



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

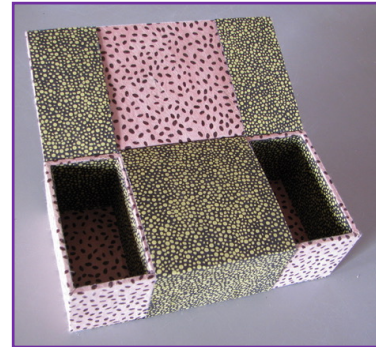
### *Our Autumn Gathering takes central stage, reluctantly*

Our regional flagship event of the year, our Autumn Gathering at Kelsall on Saturday 13 September, has become the 'go to' event following a recent national decision *not* to proceed with a national conference / seminar / gathering in 2025. The Trustees had announced 20/21 September as their preferred date, but everything had been left too late to book an appropriate venue with a sufficiently attractive programme to proceed. Reluctantly the National Management Committee and Trustees agreed, on 5 June, that the only offer on the table was *too little and too late*. The Trustees are committed to a national residential event in 2026; and there will need to be an AGM in some form later this year.

Our own regional Autumn Gathering is in part a response to the success of, and feedback from, our Anniversary Day in July last year. Again we will have **trade stands** from Hewit's and Harmatan, and a **raffle** with excellent prizes. The committee have now decided to add in a **Silent Auction**. Do you have items that you are willing to donate to the raffle or the Silent Auction? If so, do get in touch ([barry@chorlton21.co.uk](mailto:barry@chorlton21.co.uk)). We will have a non-competitive exhibition/display of members' responses to **our Binding Project: The Northern Art Workers' Guild and the Arts and Crafts movement in Manchester** - with all exhibitors' names going into the hat with a chance to win a copy of the new edition of Jen Lindsay's book **Fine Bookbinding**.

All of the above of course are the *fringe events*! The day itself consists of an **illustrated talk** (on *publishers' Arts and Crafts book covers*), and **two demonstrations**: one on the *craquellé* and another on the *tree calf* decorative processes.

**And all this for just a tenner! Get booked in with Sue** ([swoosal@btinternet.com](mailto:swoosal@btinternet.com)).



### *A Kelsall workshop review*

If there's one thing that's certain about **Lori Sauer's Magic Box workshop**, it's that the box is indeed magical - both in its construction and the way it makes you approach creativity. The workshop provided an exciting introduction to the art of box-making, and by the end of the day, every participant left with a wonderful, completed project (albeit after a few brain-fogging moments of confusion!).

The first *magic trick* of the day was the box itself. The workshop centred around creating a box with a unique dual-opening lid - a design that seemed to make sense on paper but turned out to be far more complex than anticipated. I was sure it was just a matter of following the logical steps, but it soon became clear that it was a far more complex proposition. The real puzzle lay in figuring out which direction each paper should face, how they should align, and when to cut (and, more importantly, *when not to*). As someone who is known to rush through things, this experience was a gentle but firm reminder to take it slow. If you didn't follow the instructions *precisely*, you might end up with a box that simply refused to open *properly*. I certainly have a new variation on a popular old saying - mine is: *test twice and glue once*. Although it was more like a dozen tests before I finally got everything in the right place!

*This magical journey continues over the page . . .*

**The magical journey continues:** The sequence of events began with assembling the basic box shape from the pieces Lori had carefully pre-cut for us, and I was feeling rather proud of myself for making my first ever box shape. We then moved into selecting papers and preparing to cover the tray. Choosing the right paper was a challenge in itself - I spent far too long debating between textures, patterns, and colours. Eventually, though, I made my decision, and the paper was ready to meet the box.



