cockerell, William Matthews, and Peter Waters. Designer Bookbinders show twenty modern bindings, and SoB film tributes to Bernard Middleton and Maureen Duke are being screened.

Too far to travel? [Click here](#) for the Gallery website, and in particular spend time with their flip book that creates an on-line exhibition for all.

Saturday 3 May, 12 noon-5pm · Sunday 4 May, 11am-4pm

## The 2025 Oxford Fine Press Book Fair

THE EXAMINATION SCHOOLS  
75-81 High Street, Oxford, OX1 4BG

**Oxford Fine Press Book Fair**  
3 & 4 May  
[Click here for more info](#)

Beautiful books, prints and ephemera from some of the World's finest presses.

With over 100 stands, including specialist booksellers and related trades & organisations, plus a programme of lectures on Sunday.

£5 entry fee covers both days plus a catalogue of exhibitors. Further details closer to the event at [www.pbfa.org](http://www.pbfa.org) and [www.fpbfa.com](http://www.fpbfa.com)

Organised by the FPA in cooperation with the PBFA

**York Open Studios**  
5&6, 12&13 April  
[Click here for more info](#)

# GREAT PRINT X10 EXHIBITION

FREE ENTRY!

4 APRIL – 29 JUNE

CELEBRATE THE 10TH YEAR OF THE UK'S LARGEST PRINTMAKING EXHIBITION

Rheged (Cumbria) Print Exhibition [Click here for more info](#)



## *A Kelsall workshop review . . .*

For the first in-person workshop of 2025 **Tanja Bolenz** (*below left*) came over from mid-Wales on a gloriously sunny day to show us how to make a book using Tyvek®: **The Three Piece Slot Book**. Tanja has been a member of the SoB for less than a year and this was her first workshop for us, and I really hope that it won't be her last. Although originally from Germany, where she trained as a bookbinder, she has also lived in Canada where she first came across this binding structure in an article she read in a Canadian bookbinding journal. She can't remember who first designed it, and I have not been able to find out although I do know that it is also referred to as a saddleback binding. So, if you know any more about it do let us know.



Even before we got to Kelsall it was obvious just how much preparation Tanja had put into making the workshop a success. Sue sent us all of us a pdf with a list of the materials and equipment required, as well as Tanja's beautifully illustrated making instructions. I found these incredibly helpful and it certainly contributed to me finishing what was a pretty complex structure in such a short time. Judging by the silence in the hall, I wasn't the only one who was concentrating hard during the day! Tanja also came armed with pre-cut and folded folios, endpapers and pre-cut Tyvek®, plus leather to cover the spine, which had already been trimmed and pared.

Tyvek® is made from fibres of high-density polyethylene, so it's a type of plastic. Previously I had only come across it as a material used in the construction of buildings, where its water resistance and breathability mean it is used as a house wrap, and for PPE. For bookbinding it also has the very useful properties of being strong but easy to cut.

One of the most astonishing things that I discovered when making this book, was how well Tyvek® takes colour. Once we had laminated some rectangles of Tyvek® to make two sheets, we then coloured them. A little bit of slightly watered-down acrylic paint dabbed across a sheet, then rubbed in with an old rag and hey presto! I had a beautifully coloured cover that has intimations of leather due to the way the fibres in the Tyvek® take up the colour. It made me feel like an artist but was extraordinarily simple to do. One of these sheets was then cut into two strips which became the sewing tapes for the book and the book was then sewn in the usual way. The other, larger piece became the book's cover. With carefully cut slots and equally carefully folded edges overlapping the foredge of the book block, we had a cover that wrapped round the whole book block with folded edges that almost met across the foredge. With holes punched through both layers of the folded foredge of the cover, the cover structure is then kept in place with thin strips of leather laced through the holes and these are then tied together and neatly close the book.

