



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Committee News: Financial Review Update

Your regional committee continues to meet every two months or so, by Zoom, to oversee the region's activities, and to respond to events and issues as they arise. Most of our work needs no reporting: it is evident in the active programme of events for both members and non-members alike. However this month the committee decided to take a more detailed look at our finances.

Regional finances are healthy, with a strong balance of around £9000. Whilst we have priced our workshops on the low side, so as not to exclude members on tighter budgets, some events have delivered healthy surpluses. All regions also benefit from receiving a small portion of members' national membership subscription by way of the regional grant. This grant enables us to subsidise our Kelsall workshops for members. After a lot of thought the committee has agreed to:

- * hold the one-day workshop fee at £30 for 2026
- * reduce the two-day workshop fee to £50
- * continue not to charge observers attending workshops
- * offer all members one free one-day workshop in 2026 (pay only for materials)
- * increase the payment we make to our tutors to £350 for a one-day workshop
- * purchase good quality raffle prizes as necessary
- * and offer at least one 50% bursary for the national residential event in 2026.

The committee did also discuss the possibility of assisting members with the cost of travel to Kelsall workshops. However it was felt the practical difficulties of manging a fair and sensitive policy outweighed the advantages. Hopefully the recently-launched Local Clusters should make it easier for members to share travel costs.

We also intend to develop a policy for a Regional Professional Development Grant open to all NW2 members. This needs thinking through, and any ideas you have will be much appreciated. Maybe an item for discussion at the next AGM?

Multiples Made Manageable: a novice's first NW2 workshop!



When I signed up for the NW2 workshop on *Creating Multiples*, I wasn't sure I'd chosen wisely. As a novice bookbinder, I often struggle to complete a single book, let alone imagine producing a batch of saleable work. Yet by the end of the day, I had not only learned a wealth of practical skills but also gained the confidence to encourage other beginners to give these monthly workshops a try. After all, practice is the only way to progress.

From the moment I arrived, I was struck by the generous working space allocated to each attendee - far more than I can muster at home - and by the warmth of the welcome. A quick browse of the bargain-priced supplies at the back of the room and a restorative cup of tea set the tone for the day.

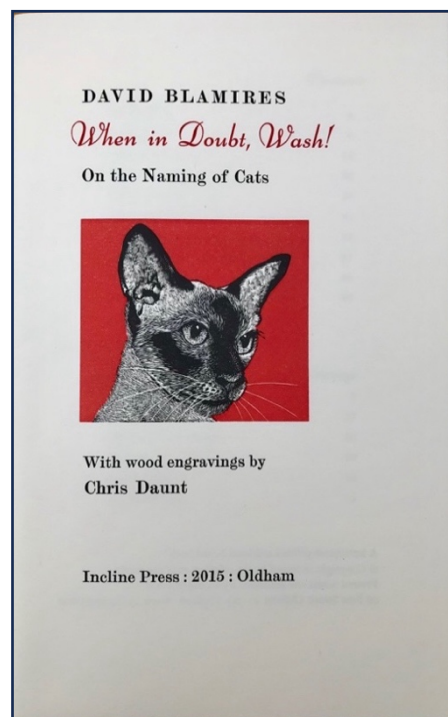
The morning began with an introductory talk from our workshop tutor, *Barry Clark*. He shared how his passion for bookbinding was first sparked by courses at Higham Hall in the Lake District, before describing the set-up of his own home studio in the cellar. His talk then shifted to the . . .

. . . continued on p4

NW2 Binding Project: an update

We're not quite finished yet with our 2025 regional binding project. Some members are still working on their binding, and we have a new deadline - **Saturday 14 February**. It's the day of the next AGM and we will have another display of all members' bindings, including those on show in September. Hewit's have donated a copy of Jen Lindsay's book *Fine Bookbinding: a technical guide* so all those exhibiting will have another chance of winning this modern fine binding manual. As it's the AGM we will be looking back on 2025 so we will also display examples of all of the year's Kelsall and Portico makes too.

So what next? The chat around the hall in September clearly indicated that there was a desire to do this again sometime, maybe make it a biennial event? However a binding project clearly needs a book of interest and quality, preferably available in sheets, in quantity, and not too expensive. *And the region has been incredibly fortunate:* with Graham's death, Helen Moss is undertaking the huge task of dismantling the [Incline Press](#). All sorts of things are coming to the fore - and Helen has donated to the region the remaining 30 copies of the gorgeous ***When in Doubt, Wash! On the Naming of Cats***, authored by [David Blamires](#), with colour and black and white wood engravings by [Chris Daunt](#). There were less than 200 standard copies letterpress printed, bound with a cloth spine and [Elizabeth Friedlander](#) Curwen pattern paper sides from 1946 (plus 40 specials in a slipcase with additional wood engravings). However Graham only bound the books as demand required. The thirty we have are sewn on tapes (easily undone if desired) awaiting purchasers and thus binding. They will make an ideal NW2 set book Binding Project. The committee's view is that another Binding Project in 2026, when some members are still to complete the 2025 set book - and with the [SoB International Binding Competition](#) in 2026 - would be a little too soon for many members. So we'll go for 2027, and let's think about how we can honour Graham Moss and his Incline Press in the process. With huge thanks to Helen Moss for her generosity.



