



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Clear the decks it could be a busy bookbinding September!

Members diaries will already have Saturday 13 September pencilled in for **our regional Autumn Gathering**. A day of demos, talks and no doubt a beautiful display of members' bindings - the culmination of our 2025 Binding Project. There may be trade stands, and certainly a raffle, and . . . *more to come?*

And, recently announced in the national newsletter, the trustees are working towards **a national gathering of some sort, incorporating the national AGM, for the weekend of 20 & 21 September**. Almost since its founding in 1974 the society has organised a national event for members, and since 2002 it has been every year, alternating between the Conference and Seminar.

This alternating format has served the society well in the past, despite many members struggling to understand the difference between the two events! Essentially Seminar has been the *how-to-do-it* event, whilst Conference takes a much broader view also looking at the history and theory etc of bookbinding. When the long-time organisers of both events stepped down last year (they understandably decided they needed a break) it was an ideal time to review and refresh our national flagship event.

The trustees announced in April last year that they intended to consult the membership on the way forward. There seems to be widespread agreement that we need one unifying event that is a real coming together, to which all are committed. And it needs to be cheaper and more affordable for members. Two proposals for a future event have been made, both from members in our region. Whilst the wider consultation is still to take place, at a recent meeting the trustees decided to organise an interim event *with talks and demonstrations, a food offering, and exhibitors*. It's scheduled for the weekend of 20 & 21 September. *Save the date?*



The weekend of **6 & 7 September** sees the return of the **Wales Artists' Book Fair** (image above). Now in its third year, the organisers have invited regional members to take a stall at the event in Newtown, Powys. A bargain at £30 for the two days, the deadline for applications is 8 June. For more info and booking details [click here](#). With over 20 stalls, demos, workshops and the Newtown Food Festival running alongside it will be a great day out for all.

We visit the **North East Wales Archives and the Gladstone Library in Hawarden Flintshire on Wednesday 6 August**. Maybe take advantage of the library's almost unique feature: one can stay overnight. For those of us travelling some distance it may be an ideal way to have a leisurely start to our visit? There are rooms available on Tuesday 5 August (with dining in the restaurant 6-7.15pm). [Click here](#) for more info and on-line booking. Our visit will include lunch at the library (pay on the day).

Tudor Style Leather Covering: a workshop with Dominic Riley

Not much could drag me away from the garden on a warm and sunny April Saturday, but a workshop with Dominic Riley will always have a 100% success. I was therefore delighted to get a place on his Tudor Style workshop.



Tudor Style was invented by Paul Delrue and first used on a book of Shakespeare's Sonnets in 2001. This is where the name comes from, although stylistically it doesn't in any way suggest the Tudor period. Dominic's workshop was part instruction of this surprisingly accessible method of board covering, and part tribute to his former mentor, Paul. Our practical exercises were interspersed with short slide shows throughout the day on Paul's own Tudor Style bindings, as well as some created by Dominic and other binders over the years. The anecdotal contributions from members who knew Paul well were also welcome additions to Dominic's presentations.

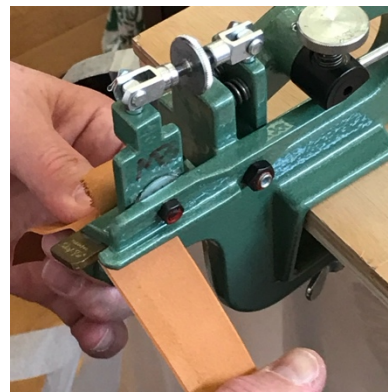
We all started by learning (or refreshing ourselves on) how to use our Scharf-fix or Brockman paring machines. This was particularly useful to me as my kind desk-mate pointed out that I had put a vital element of my Brockman onto the blade the wrong way, which explained my failure to pare properly. It was quite a sight, seeing 13 paring machines set out at the end of the hall, all ready for action.

