



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Lively discussions at the AGM, four bookbinding displays to view, two talks, a demo, numerous raffle prizes, and more . . .

Over thirty members enjoyed a lively AGM-*plus* day in mid-February, full of bookbinding-related activities. We share a pictorial summary of the day over the page. At the AGM itself the formal business* quickly moved on to a wide-ranging *discussion of what more we might all do to promote the craft of bookbinding*. It was well recognised that our membership is mainly white and older, and we need to reach a younger and more diverse audience. There was no shortage of ideas: demos in local libraries, informal workshops in arts and community centres, talks, stands at craft fairs and book festivals, build a social media presence, reduced membership fee for under 30s, maybe a national youth section and more. Some of these ideas are matters for the national society, however at regional and local level it was recognised that more members need to be involved if we are to press forward. There is no shortage of desire, or indeed finances, but it will need more activity by more members in our own local areas if we are to make significant headway. And the committee will continue to facilitate and encourage more members to be involved in outreach / diversity work. Our secretary Jacqueline Payne reflects further (p3) on how our recently-formed *Local Clusters* could be the vehicle to generate more bookbinding activity in our own localities.



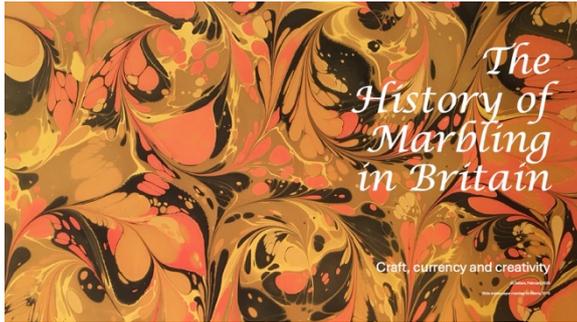
2026 Regional Kelsall programme is just too popular

At the AGM some members expressed disappointment about not getting a guaranteed place on the workshops that they wished to attend. Programme Organiser Sue Wood confirmed that bookings have been very strong indeed for the 2026 programme, and there is now a waiting list for the remaining seven Kelsall workshops this year. In previous years those on the waiting lists have in fact secured a place. Whilst there is no guarantee that this will be the case this year, Sue reiterated that it is always worth asking to be put on the waiting list, and also to attend on the day as an observer. In the discussion, suggestions were made about how to ensure fair access to booking - and it was agreed that the committee would keep the booking system under review.

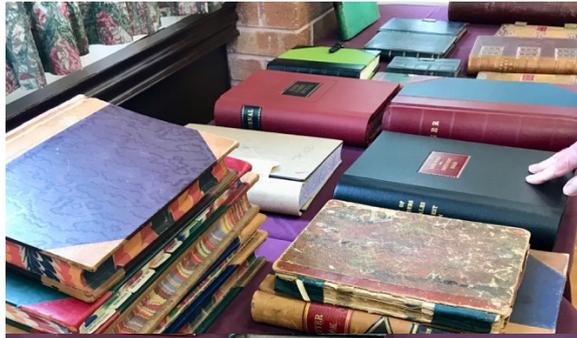
There was also discussion about the availability of notes at workshops. Various, differing views were expressed. It was agreed that tutors will be asked if they could provide a handout for paying participants but we would not insist on it, and it is up to the tutor when to share it.

National SoB News

Conference is back this year, two nights residential 14-16 August. We understand the programme and booking details are to be circulated very soon, with the full fee held down below £300. Check your e-mail inbox for that. This year the region will be offering two 50% bursaries to attend - invitations to apply will be circulated once the Conference details have been announced. And soon, yes a bit late, through our letterboxes, we should be receiving *the 2025 edition of our journal Bookbinder*. There is no news on a replacement editor for the *national Newsletter* (if you can help with that do email the retiring editor Ivan Salcedo (ivan@quixis.com)). The 2026 programme of *joint DB/SoB workshops* have been announced, [click here](#) for more. Also look out for the e-mail with details of the next *Wednesday Webinar* (15 April) with Nesta Davies of the Western Region. In April entry details for the biennial SoB *International Bookbinding Competition* will be circulated.



