



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Autumn Gathering price cut!

The region's funds are healthy, times are tough, and the national membership fee has increased by at least a tenner - so bag yourself a place at our Autumn Gathering at the **knock down price of just £10!** Our flagship event is for and about members, and the NW2 committee has decided that we don't need to make a profit nor break even, so for all advance bookings the charge is now £10; it will be £20 if you turn up on the day. It's not a workshop, so there is no free observer option. As well as demos and illustrated talks, we will have a raffle, a trade stand from Hewit's and of course the display of members responses to our 2025 regional binding project. We may add more attractions as we go. Refreshments provided, but bring your own lunch as usual.

We're nearly half-way through the year, so here's a reminder of what is still to come:

14/06: Lori Sauer: **The Magic Box**

12/07: Lynne Connolly: **Cyanotypes**

Wed 06/08: Mark Allen: **Visit to the North East Wales Archives and the Gladstone Library**

13/09: **Our Autumn Gathering**

11/10: Barry Clark: **Creating Multiples**

08/11: Ruth Brown: **Creating and using your own book cloth**

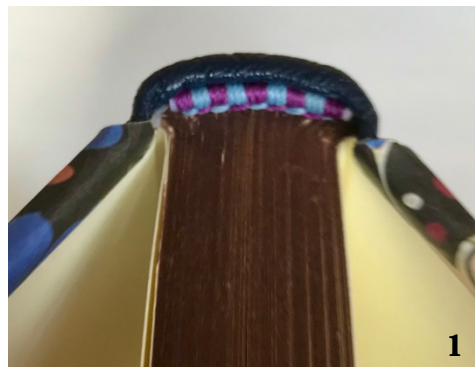
29/11: Kathy Abbott: **Stub Binding** (a second chance to book for our on-line workshop)

06/12: **Christmas social at Kelsall**

Stop Press: Lynne Connolly is now unable to take the July workshop. However Lynne recommended Mary Thomas as an ideal replacement. Mary tells us: *I have been running workshops for a few years now for groups and galleries. I supply everything that is needed for it. If you would like to see some of my work I am on Insta ([click here](#)) and FB ([click here](#)).*

For the full details of each event [click here](#), and for bookings e-mail Sue (swoosal@btinternet.com).

A Kelsall workshop review



We are exceptionally lucky to number some renowned design bookbinders amongst our regional membership. This gives us unparalleled access to the knowledge and craft of some of the giants of the bookbinding world. After Dominic Riley's tour-de-force on the Delrue-invented 'Tudor' binding (not forgetting Michael Burke's magisterial demonstration of the Scharf-fix machine) we were treated to a **two-day fine binding masterclass from Glenn Malkin on the three-piece, boards-off, binding [1]**. This structure is a great favourite of design bookbinders not least because it gives the freedom to experiment - successfully or not - with covering and decorating boards as your heart desires before they are attached.

This workshop dealt with every step of binding a book in this way, with each step being demonstrated by Glenn beforehand. Taking old Folio Society volumes as our starting point we detached the boards, pulled the books and rounded them before adding some endpapers, lining the spine with Fraynot, and adding a pair of hand-stitched two or three colour silk endbands using a simplified technique (one so simple even my four thumbs could manage). These endbands, sewn over a prepared jute core, look fantastic, and making them yourself means that you are completely liberated as to the exact colours and proportions [2]. We then added a leather 'skirt' - a short length of leather, matching the spine leather, designed to hide any sight of the kraft paper hollow - to the foot of each endband, and ended with a one-on two-off three-quarter hollow [3] and a layer of smooth watercolour paper.

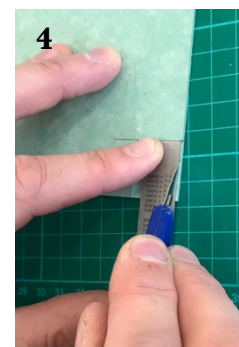
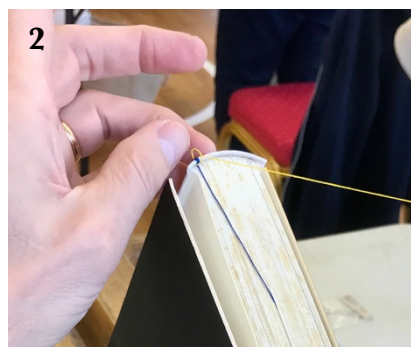
Over the page for day two . . .