Booker binding re-visited



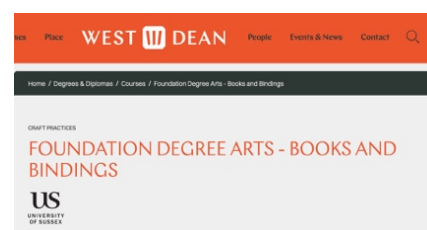
Newer members may not be aware that at this time of the year six of our best bookbinders are beavering away creating a unique design binding to be presented to the six shortlisted [Booker Prize](#) authors at the winning ceremony on 15 November. Over the years NW2 members David Sellers, Paul Delrue, Julian Thomas, Dominic Riley and Glenn Malkin have [bound the Booker](#). We had a talk from Glenn at our last AGM on his winning binding, and now there is a film available of Dominic Riley's binding of author Alan Garner's *Treacle Walker*, [click here](#).

Bindings on display in Lancaster



Han Fleet has a small exhibition and selling display *The Art of Bookbinding: From Raw Materials to Finished Books* at Halton Mill, nr Lancaster. It's a joint showing with Catriona Stamp, and runs until Monday 1 December. [Click here](#) for details.

Budding binder needs a placement

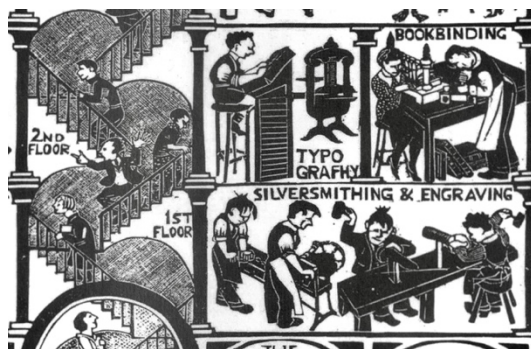


The region has been asked if we can help find a placement for a student on the [West Dean College](#) Foundation Degree in Books and Bindings. The award-winning student has family in Liverpool, and ideally would like a work experience place in a bindery within travelling distance. It's a two-year full-time course, and placements enable students to gain practical experience in a real-life setting. If you think you may be able to help contact our Secretary, Jacqueline Payne, for more details.

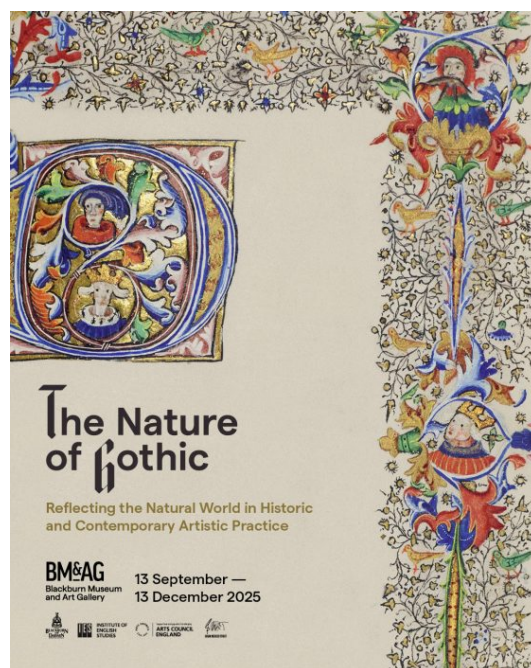
News from round and abouts



On his travels [Peter Criddle](#) spotted this delightful book cover (*left*) designed by May Morris for her own book *Decorative Needlework*. As well as this edition with the design printed in red on pink book cloth, there was a limited edition of 125 with the design stamped in gold. The book was part of an exhibition about May Morris's life and work at the Russell-Cotes Museum and Gallery in Bournemouth. *The exhibition comes to our region next year - to Blackburn, the Arts and Crafts House in the lake district.* Another exhibit that caught Peter's eye was a woodcut print of a cross section of the Central School of Arts & Crafts created by artist and illustrator [Herry Perry](#) (*detail top right*); an artist who should be much better known.