No, no that's not **Lyn Gibson** bringing her domestic ironing to Kelsall! But a very hands-on demo and talk from Lyn about her approach to covering boards in fabric. Lyn shared tips on backing materials and processes (others chipped in with their approaches), and most importantly: glue the boards not the fabric.



Earlier **Jill Sellars** had treated us to an illustrated talk, *Craft, currency and creativity*, about early uses of marbled paper - on Bank of England notes and later cheques. We were introduced to *security marbling* as opposed to the *decorative marbling* with which many are more familiar.



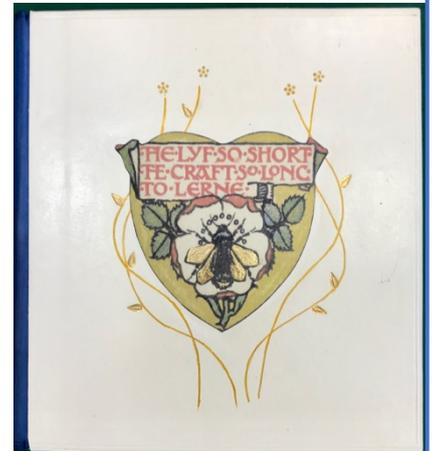
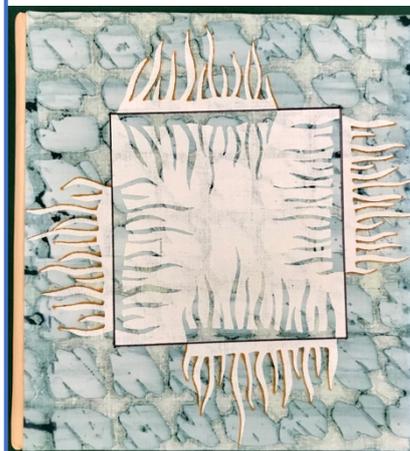
Tim Foster picked up on *security marbling* in his talk about ledgers, springbacks and account books. He brought along a considerable number of (very large and heavy) examples, as well as the associated equipment and tools for these mighty books. The book blocks were marbled so that auditors could easily tell if pages had been removed to hide fraudulent transactions.



Throughout the day members were buying and selling, collecting their orders from Hewit's (no shipping charge), and eyeing up the numerous raffle prizes - so many that there proved to be a prize for almost everyone present! Thanks to all those who donated prizes (*some below*), and those who bought raffle tickets.



In addition to Tim's display we exhibited *members makes from our 2025 Kelsall workshops*, and the *makes at the beginners' workshops at the Portico*. Here we feature two more bindings on show in the *display of members' bindings for our 2025 set book Binding Project*. *Left, Ruth Brown* created her own decorative bookcloth for the cover. *Right, Richard Nichols'* binding is in white alum-tawed goatskin incorporating a recess for the Guild's motto and logo; the bee's wings are gilded; gilded stems, leaves and flowers surround the panel.



To Cluster, or Not To Cluster - and £100 to spend . . .

During our recent AGM there were lots of really interesting comments and suggestions about outreach work and how to diversify our membership and indeed encourage younger members. This got me thinking, *writes Jacqueline Payne*, about how we communicate with each other and how we can increase engagement with non-members. Some of the discussion was about how much easier it is for us to engage with non-members *in our own locality*. I mean, I'm happy to go and sit with another binder and just do some binding in my local library for example, and chat to people about what I'm doing but to do that somewhere I don't know would have a lot more obstacles for me. So this, in turn, got me thinking further about our Local Clusters...

It seems that most of us haven't yet taken advantage of our cluster. Just to recap, I sent out emails last summer copying in everyone in your cluster, which is just a grouping of members who live reasonably close to each other. The idea was to connect people near you so, for example, you could maybe offer each other lifts to make it easier to get to Kelsall and perhaps meet up socially to chat bookbinding.