There is very little glue used in this structure, but it is not completely adhesive free. PVA is needed to laminate the Tyvek® and is also applied to the spine of the book block. The end papers are single sheets (note to self: good use of small pieces of decorative paper), hooked over the first and last sections. The final bit of gluing is for the leather spine piece through which two windows are cut for the tapes to come through. The leather is then glued onto the Tyvek® cover, slipping under the tapes.

This structure offers the opportunity for so many different colour combinations that although everyone's books were structurally the same, they all looked so different. Sadly I wasn't able to appreciate all of them. I had noticed earlier in the day that the clock in the hall was running 15 minutes slow. When I say *noticed*, I mean it had registered with me but somehow hadn't quite landed. So, knowing I had to be somewhere else at 4 and thinking I should be packing up at 3:45, I suddenly realised it was actually 4 o'clock already. You've never seen anyone clear out of a Kelsall workshop so quickly. So my apologies to all for my extremely hasty departure. You would think that I didn't wear a watch, nor never look at my phone ...



*With thanks to Jacqueline Payne for this review of our March workshop*

## Conserving the RIBA's rare book collection

It is perhaps not widely known that the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has 4,371 rare books in its collections - and an in-house team of conservators to look after them. Published between 1478 and 1840, **their special collections** include antique, richly illustrated editions of seminal works on architecture. Early editions of texts by famous architectural theorists can be found alongside manuals and pattern books, large volumes on archaeology, and detailed building studies.

Since 2016, RIBA conservators have been embarked on a long-term project to surface clean and repair these titles. So far 3,363 volumes have been surface cleaned and 432 have received further treatments - repairing page tears, humidifying and flattening creases, securing detaching pages, and supporting covers and spines, all vital to facilitate researcher access to the books, to enable their digitisation, and to protect them for the benefit of future generations. Two of these items requiring more extensive conservation work were described in a recent announcement:



1 An architectural treatise dating from 1578 had been badly affected by mould damage throughout, leading to large areas of loss and soft, very vulnerable pages [1]. In response, our conservators strengthened every page with a 5% methyl cellulose adhesive, applied through a layer of thin Japanese paper to help it consolidate. In-fills of sekishu Japanese paper were applied using wheat starch paste [2].



Another item, Vitruvius' *De Architectura*, is the only architectural treatise to survive from antiquity. Our edition dates from 1522, one of a series of editions edited by the architect Fra Giovanni Giocondo, whose woodcuts also illustrated the text. The volume had been re-bound, which the conservators estimated to have occurred at some point in the C18th. The leather of the binding had started to degrade, particularly at the spine [3] and along the cover joints. The first few leaves were also detaching and at risk of loss. Because of the extent to which the leather was degrading, the conservators decided to remove the spine so it could be cleaned and re-lined, before attaching the boards securely with cloth. A key priority was to retain the original gold tooling and label on the spine, so that it could be placed back onto the volume after the work. The spine was cleaned and the old adhesive (which can be acidic and prevent the attachment of a new lining) was removed. Next, a fine linen cloth was adhered to it, inserted between the boards to attach to the cover. A new pared and toned calf leather was attached over the cloth, and the original spine label, with its gold tooling, was re-positioned on top [4].



**A rare lichen has been reintroduced to its historical habitat of East Anglia - with the help of some bookbinding glue!**

Scrambled egg lichen, so named for its bright yellow, crumbly appearance, was once common in the Breckland region of Norfolk and Suffolk but was last seen there in 1994. It is thought to have become extinct due to habitat loss resulting from changes in farming, an increase in tree cover and a drop in the number of rabbits.

The charity **Plantlife** has now launched a conservation effort to transfer the rare lichen back to the area from the north of Cornwall. The technique used to move the species, known as translocation, involves removing small patches of the lichen and using either water or bookbinding glue to reattach them to their new habitat.