Goatskin is always used in Tudor Style, and thanks to Hewit's (and Dominic's) generosity, there were several different colours of leather to play around with. The leather would usually be pared to 0.7mm to cover the spine, with subsequent strips pared to 0.5mm thickness. Each strip is pared, sanded using a very ingenious method of sandpaper attached to the end of a strong cardboard tube, measured with a micrometer and then cut to size. The first cut is cut straight, the leather dampened, a mix of paste with a little PVA added (for speed of grab) applied, then placed on the board and turned in. A mark is made on this strip with a sharp bone folder to indicate the line against which the second strip should be placed. This second strip has a 'leading edge' cut very precisely at 45 degrees. It is then laid over strip one, along the mark made, to produce a line of double thickness on the left side, with a single thickness directly attached to the board on the other. This produces the distinctive textured finish which suggests that the board has been bandaged in leather. The 45-degree angle allows the leading edge to flow nicely into the score mark made on the previous strip, especially with a little gentle easing with the folder.

Turning in each of the free edges of the leather can either be done directly over the previous strip, which produces a kind of crenelated board edge. However, I chose to peel back and trim the previous strip edge to allow the next one to fall flat on the edge of the board. I felt it gave a neater finish.

Dominic also demonstrated secondary overlay application - a rather more advanced method of achieving a pleasing woven-looking finish. I think I'll leave that one for a while though!

It was a lovely day, full of learning, chat and laughter, as I have found all my visits to Kelsall workshops and meetings to be. Plus the opportunity to (over-)spend on the wonderful array of equipment, tools, materials and books on sale at bargain prices. Many thanks to all those involved in putting it together for us.

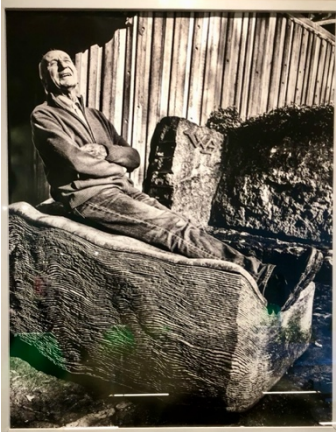


Michael Burke giving a demo of paring with the Scharf-fix.

Dominic using his ingenious tool for sanding thin strips of leather.



My Tudor Style panel created at the workshop.



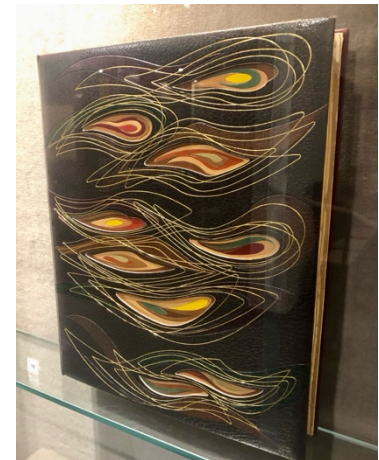
Chris McNall looks back on a pre-Christmas visit to the Wittockiana Museum and Gallery:

we decided to grab a few days away before Christmas, and lit on the idea of getting the Eurostar to Brussels, to visit some Belgian Christmas markets - Brussels, Antwerp, and Bruges. All were excellent: we sampled some terrific waffles (each city has its own ... we couldn't tell the difference), lots of moules-frites, excellent beer, and even some excellent Belgian wine (more and more is being produced in areas previously unsuitable for vines).

But, waffles, mussels, beer and wine aside, Brussels is an attractive destination in that it has Europe's only dedicated book arts and bookbinding museum - the Bibliotheca Wittockiana ([for more click here](#)). The eponymous Michael Wittock was a businessman who made his money in textiles (just like our own John Rylands). He was also a bibliophile. In 1983, he threw open his collection to the public, housed in a purpose-built contemporary building a short bus ride from the centre of Brussels. It is altogether very discreet - but your eye might be caught by the sculpture of a book (inside is a photo of its founder, lounging on it, *image opposite*).

They have some fantastic stuff in there: Grolier bindings galore (naturally), and a lot of handsome C19 stuff. We particularly enjoyed their exhibition about surrealist bookbinding, with a small but excellent selection on display. We liked the striking Max-Headroom-esque 1988 binding by Michelle de Bellefroid (gilding by Anne Thimmesch Dor) (*right*); and the magnificent 1957 Paul Bonet binding (*far right*). Just look at those swooping lines. Food for thought when it comes to our 2025 binding project?