I'm lucky in that my cluster, Morecambe Bay, quickly started exchanging emails and we have now met twice socially and have also had a small workshop led by one of our members. We have also been able to assist a retiring member who wanted to sell and donate items from his bindery. These have been great but it occurred to me that clusters could be the ideal way for us to reach non-members and diversify our membership. Yes there is much that could be done nationally and we are doing what we can regionally but what about doing something with our bookbinding 'neighbours' in our local area, in our library or community centre? Worth a thought?

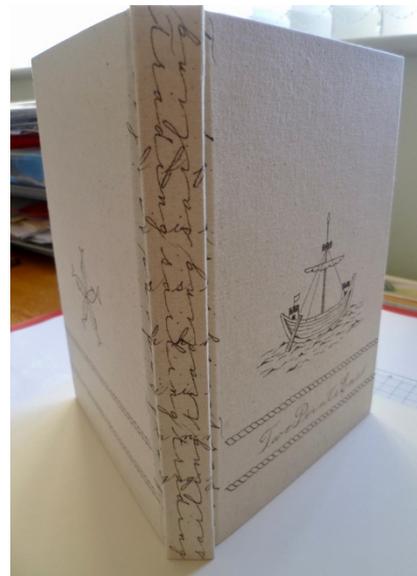
As your committee, we recently agreed a proposal to encourage local clusters to be active in their locality, for members, non-members and generally to promote the craft of hand bookbinding. ***We have agreed to provide £100 grants to pump-prime local initiatives of your choosing. It could be used to pay for local outreach activities; whatever suits you and the others in your locality*** (and is consistent with the Society's charitable aims: *to advance education in the craft of bookbinding for the public benefit*).

With this in mind I will be sending out reminder emails to everyone in your cluster in a week or two. I would encourage you to take the leap and just 'reply all' and say 'hello' to your fellow local SoB members.



Some concertina books I made as calligraphy projects which led on to me wanting to learn more about bookbinding and 'proper' books.

Jane Price sends a fond farewell. We gain members, and lose members for all sorts of reasons, but we will be very sorry to see less of Jane at Kelsall. Jane writes: *I've decided not to renew my SoB membership. The eye problem I have been struggling with during the past year is much better, but my sight is not back to normal yet. I can drive now, which makes life easier, and my ability to carry out everyday tasks is much improved. However, my ability to measure, cut or fold accurately is still poor which means I am not able to book bind as I would like. It is all very frustrating!*



The first big challenge for me came when binding a full printed text block for the first time, which I did with *Two Points East*, combining both calligraphy and bookbinding.

I particularly enjoy making drop back boxes and have made several over the years.

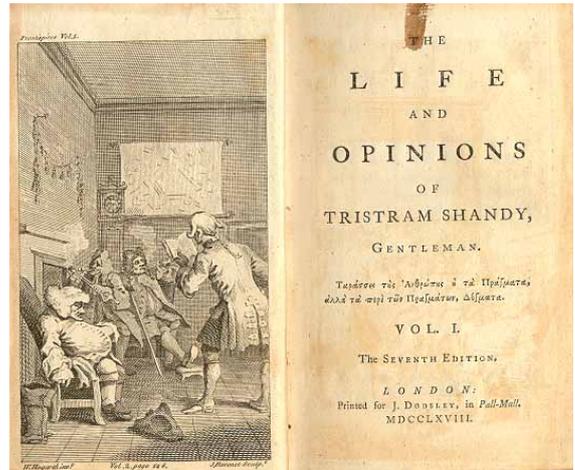
During the years I have learnt such a great deal by being a member of SoB, and in particular by attending workshops organised by the NW2 region. Thank you for all the help, guidance and tuition I have received, enabling me to pursue a craft that has given, and continues to give, me so much pleasure. Members are always very generous with their time and in sharing their knowledge, which has been wonderful.

I wish the NW2 group every success in the years to come. I hope that I may be able to travel across to observe a workshop in the coming months.