Meanwhile closer to home a May Morris binding features in another exhibition, [The Nature of Gothic](#), at [Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery](#) (*image right*). It's an embroidered binding designed and executed by May Morris (*left*). Manuscripts, books and bindings dominate the displays, with items on loan from Chetham's Library and the Rylands. However central to the exhibition is the rare book collection of a local industrialist and philanthropist [Robert Edward Hart](#). He gifted his collection of over 500 items to his native town, along with six incunables (books printed before 1500) to Cambridge



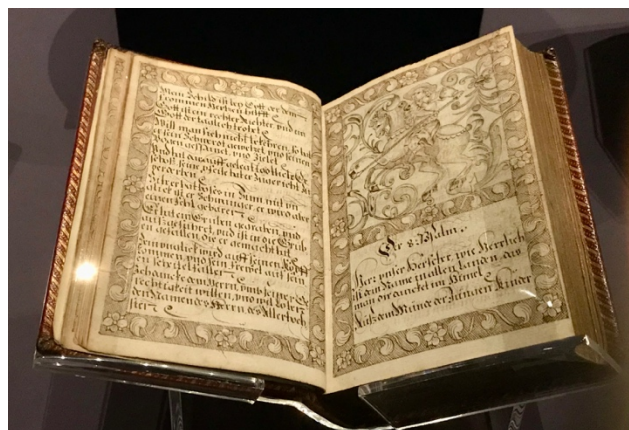
University Library. All the important items are re-united in this exhibition for the first time since gifted in 1946. Also featuring textiles, ceramics and paintings it is a stunning show, reminding one of the importance of our smaller municipal galleries and museums up and down the country. The exhibition continues until 13 December. [Blackburn Cathedral](#), near the bus station, with its statue of Barbara Castle outside, is a great cafe stop - and the C20 and C21 additions to what was the parish church until 1926 are well worth a closer look.



Left: A Book of Hours, England, c1440. A personal prayer book that demonstrates the enthusiasm of English patrons for the exuberant floriate border.

Right: A Psalter (book of the psalms), Germany 1646. An early printed book.

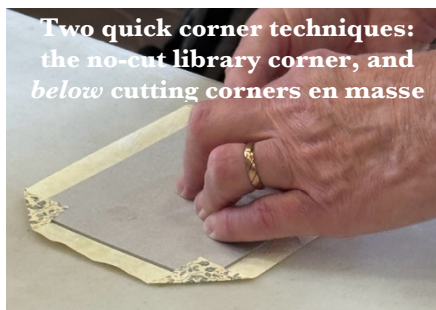
Both on display and from the Hart Collection, Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery



. . . . the realities of selling at craft fairs. Barry's guidance was both practical and encouraging: focus on designs that lend themselves to small-batch production without becoming overly labour-intensive; select materials that are both appealing and cost-effective; uphold consistent standards of craftsmanship; and, above all, understand the needs and preferences of your market.

I came away with several invaluable tips, including recommended suppliers for affordable materials (see box below), and the clear message that jigs and templates are invaluable for speed, accuracy and uniform results in cutting and sewing (*opposite, the cutting template for the Eco sketchbook paper*).

Barry also displayed a selection of his own craft fair stock, neatly presented with computer-printed belly-bands describing the materials and methods used. He explained that he always leaves one example unwrapped to invite handling, and that careful choice of venue matters more than sheer footfall when it comes to sales.



After a short break, we moved on to the first practical project: Barry's *Italian Journal*. This elegant A6 hardback features decorative exposed sewing, with a book block of eight sections of recycled Five Seasons paper sewn onto cotton or linen tapes using multicoloured waxed thread. The covers combined patterned Italian paper at the front with cloth at the back. Each participant received a full set of materials to recreate the journal at home, and Barry's clear demonstration made the process feel achievable.

Following lunch, we tackled Barry's best-selling item, an *A5 Eco Sketchbook*. This design uses 140gsm recycled cartridge paper and limp Zaansch Bord covers from De Schoolmeester windmill in Holland - the world's last remaining wind-powered paper mill. Barry guided us through each stage of the binding, pausing so we could return to our benches and repeat the steps. He circulated constantly, lending tools such as screw punches and offering encouragement, while more experienced attendees kindly supported those of us still finding our way. To my delight, even I managed to stitch the sections into place (almost perfectly!) using long and link stitch, before finishing the binding by folding and sewing the extended back cover into a handy pocket.