The stage set, day two raised the curtain on more of Glenn's techniques. We began with careful delamination of millboard inner boards, stripping off slithers to form shallow recesses for the Fraynot and the leather turn-ins [4], so that these would not be visible under the paste-down or add bulk to the edges of the finished boards. I should add that Glenn - nothing if not meticulously prepared - had made up a personal pack for each of us consisting of the whole suite of made-to-measure boards and other components for our own individual books. These millboard inner boards are then attached, but using a spacer - to be removed at the end - to preserve the movement in the joints. Then came the leather work for a wide spine piece: pasting, fixing it to the spine and across an inch or so of the inner board, and turning in at the head and foot using paste as lubricant. This is always challenging, but, as Glenn reminded us: *you are in control of the leather; the leather is not in control of you!* And using paste gives a decent working window. I found that the hardest part of this was rolling the leather into the hollow, preparatory to forming the headcaps and the ears by pulling the leather out a bit and turning it over the endbands with a spatula or narrow folder. Having now done this once, I think that a bit more practice is required to reach that 'Eureka' moment. Others seemed to be having an easier time of it!

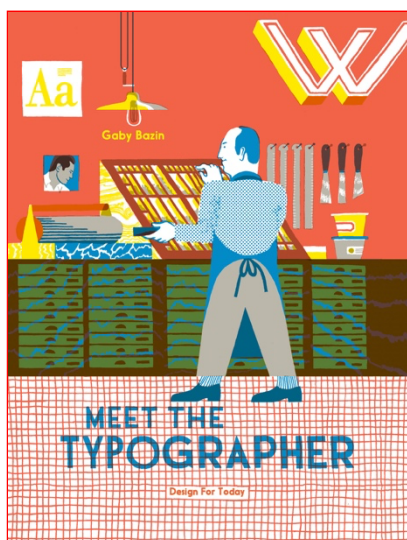
It was (relatively) plain sailing from there: we filled-in the inner board with card, to level it off, and then attached our outer (covered [5]) boards to the inner boards, just 3mm off the shoulder, and pasted down. Et voilà: a completed book!

I learnt a lot, including some techniques which I will try and carry across into my regular binding; and, of course, there are few things more congenial than doing some bookbinding in the company of like-minded enthusiasts.

With thanks to Chris McNall for this review of our May two-day workshop



Above left: Glenn's ingenious 'no fail' approach to hand-sewn endbands: the core is pre-made and glued to the spine! *Above right:* just a slither off the inner board to take the thickness of the leather turn-in, fine bindings benefit from this attention to detail. *Below:* the three-quarter hollow is glued to the spine. *Bottom:* Glenn's diagram to show the cut needed on the final board covering to achieve a neat spine-end corner.



Design for Today fans will need no introduction to **Meet The Typographer** by Gaby Bazin. Selected by *The Times* in their round-up of *Art Books of The Year*, it offers a colourful insight to the world of typography and book making, suitable for all ages. The illustrations are by award winning French illustrator Gaby Bazin. The blurb tells us: *it's a colourful and accessible guide to the art of the typographer, covering the journey and history of type from engraving on stone, wooden Chinese blocks, then to Gutenberg's movable wooden type, and through to metal type, font sizes, and to the mechanical printing of today. The book is lithographed using three colour separations on uncoated paper, as befits a book on printing.* SoB member and Incline Press proprietor Graham Moss was their typographical adviser and comments that: *the artwork is a delight, somehow very much not a typical style for UK readers, and entirely appropriate.* Available from Design for Today ([click here](#)), £16.50 hardback.

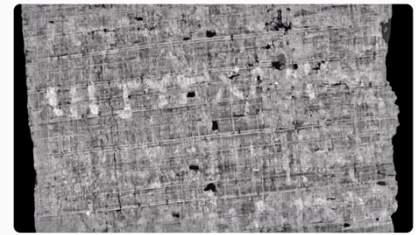
A miscellany of curious items

A charred scroll recovered from a Roman villa that was buried under ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted nearly 2,000 years ago has been identified as the influential work of an ancient Greek philosopher.