The Art of Chance in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*

In 1759, Laurence Sterne, vicar of Coxwold, Yorks, privately published the first volume of his groundbreaking novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Purporting to be the biography of its eccentric protagonist, the work defies conventional storytelling through digression, double entendre, visual experimentation, and an unusual blend of sentiment, humour, and philosophical reflection.

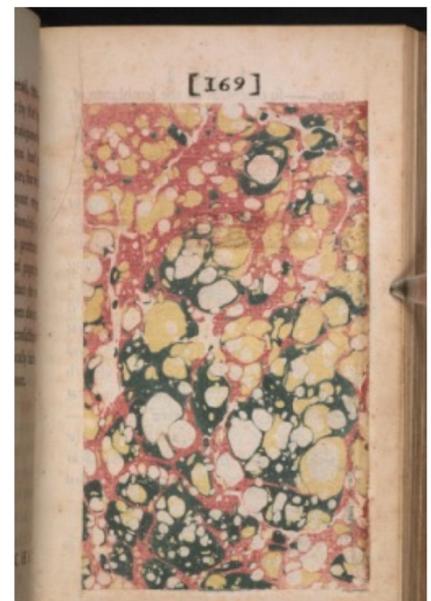
The novel was an immediate success, quickly making Sterne a celebrated literary figure in London. Across nine volumes, he challenged not only narrative form but also the physical expectations of the printed book itself. Sterne inserted visual devices - black pages, squiggles, and most famously, a marbled page - which he described as a *visualisation of ideas*.



The marbled leaf in Volume III (pages 169–170) stands as Sterne's boldest fusion of text and material form. Introduced in the narrative as *the motley emblem of my work*, it reflects the very principle that structures the novel: unpredictability. Careful examination reveals four-fold marks defining the margins, showing that a central sheet was physically laid onto a prepared marbling surface to receive the coloured impression. Once dried, the sheet was reverse-folded and marbled again on the other side.

Because of this hand-made process, every copy of the first edition contains a different marbled image. No two are alike. Each reader, therefore, encounters a unique visual counterpart to Sterne's endlessly digressive narrative. The page becomes not merely decoration, but a material argument: the book itself performs chance, variation, and individuality.

This suggests that Sterne understood the marbling process intimately. Whether executed by printer or binder, the results - sometimes crude in early copies, improving with practice - reinforce the experimental nature of his project. The marbled page is less an illustration than a philosophical gesture, embodying creativity that is *endlessly variable, endlessly open to chance*.



To mark the 250th anniversary of the novel's publication, [The Laurence Sterne Trust](#) organised an exhibition and auction celebrating this spirit of chance. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project invited 169 artists, writers, and composers to create their own *emblems* of creative practice - in effect, modern responses to Sterne's original experiment.

The exhibition, held at Shandy Hall in October 2011, paid tribute to Sterne's enduring idea that meaning can emerge through unpredictability as much as design. Among the works displayed was a contemporary marbled page, extending the dialogue between craft, chance, and imagination that Sterne initiated more than two and a half centuries earlier.

In *Tristram Shandy*, the marbled page is not simply seen - it is experienced as a singular event. Each copy differs, just as each reading differs, making the novel a living demonstration that art, like life, resists repetition.

Criss-Cross Creativity: A Day with Mylyn McColl



I was delighted to be one of eight NW2 regional members able to participate in Mylyn McColl's latest online workshop live in January, *writes Liz Kenny*. The online workshops - especially with a tutor as skilled and engaging as Mylyn - open our programme to members who live far from Cheshire or simply can't attend on the day. All twenty two participants - those attending live and those who received the recording and notes the following day - had been sent one of Mylyn's carefully curated packs of materials. Each contained a unique, colour-coordinated selection of decorative paper, endpapers, book cloth, coloured threads, pre-cut boards, and papers for the signatures. Opening the pack I was delighted to receive such a personalised project kit.

The workshop focused on a criss-cross long-stitch binding sewn into a Bradel-style case, a structure in which the boards and spine are constructed separately before being joined. We were to attach the eight signatures by stitching through the sections and into the cover at the same time. It's a satisfying hybrid: decorative on the outside, beautifully flexible in the hand, and ideal for showcasing colourful materials.