Lori demonstrated her method of covering the tray, sharing tips that I'll definitely use in future projects. With my brain full of what to cut, not cut, mitre and stick, just for the covering of the tray, I had a preview of the fun that was to come . . . There was a short reprieve with covering the lid and dividers, where I began to feel that I had some ability to make this work. However, it wasn't long before the real challenge kicked in as we moved on to wrapping the sides of the box and lid, creating that innovative two-way opening system. Getting everything lined up properly - particularly on the lid that had to open two ways was a new experience for me and one that I'm not sure I'm keen to repeat too soon! The biggest brain ache came with ensuring the papers lined up seamlessly and that I wasn't cutting in the wrong place. There were more than a few *oops* moments, as I had to go back and check and check again, but with patience (and a bit of support from fellow workshop-goers), I managed to keep going without completely losing my mind.



By the time the workshop ended, I felt a huge sense of accomplishment, despite the occasional frustration. The finished box is something I am really happy with, and more importantly, I learned valuable skills that I'm excited to apply in the future. The best part? The endless possibilities for future designs and ability to be innovative in future attempts. Lori's instructions had emphasised the opportunities to personalise and change things, and I found myself envisioning all sorts of possible applications of the skills on other boxes, and ways to add new elements in the future.

This was certainly a challenging project for me - perhaps a little ambitious for a first box, especially with the lid's dual-opening complexity. But even though there was some fiddling, and at times much frustration, the experience was thoroughly enjoyable. I left the workshop with a finished piece that I'm much happier with than I expected, and a much better understanding of the craft. I'll certainly be returning to and adapting the skills learned in this workshop to my own projects. Now to go off and find little things to store in my newly created box!

An on-line tutorial for a variation of this magic box structure is available [here](#).







**Val Corrigan writes:** recently I have been collaborating with [Dapper Notes](#) of New Jersey. I supplied them with a collection of Herb Garden related artwork and they made the notebooks. Although only simple single section books they put a great deal of effort into their making and presentation. The cover is printed on to linen out-of-house, but the rest is done by Dapper Notes. Each notebook is enclosed within a folded box, complete with bookmark and sticker. For a fascinating video of Dapper Notes small-scale batch production process incorporating Val's artwork, [click here](#).

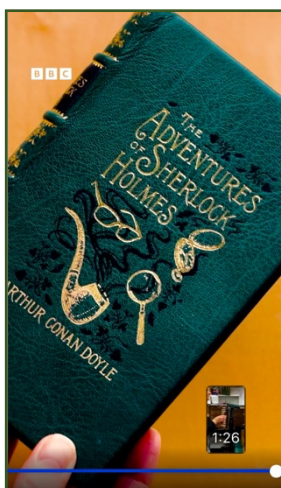


**Peter Criddle** recently found this photo in a rummage at home: source unknown, bindery unknown, date unknown. Can you throw any light on it?

And from **Tim Foster:** this Victorian line roller came up for auction recently and went for nearly £80, the first I have ever seen. Regretfully I was the under bidder!



**And that old arsenic chestnut returns!** Most bookbinders are aware that C19 books covered in an emerald green bookcloth *may* contain arsenic (used with copper as a pigment). As a precaution many libraries have removed books from circulation. However researchers at the University of St Andrews have perfected a hand-held device that can detect the presence of arsenic in a fraction of a second. For more on this story [click here](#).



Has anybody else spotted these delightful **BBC The Rebound** clips on Facebook? A well-known celeb selects a book precious to them, and a bookbinder rebinds it in an interesting way. Take a look at one [here!](#)

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The #bookbinding process is beautiful to watch 🙌

This time on The Rebound: **Wainwright Bookbinding** takes us back in time with this era-inspired rebind of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Widdicombe...*

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**Lynn Kingston**  
I love this. As a student in Liverpool, I did book binding. It is such a skill that must be preserved.  
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**David Thornton**

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**THE REBOUND**  
Part 1: The Process

0:05 / 2:01

A Victorian-inspired rebinding of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes - ...

## My Bookbinding Beginnings: Laura Roberts

***We continue with our monthly profile of a regional member. This month we meet one of our very recent joiners, barely six months a member and new to bookbinding too. We look forward to welcoming Laura to a Kelsall workshop sometime soon. Read on . . .***

I am a biblioholic. The walls of my home are covered with the paper treasures of my addiction, in a variety of states. From my highly treasured, yet library battered, collection of Bullough, to the perfect bound latest history texts, they all fight for a much-deserved space through the house. When social media suggested a home bookbinding kit, my interest was piqued. Not only could I hoard books, I could make my own! I resisted...