They hold regular bookbinding and gilding classes (a good chance to improve your French?). When we went, they were hosting a bookbinding class in the studio - peeping in, it looked as if they were making and using maquilletes for some gold tooling. Someone was wielding a very large fillet, and looking scared!



Joan Duncan writes: Last year one of our esteemed members (aka Val Corrigan) talked me into enrolling on a ten-week evening class in basic printing. Two of those weeks were dedicated to lino cutting. Totally ignoring my lack of experience I launched into producing a "complete book". The artist's book has always excited me. Having offcuts of cardboard I decided that I would make use of them to create the pages. Being very new to the art form, I decided that basic and simple would be my priority. Playing with layout and having just one word per page seemed as good a start as any and I suppose proved to be so. However I included some calligraphy alongside the lino prints - to add interest and diversity - and the odd gold embellishment. All lettering was designed to cause consideration rather than being instantly obvious.

Covering and titling the book were my next considerations. I asked the experienced printers if they had ever used lino blocks on bookcloth - and was not surprised to hear that no-one had. Not in the least daunted I cut my title block which is **Big Bold & Brash**. With some trepidation but more excitement I sallied forth. I was pleasantly surprised with the result as the cloth I used had a definite but subtle texture. It worked a treat and I could proceed with assembling the project. Titling before assembly is not the most usual but I felt that would work best for me!! Next I had to give consideration to binding. With cardboard pages I felt that to pamphlet bind them individually was what was needed. It was a fun project and I enjoyed and learnt a lot from the experience.

My Bookbinding Beginnings: Debbie Matthews

Following a career in the public sector, I was delighted to be able to pursue my creative interests. I have always had a passion for paper and a fascination for stunning marbled papers. I enjoy mixed media art and particularly like to use my own collaged printed papers in my books. I am a member of Southport Contemporary Arts, where I attend a Creative Textiles Class.

So where did my bookbinding journey begin? In autumn 2019 I enrolled on a weekend Marbling Course held at The Grange in Ellesmere. The amazing course tutor, Jill Sellars, introduced me to the delightful art of marbling. By lunch time on the first day we had already tackled a Spanish wave. I was captivated by the process and throughout the weekend we practised a variety of techniques. We used different weights and colours of paper and we were encouraged to experiment. We also had the opportunity to visit the extensive bindery on site; it was an impressive environment full of amazing equipment. I left The Grange armed with a plethora of marbled papers. It was very likely that these beauties would be kept 'for best', looked at and not utilised!

In 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear and I suddenly had time on my hands. Inspired by my marbled papers and the Grange Bindery, I purchased an on-line beginner's bookbinding course and kit. I worked through the content, following the clear instructions of Yvette Jah. The on-line process allowed me to pause and replay sections that initially appeared complicated. There was also the option of a private Facebook group to help out with queries. My interest was sparked, and I was keen to learn more.

I continued to find on-line opportunities to develop my skills and create simple books. And in 2021, I attended my first in person bookbinding weekend course. It was held at Madingley Hall in Cambridge. The course tutor was the very talented Helen Perry ([click here](#) for her website). I created four books during that weekend, and a slip case in which to store them. I have had the luxury of attending a number of Helen's courses and there are still a few on my wish list for the future . . .

As a novice in the art of bookbinding I am keen to learn and develop my skills. The Society of Bookbinders had been mentioned to me on a number of occasions. However, every time I looked at the literature, the newsletters and the amazing achievements of the members, I felt too much of a beginner. After much deliberation, I finally took the plunge and joined. I was delighted by the welcome from the region and I really look forward to getting to Kelsall soon and meeting everyone. In the meantime, I will continue to work on my imposter syndrome [Ed: *the images of your work Debbie show that you are no imposter!*].



Left: the green coptic binding was created on a workshop with Gillian Stewart of JuJu Books; the orange was my homework. *Below:* leather and vinyl journals created as gifts for friends & family. *Below left:* the Artists Collection in a slip case from a Helen Perry workshop. *Below right:* some collage-covered journals. *And bottom:* this little collection is the result of my very first online course with Yvette Jah.



Something old . . . something new? And all in blue!