The morning was spent on the groundwork: creating a stitching template, cutting the spine piece to size, constructing the Bradel case, and piercing eight rows of closely spaced sewing holes. Mylyn explained the importance of the 4mm lateral spacing - any narrower risks weakening the spine, while wider gaps leave the signatures too loose.

After lunch, we moved on to the stitching itself. The signatures were sewn in pairs - sections 1 with 3, 2 with 4, and so on - to create the distinctive criss-cross pattern on the spine. Some sections were sewn twice to complete the design. Thanks to the hole spacing, the swell at the spine was manageable, and with Mylyn's patient guidance most of us finished the sewing comfortably within the session. Those who didn't were well equipped to complete their books over the weekend.



As we worked, Mylyn also spoke about her involvement with the *Bound by Veterans* project, which uses bookbinding as a tool for rehabilitation, confidence-building, and skills development for wounded, injured, and sick ex-service personnel. Some of the charity's courses in Wiltshire are open to the public as well as veterans, and further details are available on their website, [click here](#) for more.

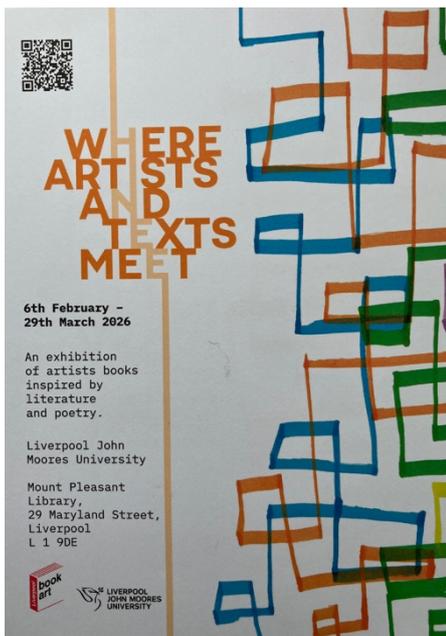
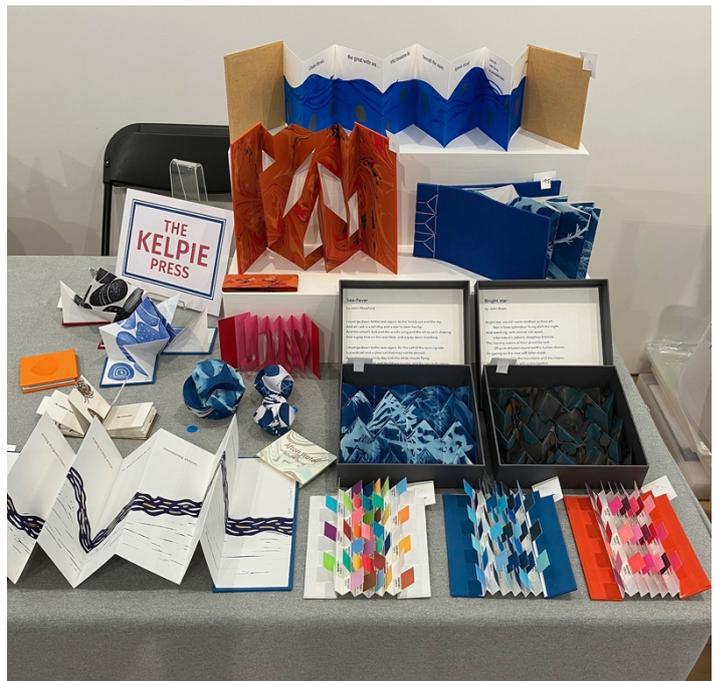
By the time our chair Barry rejoined us at the end of the workshop, he found eight very happy binders, each proud of what they had achieved with Mylyn's expert help. It was everything a Society of Bookbinders' workshop should be - a day of learning, making, and genuine connection.