I didn't resist very hard...

I soon treated myself to the kit for Christmas 2024, and spent the day carefully creating a *case bound book by numbers* [1]. I was hooked.

Not one who enjoys following instructions blindly, I went exploring. I wanted to know everything! Why do we do it this way? What alternative methods are there for this technique? What are the big no-nos? Of course, more books were bought (my trusty Cockerell\* might be old-fashioned, but it has become a dear friend). More books were made - an experiment in seeing how small I could make them [2], a dabble in Coptic bindings, and binding an actual text block (Cockerell of course!) rather than yet another plain notebook [3].

My *real world* life means that I am unable to commit to regular classes (I am required to be on-site at all times, unless I can find cover), which has limited my learning journey. Fortunately perhaps, I am relatively good at following written guides, and recognising my mistakes; and how to learn from them!

My most recent project (I was perhaps a little too keen, tackling this with less than months' experience...) has been a laced-in boards leather bound notebook [4 & 5]. I suspect this method will become my favourite - although I'm not sure I'll ever truly love paring leather... Whilst it went better than it had any right to, it has left me with a very long list of things to work on for next time. But there will be a next time. And that's what matters.

I've signed up for a four-day gold leaf tooling course in September, and am hoping to make it along to some Society of Bookbinders' Kelsall sessions soon. It would be great to meet people who are much further along this journey than I am.

It can be a lonely existence up here in north Cumbria\*\*, surrounded by the books that are now begging me for new bindings. They will have to wait until I can be sure of doing them justice, but I know that time will come.

\* Douglas Cockerell *Bookbinding and the care of books* (first published in 1901, rarely out-of-print since).

\*\* Our soon-to-be launched *local clusters* should help regional members locate and keep in touch with other members living nearby.





## *The fold-over sketchbook, Maureen Duke, DAS Bookbinding, a couple of modern hand tools, and Chris McNall's (mis-)adventures in bookbinding*

I was really interested to read Donna's *My Bookbinding Beginnings* piece in the last newsletter, *writes Chris McNall*, and to see that her first binding project was the fold-over Maureen Duke sketchbook. At Kelsall, I always feel like I am the tail-end Charlie, with my thumb in the glue pot, but it's good to be reminded that we are all travellers on a similar journey - it is just how far we are along it. I started binding a year or so ago by trying to fix some C19 leather tighbacks with detached boards and cracked spines - what a place to start! But my miserable failures did not put me off.

As far as I know, the Maureen Duke sketchbook takes its moniker from a description on a DVD with her being interviewed by our own Dominic Riley [1]. I have not seen this DVD, but have encountered the structure on a video on [Darryn Schneider's DAS Bookbinding YouTube channel](#). In terms of social media presence, Darryn could well be the world's most influential bookbinder. He has told me that he does not share this view, but, as his viewers will know, he is a modest and self-deprecating individual, so he would say that.



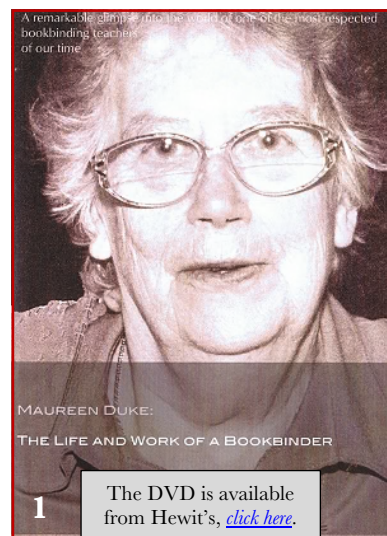
Like Donna, I have also made a few of these sketchbooks, but to a slightly revised recipe. I use quite sturdy (220gsm) textured watercolour paper, and, at 8mm from the fold, after folding and before gathering, I use a little Olfa perforator (about a tenner on Amazon) to allow each page to be torn out, like a postcard. Cutting the paper, folding it, and perforating it take much of the time.