We have been contacted by the wife of a bookbinder who due to ill health is no longer able to bind - and she would like to move on his bookbinding equipment, tools and materials. The kit is in Chepstow, south Wales (NP16 6LJ). We have a list of the items (opposite) and some photos (below).

If you are interested please contact Susan Roeder direct on 07807 418385.



- Print per box : £50 (6, 10, 14 pt. C18)
- Board cutter: £75
- Handmade paper : 5 sheets, £20
- Backing hammer x 3 : £10 each
- Cloth / textured paper per roll : £20
- Hide per skin x 4 : £75 each
- Leather bundles (5 pieces) : £75 per bundle
- Marshalls heater : £75
- Parchment : £75
- A5 notebooks ready to bind : £2.50 each
- Backing boards : £20 pair
- Guillotine (cast iron, very heavy) : £350
- White-ish paper (not brilliant white) : A3 & A4; some handmade
- And a lot of marbled paper.

And the new:

Jacqueline Payne has forwarded this from the latest e-newsletter of Kendal-based Paper Mill Direct. The wood-free Sugar Cane Copier paper has an attractive natural soft white shade achieved through a chemical-bleach-free process. Unusually the A4 packs are short grain, great for A5 notebooks, but it is only 75gsm. For more info [click here](#). Sign up for their newsletter and your first order attracts a 10% discount. They do have a lot of goodies on offer!

Ledesma
NAT
 PAPEL NATURAL
 Sugar Cane Paper
 75gsm



100% Sugar Cane
0% Tree Fibre
0% Bleaching Chemicals

Renewable and sustainable, sugar cane is the perfect alternative to wood-derived fibres for paper production. Sugar cane is infinitely renewable and, as it crops annually it absorbs CO₂, making it a valuable tool in the fight against the greenhouse effect



The arts and crafts *Court Barn Museum* in the Cotswolds town of Chipping Campden has recently uploaded this on-line exhibition to their website ([click here](#)). The Museum's volunteer historian Penny Nuttall explains that the Bindery at the Guild of Handicraft in the town (1902-05) was run by Annie Power who had trained briefly with Douglas Cockerell; two of the three other binders were also women. More well known perhaps is Cotswolds-based bookbinder Katharine Adams ([click here for her Wikipedia entry](#)), one of the most accomplished binders of the period. However the on-line piece also tells the bigger story of women's involvement in bookbinding more generally.

Across the Irish Sea the National Museum of Ireland's exhibition ***Words on the Wave: Ireland and St Gallen in Early Medieval Europe*** features the Lough Kinsale Book-Shrine (*image opposite*), the earliest and largest known container for a sacred text - on display for the first time following a major conservation project. It had been discovered broken at the bottom of a Longford lake. Many of the manuscripts on display are returning to Ireland for the first time in a 1000 years. Irish monks had taken them to Europe to protect them from Viking raids and to spread Christianity. The seventeen loans from Switzerland's Abbey of St Gall are part of a *landmark exhibition that will combine artefacts and parchments to recreate a sense of Ireland's golden age as the "land of saints and scholars", when missionary monks established monasteries across Europe.* More of the Guardian's story [here](#). The exhibition runs until 24 October.



Closer to home, Leeds University Special Collections recently acquired at auction a previously unknown 450-year-old treatise on cheese. ***A pamphlet compiled of Cheese*** probably dates from the 1580s, consists of 112 pages and is bound in vellum (*image left*). The binding is described as: *Sixteenth-century full limp parchment; laced case binding, with three leather strips visible at hinges; single gilt fillet to form an outer border, then an inner border, with leafy tools to the corners of the inner panel; gilt lion rampant tool to centre of both covers; sewn onto five cord supports; spine smooth and decorated with double gilt fillets; originally tied, possibly with silk ties, now wanting; the front cover has been stapled with seven staples to hold the parchment turn-ins down . . . The paper bears a watermark of the arms of the University of Paris, signed S[imeon] Nivelle, similar to Briquet 1845, found by Briquet on papers in use between 1580 and 1595. Leaf size: 171 mm x 107 mm. Text frame: 129 mm x 91 mm. Food historians believe it's probably the first comprehensive academic study of a single foodstuff to be written in the English language.* More info & images on the University website ([here](#)).

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the Society
of Bookbinders