Dave Lamacraft, Plantlife's lichen and bryophyte specialist, investigated different types of glue to find one that would not damage the lichen: *There's a study from work in Spain with ecologically similar lichen species and similar habitat, clay calcareous soils. They found water and glue were the two most effective. Scrambled egg lichen grows on soils that are pH7 or higher, really alkaline soils. A lot of the waterproof glues are quite acidic, I discovered, and also they have biocides in them.* Through trial and error using different types of glue, bookbinding glue was found to have the correct pH for the lichen and was also waterproof. Two hundred small pieces of the lichen were removed from Penhale in Cornwall, of which 160 have been transplanted into the chalky Breckland landscape.



## My Bookbinding Beginnings: Jane Sheppard

My start in bookbinding owes much to two people: Jacqui Clarkson and Helen Golding Miller. Jacqui and I first met on an enamelling course at Higham Hall (one of the few remaining adult residential colleges left in the UK: [check it out here](#)). We were both keen to get onto one of Higham's bookbinding courses but they were always fully booked. Whereas I just moaned about this, Jacqui was more proactive; she found and searched the SoB website for a tutor within a feasible distance who could offer 1-2 tuition. Enter Helen!

We already had dates booked for our first session with her when there was another, less welcome, entrant: Covid-2019! A situation none of us had encountered before. Undeterred (and after time to think) Helen offered to construct a package to send by post, with the offer of phone or Zoom assistance. Zoom, what's that? Something new for all three of us, but it worked and over the next six months we learned, remotely, how to construct single section notebooks, a slipcase to hold them, limp leather, cross structure and limp vellum bindings and finally a case binding.



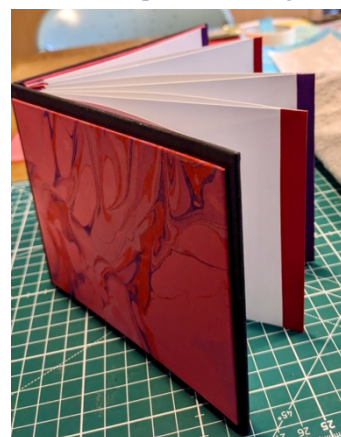
Above, Jane's pop-up slipcase in a box; below left, a first go at inlays; below centre, five bradel bindings; and below right, a concertina with suminagashi.

Eventually in mid-2021 we were able to meet in person, in Helen's garden studio, and continue to learn new techniques. During this time Helen often talked to us about the SoB, the regular meetings/workshops and the annual national events, dangling the carrots of opportunities to learn from a range of superb binders and meet suppliers. We soon joined up and haven't looked back.

I lack the necessary precision and good hand skills to ever be anything but an amateur, but the friends and family who are recipients of many of my bindings don't seem to realise this, thank goodness! Thanks to the SoB Kelsall NW2 workshops, Portico workshops, Higham and other workshops I now have over 24 bindings, cases and boxes that I can make, providing me with many opportunities to vary my gifts - and also to concentrate on the ones that give me most pleasure and success, whilst still leaving me the objective of improving at the others.

Meanwhile my downsizing house move means instead of a complete room for binding, all my kit needs to fit in the hall cupboard (alongside a mop and broom, but who needs house cleaning kit?). It has one benefit of making me much better organised! Another outcome of my recent move to Manchester, and its proximity to Salford, is that I've enrolled on the *Complete Book Artist* programme at the [Hot Bed Press](#).

The SoB has offered me so much more than workshop opportunities: talks, publications and national events have opened my eyes to a much wider bookbinding world. The wealth of experience of fellow members is just staggering. One of these days I might even feel competent enough to join DB as well . . .