Recognising and
Dating English
Bookbindings, 1450-
1850 at Shrewsbury
School

Shrewsbury School host this four-day course, 24-27 March tutored by David Pearson (his *English Bookbinding Styles 1450-1800* and other publications on binding and book ownership are standard reference works). For more [click here](#).

A focus on Bookarts

Regional member Isobel Gillan sent her apologies for our AGM, she was exhibiting that same weekend at this year's Artists' Bookmarket at The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh. Isobel reports that: *it was a huge success. With over 70 book artists and art publishers from across the UK there was a lot to see, and the crowds of visitors who attended were not disappointed. As an exhibitor myself (as [Kelpie Press](#), image opposite) it was great to meet other book artists and to see all the wonderful books and ideas. Bookarts is gaining interest in the UK and this fair is probably one of the best, combined with its location and the number of knowledgeable and genuinely interested visitors. As well as the stalls there were workshops and talks all very well attended. Whilst I was relatively successful in selling my work it was instantly reinvested in work from other artists! [Click here](#) for more information about the exhibitors, the talks and workshops.*



Isobel's work also features in this recently opened exhibition in **Liverpool**: titled **Where Artists and Texts Meet**, it's prompted by the library setting and Liverpool John Moores University's (LJMU) annual Library Fest which takes place each spring celebrating all things related to books, reading and libraries.

The range of artists books in the exhibition is extensive, embracing:

- Works inspired by existing texts of literature or poetry
- Artists books which include full texts or extracts from literature or poetry (including texts by artists themselves)
- Sculptural settings of texts
- New bindings or settings of texts.

Videos have been created, showing each work being handled. QR codes throughout the exhibition and in the exhibition booklet link to each video.

This free exhibition, in LJMU's Mount Pleasant Campus Library, marks a new collaboration between Liverpool Book Art (LBA) and LJMU. It continues until 29 March. For more info [click here](#).

The 4th annual **Wales Artists Book Fair** will be running over the weekend of 5 & 6 September and will include artists' stalls, demonstrations and workshops and an exhibition. The event will again coincide with the Newtown Food Festival. The organisers are seeking applications for the 20 stalls: individual artists, groups and small publishers who create high-quality artists' books which are hand crafted with paper, fabric, sculpture, printed, drawn, stitched, or small press and zine editions. The call out is open from mid-March to June. For more information contact amysterly@gmail.com



New homes needed for some nice bits of bookbinding kit!

Regional member **Amanda Field** writes: *a lack of workspace has forced me to make some difficult choices on which equipment I keep and which I can do without. This means that the following two items are now looking for a new home: Louet Vertical Plough, hardly used complete with sharpening jig and original packaging, oiro £400; and a Litho Stone, very large and heavy, measures 43x33cms x 9cms thick, oiro £100. Prices are indications only; all reasonable offers considered. Contact Amanda direct at shortround2shop@gmail.com for further information/photographs.*



And **Ruth Brown** tells us: *I need to make space in my workroom so have decided to part with my laying press. It's very sturdy and functional but isn't a thing of beauty. There is surface rust on the metal parts but turns easily. There is a plough with it but it's seized solid. If you have the time and skill to do it up you could have a nice press. Both free to a good home! Contact Ruth direct: ruthbrown.stonecreek@gmail.com*



The Western Region have recently announced their set book binding challenge for 2026, and they would be delighted if members from other regions would like to join in! It isn't a competition, there are no prizes, just a chance to bind the same book and then see what a wonderful range of different bindings are produced. The set book is [*A Long Story*](#), a four-part poem by former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, with four wood-engravings by [*Simon Brett*](#). A private press book printed by The Old School Press, the text is hand-set in 14pt Fournier italic and printed on 170gsm Magnani mould-made paper in four sections each of 12 pages. The untrimmed size is 325mm x 230mm. Each set is signed by the author and the artist. The unbound sheets are available at a reduced rate of £40, plus £3.50 for postage and packing. The Western Region will display the resulting bindings at their Spring Gathering and AGM in February 2027. However they will be delighted if members from other regions would like to take up this challenge, and maybe share photos of the finished binding also for display then. If interested, please *contact Martin Kennaugh* at mkennaugh@yahoo.co.uk .

