



the Society
of Bookbinders



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

2026 Programme Launched

With our 2025 programme drawing to a close we are now able to go live and take bookings for 2026. Our Programme Organiser Sue Wood has again put together an excellent set of events, ranging from in-person workshops, an on-line workshop, a library visit, two days of talks/demos/displays (at the AGM and at our Autumn Gathering), plus our Christmas Social of course. The full programme is circulated with this newsletter. For quick reference here's the outline for 2026:

- 10 January: *Criss Cross Long Stitch Binding* / Mylyn McColl
- 14 February: Springback to bookbinding: *AGM plus talks and demos*
- 14 March: *A Flexible Leather Binding* / Tanja Bolenz
- 11 April: *Precise Leather Paring & Covering* / Dominic Riley
- 9 May: *Leather Dyeing and Decoration* / Tom McEwan
- 13&14 June: *Limp Vellum Binding* / Glenn Malkin
- 11 July: *Surface pattern design* / Val Corrigan
- Tuesday 4 August: A visit to *Liverpool Libraries*
- 14/16 August: International SoB Residential at York University
- 12 September: *Our Autumn Gathering: talks/demos/displays*
- 10 October: *The Merry-Go-Round book* / Magalie Briand
- 14 November: *The Buttonhole Stitch Binding* / Dieter Rader
- 5 December: *Christmas Social*

Our in-person workshops are all tutored by experienced trainers; some are our own regional members, some from further afield. In 2026 we are increasing the payment we make to our tutors to £350 - it hasn't gone up for many years. **However we are holding the participants' fee at £30 for all one-day workshops (just £50 for the two-day workshop), and we will continue not to charge those attending as observers.** And in 2026 we are again inviting all regional members to take one one-day workshop for free (just pay the materials charge) - just let Sue know you are taking up that option when you book, or when it's time to pay. As ever no payment with bookings; Sue requests payment four weeks before the event.



Susie Leiper: All about the book: from editor to scribe to maker

Wednesday 10 DECEMBER 2025 at 19.00 GMT

The Society's final Zoom webinar of 2025 features *Susie Leiper* and her work. The blurb tells us: *Susie will take you on a fully illustrated romp through her life in books, from her first job as an editor at British Museum Publications, to her years as a scribe on the monumental Saint John's Bible, and to the creation of her own one-off artist books, including a complete handwritten and illustrated edition of Nan Shepherd's The Living Mountain and a multitude of smaller creations. Books have always been central to Susie's life. From editing books on Chinese art and archaeology and a spell in Hong Kong, Susie trained formally as a calligrapher under Donald Jackson on the Saint John's Bible. The extreme discipline of being a scribe gave Susie the freedom to develop her own calligraphy and painting practice, much of which involves artist books, both monumental and miniscule.*

It's free to members, but we do need to register; [click here](#) for that.

Portico Library 2026 Beginners' Programme Announced

Our collaboration with the Portico dates back to the 1980s. More recently we have offered a series of one-day bookbinding workshops, suitable for beginners. We continue this in 2026. The dates and titles are below, for more details see the [Portico website](#).

- 11 February: *An Introduction to Bookbinding*
- 15 April: *A handy pocket notebook*
- 17 June: *Creating a portfolio for loose sheets*
- 16 September: *A multi-section notebook*
- 11 November: *Paper Magic!*

Ruth Brown's November workshop: Creating and using your own Bookcloth



It was another full house for this workshop at Kelsall and I think we were all immediately in awe, viewing the wonderful examples of Ruth's work on show. Amongst the many possible methods, and with limited time, Ruth explained we would concentrate on screen printing, mark making and inkjet printing - all on fabric. We would also discuss backing the fabric and the options for making neat corners with fabric book cloth.



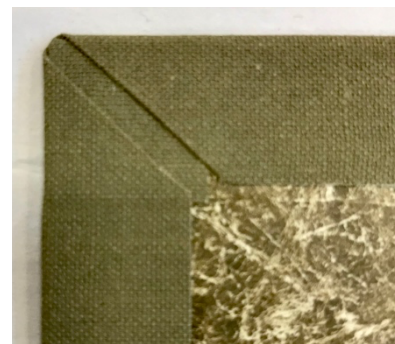
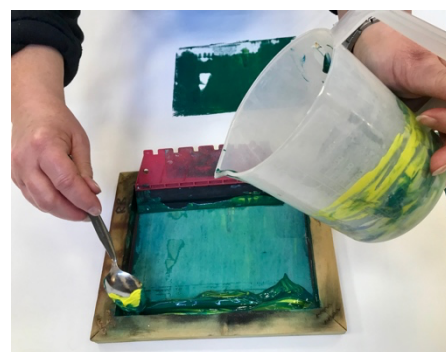
Ruth was keen that we all experience the process of printing a screen, rather than just watch a demonstration. So we split into two groups and working at a long table, suitably covered, each of us printed three plain screens. Ruth was quite correct that having a go at screen printing removed some of our doubts and uncertainty about the process. We were encouraged to think of trying various cheap and easy methods of masking off areas of the screen: stencils, a well dried paste made with flour and water, masking tape torn into irregular shapes.