Darryn guillotines the edges of the block, but I don't have a guillotine, so I use another nifty little tool - a circular bladed hand-held plough, hand-made by a pleasant gentleman in Lodi, California. I use it a lot. It is slightly temperamental, but it produces a really nice edge suitable for painting and gilding, if that is your thing.



I have made a dozen or so of these fold-back sketchbooks, and so have made most mistakes it is possible to make: wonky boards, sewing disasters, and various endpaper mishaps (eg, pasting them in back to front, so the pastedown shows white; and somehow sticking them together). I have learned that a lot of my mistakes come because my attention wavers, but I push on to do the next step rather than just having a break and a cup of tea. Bookbinding cannot be rushed.

I have also tweaked the dimensions of the big fold-over joint at the front. As I am using thick paper, I have fewer signatures than Das, and cannot really round or back the block. I think that can end up making a small difference to the overall opening ability, so I increase the gap by a couple of mm. However overall this is quite a forgiving structure, doesn't use a lot of material, and the resulting sketchbooks are very useable as gifts to show off your bookbinding prowess. You can really play around with a variety of finishes.



### **For newer members:**

**Maureen Duke** was a skilled bookbinder and inspirational teacher and enthusiast. She ran the full-time bookbinding course at Guildford College as well as short courses at Urchfont Manor and West Dean. She was awarded the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's 2017 New Year Honours List, for life-long service to the teaching and propagation of the crafts of Bookbinding, Conservation and Restoration. Maureen had been our national Chair, President and until her death in 2018 our Patron. At her death Designer Bookbinders commented: *She had a profound influence on students and fellow craftsmen and women across the UK and around the world and continuously motivated the members of the SoB with energy, commitment and high distinction. She commanded the deepest respect for the vigour and enthusiasm with which she preserved, nurtured and interpreted her crafts for several generations of bookbinders and craftsmen/women.* The Maureen Duke Educational Award, funded by the Norie Trust and administered by the SoB, was established in recognition of Maureen's enormous contribution to the craft of bookbinding.

**Make your own fold-back sketchbook, with the aid of the DAS Bookbinding YouTube video: [click here!](#)**

### Chris continues with his (mis-)adventures:



Another Das technique is the conversion of modern paperback *perfect bindings* into faux leather bindings. These are terrific. I find these work best with big thick books (think *War and Peace*): cut down the covers, leaving stubs; put these into split boards; stick in some nice endpapers, ribbon and headbands; make a hollow and use narrow strips of tooling leather to put some false raised bands on it; cover with a leather spine piece; cover the boards; paste down, and voila. One genuine fake C19 book.

Inspired by Glenn's recent workshop, I have also been working on Folio Society volumes: these use good paper, are usually well sewn, and cost just a few quid. I just love edge painting and sprinkled gold (buy a tea strainer and [see Glenn's video](#)). The attached photos show what was a rather dowdy *Anna Karenina*, now not so dowdy. As Glenn has said, half the time is fixing the problems you have made, and this was no different: I tore through what I was going to use for the board leather with over-enthusiastic paring, so had to resort to paper. There is still a bit of work to do to somehow title the boards; but I am waiting for inspiration to strike.



### And returning to those modern hand tools: the little and the large (that's the cost!)



The Olfa rotary cutting perforator [*left*] that Chris mentions is indeed available from Amazon for not much more than £10, [click here for more info](#).

However the circular-bladed hand-held plough [*right*] will cost you about £250. Jim Poelstra, a professional cabinetmaker with over 40 years experience runs Heritage Crafted Interiors in Lodi, California. He has also been a bookbinder for some twenty five years, and he makes and sells a good range of hand-made wooden bookbinding equipment. *The Bob Hamer of California?* His hand-held plough is his smallest item and it will ship easily. Jim's website gives the details, and demonstrates it in use. [Click here](#) for that. It certainly looks a gorgeous bit of kit if you can afford it; Chris is happy with his.



### The Committee for 2025

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