Oxford's Bodleian Library have been working with the UK's national synchrotron facility to digitally 'unwrap' the badly burnt scroll from the Roman town of Herculaneum. The document, which looks like a lump of charcoal (*opposite*), is too fragile to ever be physically opened.

Nicole Gilroy, head of book conservation at the Bodleian, commented: *We've never been convinced before that any of the techniques would be safe enough or effective enough to get any information from the scrolls.* But now scientists and researchers have discovered the title and author on the scroll after X-raying the carbonised papyrus and virtually unwrapping it. Traces of ink lettering visible in the X-ray images revealed the text to be part of a multi-volume work, *On Vices*, written by the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus in the first century BC.

For the full BBC story on-line [click here](#), and for a short BBC film explaining the fascinating science behind the process [click here](#).



Every now and again something really unusual is offered to me to repair, **writes Barry Clark**. This rather cheap everyday printing of *The Poems of John Milton* (George Newnes 1901) must have been re-bound at the time of its publishing - with a highly decorated paper binding, and unusual [gauffering](#) to the top edge. Possibly by an amateur binder, or a trade binder in his own time?



Book now for the next SoB Wednesday Webinar on 4 June: **Handmade Paper** with Gangolf Ulbricht. For more details and to book (for free) [click here](#).



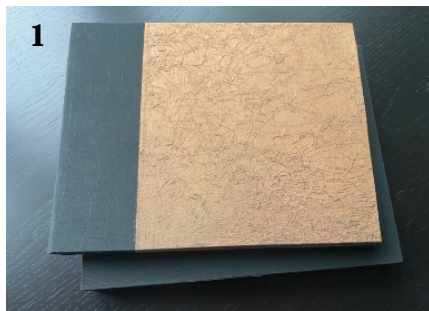
Tim Foster recently acquired this highly decorative book and paper press (*left*) once used on a Royal Navy training ship for boys, HMS Lion. Described by the auction house as: *fashioned in ash or possibly fruitwood, painted and lacquered, with full and good provenance . . . removed when the ship was brought to Devon for scrapping and salvage.* It was manufactured in the mid/late nineteenth century by [Thomas Bradford & Co](#) of Salford and Manchester. Maybe Tim's item will soon like the one on the right, a fully restored and very elegant press from the same maker?



My Bookbinding Beginnings: Donna O'Reilly

Creative arts have always been a part of my life and, although a passion, I never had the opportunity to pursue it as a career: it has been a constant hobby. As my children became adults, and I had more time, I decided to develop my skills and work towards a professional standard in my work. I am very much a traditionalist in my approach, attracted to heritage crafts. After attending several short courses in printmaking, bookbinding and marbling I undertook a year-long course in traditional printmaking at the [Hot Bed Press](#) in Salford.

I have always enjoyed the wide diversity of these crafts, and the possibilities of combining the different processes and techniques in projects. However, reflecting back I developed an ambition to master bookbinding, alongside marbling to make my own endpapers, and down the line maybe I could bring in the printmaking skills I had acquired. Little did I realise at this time the depth of bookbinding and how much there is to learn, not to mention the delicate balance and skills required for marbling.



After learning some skills online, my first binding was the Maureen Duke foldback sketchbook [1]. Looking to push my skills further, I joined the Society of Bookbinders in January 2024. What I found was not only opportunity to develop professional skills, but also an amazing network of people who were so friendly, welcoming and willing to share their knowledge. I was very fortunate that within this group is marbler Jill Sellers who has been very kind in supporting me in my marbling pursuits [2].



Whilst a member of the SoB I have learnt various bindings and techniques: from learning to sharpen paring knives and how to pare leather, edge decoration, butterfly stitch books [3], Italian paper case bindings, stub bindings, three piece slot books, Tudor style leather coverings, making an off board binding, alternative bradel bindings, artist books, stacker boxes and traditional Japanese pouch books. I have attended a lot of Kelsall workshops since joining!

I was also at Kelsall for the 50th Anniversary Day in July, and I joined the visit to Manchester central library to view our two anniversary exhibitions - one a collection of designer bindings organised by Dominic Riley and the other by Catherine Garrett taking us through the journey of the book - followed by the session where we were able to handle some of the library's extensive private press collection. Further afield I attended the York Conference in the Summer 2024.