We moved on with Ruth demonstrating her mark making processes with various tools, before all having a go ourselves. Acrylic paints were used on plain cotton. The key was play! and don't restrict your imagination. We used rollers, credit cards, stiff brushes, plastic shapes, green 'scotchbrite' pads, mesh from kindling and citrus packaging, skewers, twigs. Other ideas were mono-printing from leaves, using porridge as a resist: the possibilities are limitless . . .

As our pieces dried Ruth demonstrated the process that blew my mind (*and indeed most of the participants and observers in the hall*) and which I found really exciting: printing fabric using an ordinary inkjet printer. The key is to use inkjet ink that is pigment-based not dye-based. You can check your own ink, if it reacts when splashed with water it is dye-based. Ruth showed beautiful, inkjet-printed examples on silk, linen, cotton, aida and fine velvet. The keys to success are setting your printer to plain paper and ordinary photo setting; back the fabric with an A4 single adhesive label to feed it through the printer. Once removed the label can be reused about four times. Definitely one to try at home very soon.

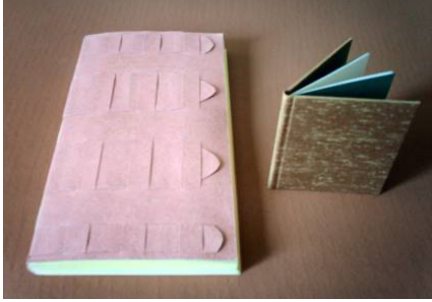
Backing a fabric is mainly to reduce the chance of adhesive coming through. It may not be necessary in all cases. If she is backing a fabric Ruth usually uses 'bondaweb' or acid free tissue. Fabric can also be backed using paste and Japanese washi paper.

And on to neat corners. Ruth demonstrated three types of corner she might use with fabric book cloth. The first was the standard bookcloth corner that we should all know. However to reduce bulk in this style there is a 'no overlap' corner: the cloth is trimmed at the usual 45° angle but only 1mm away from the corner; a tiny triangle, base on the line and 90° apex at corner of board, is then removed creating a butt joint on the edge of the corner as the turn ins are pasted down. However Ruth had good words also for the library/universal corner, disagreeing with the oft-stated view that they are 'thick and ugly'. Ruth sometimes even uses them with turn ins on the face of a cover instead of the inside, possibly highlighting the interior of the corner with colour and adding a decorative siding. A new one for all, and named forever more as: *Ruth Brown's reverse artistic library corner!*



With thanks to Jane Sheppard for this workshop review

My Bookbinding Beginnings: Tina Kelly



Above: my first two books made at the Otter Bindery with Marysa de Veer, and at CityLit with Clare Bryan. Below: volunteering at UCL's Special and Rare Books Collection.



You could say that my first foray into bookbinding started at the tender age of eight! I thoroughly enjoyed visits to the library with my mother and began to write my own books - small single sections that weren't held together in any way but were still very satisfying to make. I even used my John Bull Printing Set to date stamp them afterwards! Fast forward to November 2005 and I had been working in public libraries for 28 years by then, making rudimentary repairs to the books in order to keep them in circulation as part of my job. My husband had recently started working for a gentleman who was married to the Patron of the [Saint Catherine's Foundation](#). They hold annual fundraising events that enable conservators to facilitate the safe storage and repair of the contents of the oldest library in the world, located in [Saint Catherine's Monastery](#) on Mount Sinai. I was fortunate enough to attend one of these events and was mesmerised by the conservation work that was being done. I said to my husband, *I'd love to do something like that* and he said *Well, why don't you?* By the following October I was studying Conservation at Camberwell College of Art, University of the Arts, London.