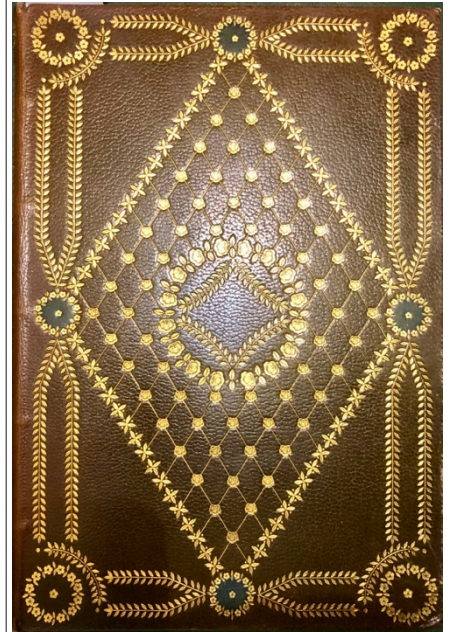
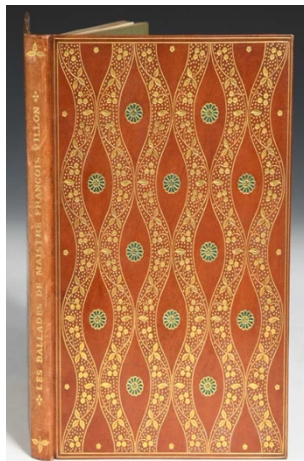


**Chris McNall writes:** I am a fan of political memorabilia, and, browsing an auction site for mentions of 'Gladstone' aka the Grand Old Man, came across a series of very attractively bound volumes, said to have been bound by one **Charles Elsdon Gladstone**. This led me to an intriguing article on the British Library's website, written by P J Marks, its Curator of Bookbindings: **The mysterious Captain Gladstone, RN - a bookbinding James Bond?** Gladstone was born in Salford in 1856, and joined the Navy as a cadet at the tender age of 14, before steadily rising through the ranks.

The article described Gladstone's well bound colourful goatskin book covers, displaying a range of finishing skills ... The bindings usually (though not exclusively) include all-over designs comprising small flower and leaf motifs, have smooth spines and elaborately decorated turn-ins. Which nicely describes a volume which I ended up being able, just about, to snaffle up: Alfred de Musset, *Histoire d'un Merle Blanc*, Paris 1904, (images opposite). It's typical Gladstone: powerfully symmetrical, with exquisite tooling (lots of laurel and roses), done with at least 8 tools, and the characteristic doublures (albeit filled-in with paper, and not the watered silk which some of his books have). The tiny initials **C.E.G** can be seen on the turn in under the bottom rosette. It is pebbled goatskin, with a solid gilt-edged block.

No-one knows when or where or how Gladstone acquired the skills to finish these books. He spent a lot of time at sea: months' long tours of duty, moving from one vessel to another. When onshore, he lived and had a family at Canning Street in Liverpool. Was there anyone in the north of England producing work life this? Bernard Middleton is said to have scoffed at the idea that Gladstone was responsible for these books. To my untutored eyes, they have a look of the work of Thomas Cobden-Sanderson and the Doves Press about them. I wonder whether any member of the Society has ever encountered any of these Gladstone bindings, or has any insight into their production?

For the full BL blog on Gladstone, [click here](#). More Gladstone bindings *below and right*.



### The Committee for 2025

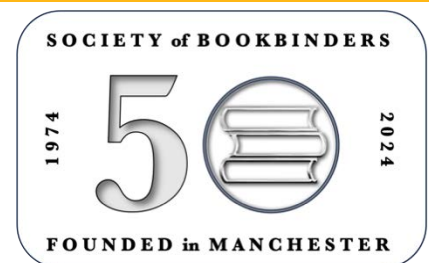
Chair & Newsletter Editor: Barry Clark ([barry@chorlton21.co.uk](mailto:barry@chorlton21.co.uk))

Secretary: Jacqueline Payne ([jacq.payne@oakbankmill.com](mailto:jacq.payne@oakbankmill.com))

Treasurer: Jeanne Pennington ([jeannebpennington@gmail.com](mailto:jeannebpennington@gmail.com))

Programme Organiser: Sue Wood ([swoosal@btinternet.com](mailto:swoosal@btinternet.com))

Outreach Lead: Catherine Garratt ([c Garratt2@googlemail.com](mailto:c Garratt2@googlemail.com))



the Society  
of Bookbinders