I have also started to share my love of bookbinding. Living just a few miles away I helped out at our SoB stand at the Poynton heritage craft fair last year [4, Donna *left* and Catherine *right*], teaching members of the public to make single section pamphlets. And I was back doing the same at our anniversary demo days at Manchester central library. Later this year I will be assisting at our beginners' workshops at the Portico library in Manchester.

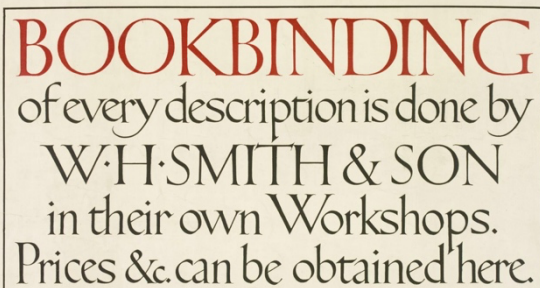
I feel that I am still a beginner in bookbinding and marbling, but my knowledge and skills in both areas are improving. My hope is that one day I will make the transition from my current career into working as a professional bookbinder and marbler. For now, I feel very privileged to be a member of such a fantastic society, whose members are so generous in sharing their knowledge and skills.



Spotlight on: WH Smith

EST • 1792

Few bookbinders or booklovers will be mourning the loss on the High Street of WH Smith. However it's an opportune time to look back on its rather special connection with good design, fine printing and indeed bookbinding. Until its recent closure the firm's design history was on full display in the company museum - in our region, on the High Street in Newtown, mid Wales.



BOOKBINDING
of every description is done by
W·H·SMITH & SON
in their own Workshops.
Prices &c. can be obtained here.

Founded in 1792, a fourth generation Smith in 1893 brought in his Oxford friend Charles Harry St John Hornby (1867-1946). Hornby transformed the business and created the High Street presence that is only now being dismantled. However Hornby was much more than a brilliant business strategist: he also appreciated good modern design, and that meant the Arts and Crafts. He commissioned in 1903 new lettering for the shopfronts by Eric Gill (later available as Gill Fascia), in 1905 a new oval 'egg' monogram (*image over page*), and many decorative tile designs by top ceramicists Carter & Co of Poole. Some of these shop fronts and interiors still survive. One of the best examples is the Newtown shop itself (now closed), dating from 1927, the whole shop was a living museum, with the company museum upstairs, on the first floor, in a space that was once a WH Smith Lending Library (yes, they did that too). Other fine examples still exist [here and there](#) (for now at least). In-house architect Frank Bayliss ensured a consistent and high standard throughout the WH Smith estate. Stockport's *Modern Moom* offers a gorgeous on-line tour of the museum that is no more, [click here](#); the contents are now in store. And the Newtown Town Council website tells the history of the museum, [click here](#). However Bayliss was much more than the in-house architect. He wrote substantial guides on shop management for staff (*The Shop Managers' Guide*, *The Master Salesman*) to ensure consistent customer service. The latter included no less than 58 pages on bookbinding, including three pages on *How to take orders for bookbinding*. *The Shop Managers' Guide* advises: *you can sell good binding if you yourself appreciate what this means to a valuable book*. At that time WH Smith offered a full in-house bookbinding and repair service (*see image above*). Those were the days!

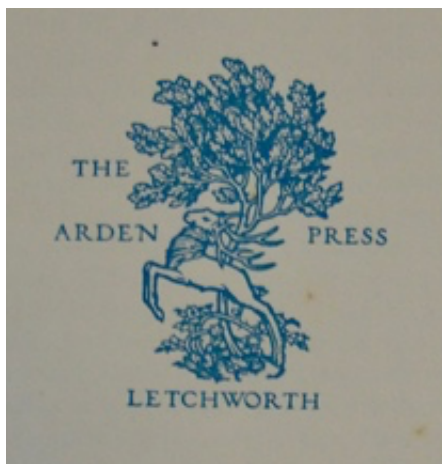


So why was it that WH Smith excelled in quality bookbinding in the early 1900s?