Having realised that in order to repair them I would need to know how books are made, I had already attended a couple of beginners' bookbinding courses at City Lit in London and became a member of the Society of Bookbinders before I started at Camberwell. The workshops held by the London & South Region in the following years were a perfect way to complement my studies, and it also gave me the opportunity to meet other binders and conservators that I could call on for advice.

Throughout my time at Camberwell I volunteered cleaning books and making phase boxes at [UCL's Special and Rare Book Collections](#), under the tutelage of Fred Bearman. There were wonderful work placements at Windsor Castle, St. Paul's Cathedral, The National Archives and Lords Cricket Ground as well. Whilst repairing a 16th century High Court Admiralty book at The National Archives I found the tip of a quill pen, with the ink still on it, in the gutter! I was the first person to see it since the gentleman who was writing had cut it off. It is moments like that, physically connecting you to the people who made and used the books, that make being a conservator so special.

After graduation I was then lucky enough to become the Paper Conservator at [Imperial War Museums](#), London, for 8½ years before I retired. Whilst there, I worked on a great deal of documents: Flying Log Books, photograph albums and diaries, some of which had bullet holes through them . . . It was a wonderful job, with plenty more 'Wow' moments along the way. I'm currently volunteering at Blackpool Transport Services repairing their archives. They date back to 1895, recording the very first Electric Road Tramway in England that is still in use today.

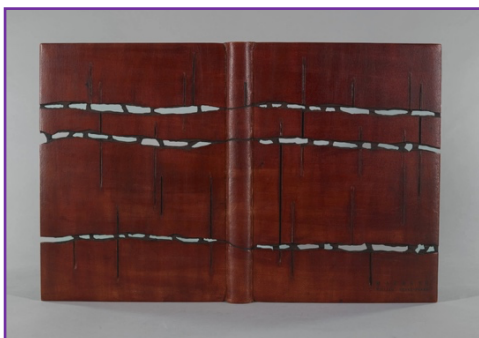


The High Court Admiralty book: above, showing the curved spine; below, the repaired spine with extended tapes.



Far left: my first leather bindings, created at SoB London & South workshops.

Left: A few of the artists books created as part of an Elective module whilst studying at Camberwell.



The winning entry by **Cesar Fariza-Navarro**, Spain. A 2012 edition of Macbeth.

Full laced-in boards binding in hand-painted and hand-sanded goatskin, sewn in meeting guards, decorated with incisions and perforations on both covers and spine on the outside and inside.



Running alongside the *Binding the Bard* exhibition is another: **Shakespeare Recovered**. Some members will be familiar with the dramatic story of the theft of Durham's First Folio (*above*), as well as six other books, in 1998 and its return to Durham University in 2010. However it had been badly damaged to remove its identifying features; the binding had been roughly removed and the title page was gone. This left the internal structure of the book exposed and vulnerable to damage. The **Shakespeare Recovered** exhibition tells the story of what happened next, exploring the work of the conservation team to make the First Folio accessible again.

NW2 members feature in North East Bookbinding Exhibition

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the printing of Shakespeare's First Folio, Durham University launched a blind juried bookbinding competition inspired by its own First Folio. It was an interesting brief as the winning binder would be commissioned to create a new design binding for a British Library facsimile edition of the First Folio, to be added to the University's collection.

The brief stated: *Binders will digitally submit an image depicting their proposed design for the First Folio Facsimile binding alongside a completed binding of a text block of their choice. This completed binding will be an exemplar of the binder's craft skills and will demonstrate how their creativity is realised in a completed design binding. The winning binder will be sent a facsimile edition in sheets to be bound in their proposed design, for accessioning into the Palace Green Library's rare book collection.*



NW2 member **Glenn Malkin's** entry: *The Winter's Tale* (Limited Editions Club, 1940).

The binding is in full Pentland goat leather which has been lightly airbrushed and incorporates raised slits on the front and rear boards within which is crimson silk. There is a gold tooled frame on each board and the title is tooled in gold on the spine. There are edge-to-edge red leather doublures and spiderweb Lokta paper endpapers.

The further NW2 connection is **Dominic Riley**, one of the panel of judges, who also contributes a five minute video on design binding as part of the on-line exhibition.

The exhibition of the submitted bindings along with the digital proposals for the facsimile edition at the Palace Green Library of Durham University has recently been extended to April 2026. However there is also an excellent on-line [exhibition catalogue](#) to view.

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 (cgaratt2@googlemail.com)



the Society
of Bookbinders



We wish all members a pleasant and enjoyable Christmas, and fruitful bookbinding in 2026