Materials (and equipment)

- * for everyday notebooks and sketchbooks try [Economy of Brighton's](#) 140gsm cartridge paper, about £10 for 250 A4 sheets; other sizes available. Free shipping on orders over £50, discount on first purchase
- * Barry uses [John Purcell's](#) Five Seasons 110gsm paper for notebooks and journals. And [click here](#) for more info
- * for reasonably priced packs of waxed thread, including some attractive variegated colours [click here](#)
- * [Shepherds](#) have an excellent range of pattern papers; but a bit cheaper are [Paper Tree Nook](#) (nice range of Italian papers) and [The Silver Locket](#) (for Curwen Press/Judd Street papers); both offer reasonable shipping charges too
- * Barry uses a bench-top board chopper for cutting greyboard up to 2mm, and has a guillotine that is invaluable for quick paper cutting (*opposite*). On the latter [take a look](#) at the VEVOR A3 Guillotine Paper Trimmer. Arthur Green has an aged bench-top board chopper available, [click here](#).



We ended the day with a sense of accomplishment, new skills to practise, and even a bag of home-grown apples kindly shared by a fellow participant. For me, the workshop was proof that NW2's monthly sessions are not just for the experienced - they are a welcoming, practical, and inspiring space for anyone who wants to learn. I'll be back!

My Bookbinding Beginnings: Paul Johnson's long journey to the book arts

I studied painting and sculpture at art school in the early sixties, although having enthusiasm for neither. The nude model was fat and forty, and the stone dust got up my nostrils. At thirty, I destroyed all my work of the previous ten years. By then art fusions were all the rage. I became a performance poet. Slide images of my 'visual poems' were projected over me wearing white as I pranced about the performance area muttering invented words. Student audiences clapped and cheered. I must have looked ridiculous.

By the mid-80s, tired of experimentation, I reinvented the painting and stone carving of student days and made paper sculptures. They sold well in the States but got damaged in transit. The solution? To make unique pop-ups instead. But it was not until my late sixties that, through discovering the piano hinge, my pop-ups became 'books'. Approaching old age, I finally found my creative metier. It had taken a long time to get there.



Above: miniature gouache painting c1973. *Below:* Sailing Boat paper sculpture c1987



Discovering, in the late 80s, a six-page book made from a single sheet of paper and scissors changed me as an artist and teacher. My first book on the arts in education, *A Book of One's Own*, brought me a large audience of teachers here and in North America, enabling me to become self-employed. For the next twenty-five years I travelled the world teaching book arts with a focus on literacy ([here's a link](#)).

In my seventies, I searched for a home for my 'sculptural' books. I thought university librarians would fall over each other in the stampede to acquire my work for free. How wrong I was. However, as soon as I said my work was for sale, everything changed. My archive, 1970-2010 (over two hundred items of artwork) was purchased by the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. But my workroom soon filled with sculptural books again. By now I had established a relationship with the Bodleian Library at Oxford ([click here](#) for more), and it is there that the work of my last years will go as an archive.

The art of successful living is to have a plan for each new day. In my 80s, I still start the day with a swim at 6.15am. The day blossoms out from there like a landscape, so much to do. I have just returned from New York to hand over a book (*above*) I made for the Venetian-palace-like [Morgan Library](#) there. At my presentation, I said to the audience: *European art galleries are empty. They only have fire extinguishers on the walls. All our art treasures are here in the States. There was no laughter, just stunned incomprehension: Whadyer mean: all yer galleries only have fire extinguishers in em?* Perhaps best not to make jokes in the USofA.

Right:
Noah's Ark
pop-up
2000

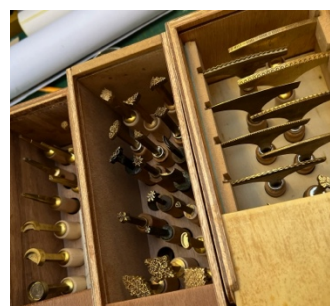


Far right:
Old Mother
Hubbard
on Wheels
2012
(sculptural
book)



Bob Hamer is downtooling . . . and he needs your help!

After nearly fifty years binding Bob Hamer is downing his tools, and he has a workshop full of kit to move on! Newer members may not have come across Bob, but he has been a key figure in our region. As well as running the regional shop before Paul Broadbent and being a regular at Kelsall, and at national Conferences and Seminars, Bob made the bookbinding equipment that sits in many NW2 binderies and workspaces. Ratchfords bought from Bob and sold nationwide. Below we show some of the kit Bob now needs to move on. And there is more. If you spot anything you need, do contact Bob direct (01524 415 984 or helenhamer@talktalk.net) to discuss prices, viewings, collection. We will endeavour to collect and bring some of the smaller stuff to Kelsall and sell there on Bob's behalf. See Bob's life in bookbinding in his *Bookbinding Beginnings* piece in our November 2021 regional newsletter (copy available on request).



The Committee for 2025

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

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

Treasurer: Jeanne Pennington (jeannebpennington@gmail.com)

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

Outreach Lead: Catherine Garratt (cgarrratt2@googlemail.com)



the Society
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