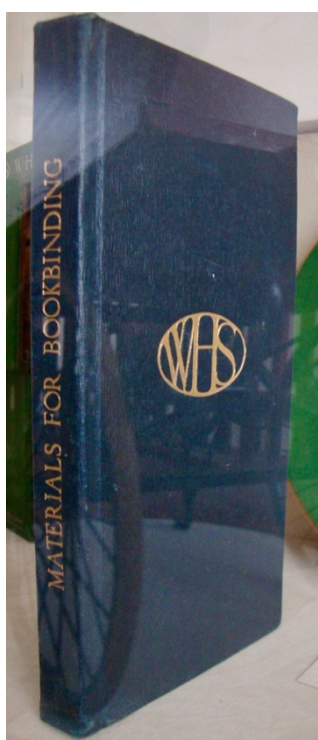
Hornby established a WH Smith bindery just off Drury Lane in London in 1902. He soon recruited [Douglas Bennett Cockerell](#) (1870-1945) as the Bindery Controller/Manager (*opposite*). It was an ideal choice. Cobden-Sanderson is often credited as the pioneer of the revival of craft bookbinding. However it was his apprentice at the Doves Bindery, Cockerell, who became the principal disseminator of best practice - though his teaching at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and by the publication of his *Bookbinding and the Care of Books*. Not only that but Cockerell wanted to build bridges between the new breed of art binders and the trade. At the WH Smith bindery Cockerell supervised the full range of work - high end one-off bindings, repair work and ordinary trade binding. He devised improved binding techniques for everyday well-used books that we still use today. Whilst Cockerell believed *that binding can be, and is, produced that is sound in construction, and pleasant to look at, and at the same time reasonably cheap* he personally continued to create beautiful one-off bindings (*opposite bottom*). Should you come across a binding with the *Bound by WH Smith & Sons* blind stamp on the rear turn in, then snap it up; it may well be by Cockerell himself. The bindery moved to model new premises at the first garden city, Letchworth, in 1907 and Cockerell stayed through to the outbreak of the first world war.



Interesting fact: it was WH Smith who created a standard numbering system for books in 1966, which became the world standard in 1970 (ISBN).



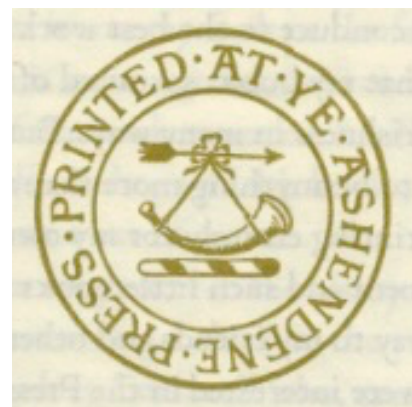
Above: the Arden Press printer's mark.
Left: an item from the WH Smith museum, an in-house bookbinding materials catalogue. Right: a Staffordshire plate showing Hornby working at his press, also from the museum.
Far right: the Ashendene Press watermark, used in all their books printed between 1896 and 1900.



Charles Harry St John Hornby was also passionate about printing. Inspired by his friends' private presses (William Morris/Kelmscott and Emery Walker/Doves) he established his own press in 1895, printing by hand himself on an Albion Press in outbuildings in his father's garden. He soon moved his [Ashendene Press](#), to his own house in Chelsea. Hornby used paper from J. Batchelor & Sons, vellum from H. Band & Co, and had two typefaces specially designed for Ashendene. His highly regarded limited editions were bound by Zaehnsdorf initially and later, of course, by the WH Smith bindery. For his own one-off fine bindings Hornby usually used the highly regarded Cotswolds-based craft bookbinder Katherine Adams.

Ashendene Press was a personal passion project for Hornby. However he also wanted everyday printing to be good printing. And WH Smith ran a large commercial print business where Hornby insisted on high standards of design and workmanship. This was reinforced by the building of a new printing works at Letchworth Garden City, and the purchase of the Arden Press in 1908 ([click here: V&A examples](#)). Hornby, and others involved in the small private presses, had a significant influence on the quality of commercial printing in the first half of the twentieth century.

All long gone, WH Smith rip.



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the Society
of Bookbinders