The Committee for 2026

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 (cgarratt2@googlemail.com)

Stop Press: Tanya Bolenz writes: I'd like to downsize my bindery and have all sorts of goodies for sale, from books, small tools to bigger equipment, linen and cloth. List attached. Email me for more info / photos. I can bring to the March workshop. tanyabolenz@yahoo.ca



the Society
of Bookbinders



TANJA BOLENZ - BOOKBINDER
tanjavbolenz@yahoo.ca - 07504815943

SMALLTOOLS

4 Metal punches, with 4 different hole sizes. £ 5
Paring Knives - French style , new £ 25 (50% OFF)
- English style, £ 5
Wooden hammer £ 5
Polishing Iron , new £ 40
Brass type holder £ 20
Fillet wheel and holder £ 50 obo
Set of single line pallets (New) £ 150

TYPEFACES (in a cloth covered box) each at £ 50

- A) Bembo 11 pt
- B) Garamond 12 pt
- C) Garamond light 18 pt
- D) Edinburgh 8pt £ 20 (no box)

BACKING BOARDS (comes as a pair)

15" £ 12

9" £ 10

SMALLMATERIALS

Beeswax block £1.50
Big skein of linen thread £ 5
Roll of Linen tape (9mm) £ 10
Roll of Linen tape (20mm) £ 15
Roll of Cord £ 5
Roll of gold stamping foil (fake gold, 2 different colors) £ 2 each
Bole. £ 5
Roll of thin Linen tape (Roll of thin Linen tape (mm) £ 5
mm) £ 7
Repair tape

BIGEQUIPMENT

PAPER TRIMMER, Make Ideal , desk top model
Cutting length: 705mm (x 550 mm width)

Application: to trim paper, cardboard (up to 3mm thick), also book cloth and leather

- professional trimmer in sturdy all-metal construction
 - common DIN format divisions & angle markings on the cutting table
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 - a solid knife angle made of cast aluminum & the double bearing knife axis guarantee precise accurate cuts
- Only £ 150

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Press made of waxed beechwood for traditional book binding, i.e. book block glueing

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- length of screws 450mm, width: 600mm between screws
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Selling cheaply because it still needs a tightening handle. You can order it at www.schmedt.com for 67 Euros.

£ 60

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In perfect working order and excellent condition, base 255mm x 375mm, opening up to 50 mm, attractive brass top on spindle

Application: pressing books or book blocks, prints, flowers etc

Only £ 200

MULTI PURPOSE BOOK PRESS

The press can be used as a book press in a vertical position or as a finishing press and perfect (fan) binding press in a horizontal position

Two fan binding metal clamps are included

Easy manually operated tilting mechanism to 90 degrees

Operations possible: pressing - edge gilding - fan (perfect) binding

Cast iron made, super solid, set on a wooden base 450 x 450 mm

- pressing area 435 mm x 120 mm

- insertion height 190 mm

Free delivery within a 75 mile radius from SY20 9JT for additional fuel payment.

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Various types, smooth, textured

Irish linen

Headbands

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Photo swatch upon request.

BOOKSONBOOKBINDING & MARBLING

1) Jane Greenfield "ABC of Book Binding", A unique glossary with over 700 illustrations for book collectors and librarians, like new, hard cover £ 30

2) Ikegami Kojiro "Japanese Book Binding" - instructions from a master craftsman, like new , hard cover £ 20

3) Journal "The New Book binder" years 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993, 1992 soft cover £ 10 each

4) Einen Miura "The Art of Marbled Paper" , Marbled patterns and how to make them, like new, hard cover £ 25

5) A W Johnson " Book repair and conservation" , soft cover in very good condition £ 14

6) Keith Smith "Exposed spine sewings" , soft cover, as new (double purchase so I have never used it) £ 20

PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST FOR ALL LISTINGS