



The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

First NW2 Cluster Grants released

News is emerging of many members getting together locally, via their Local Cluster, to support each other and to promote the craft of handbooking.

The Morecambe Bay Cluster have had several meetings, often at [Wavecrest Crafts](#) in Morecambe. Helen Golding-Miller is also running workshops that she has delivered at Kelsall, and Han Fleet has organised an informal demo at Lancaster library.

Meanwhile the Chester Cluster are working with a local college and are delivering beginner workshops with 20 btec photography students and 23 btec art students. There is also talk of informal demos / workshops in local libraries.

Northern Ireland SoB members are not of sufficient number to justify a region of their own so they are part of our NW2 region. To encourage both members and non-members alike, NI member Sam Bell is hosting a visit, tour and get together at his and Anna's [Belfast Bookbinding](#).

Closer to home Maurus O'Donnell is teaming up with the Clwydian Cluster to explore further outreach activities with the Gladstone Library in Hawarden.

Meanwhile the North Cumbria Cluster are having a 'show and tell' in each others homes, with Barry McKay kicking off with coffee and posh biscuits!

Both Morecambe Bay and Chester have claimed their pump-priming £100 grants to assist with the costs of their activities. Our NW2 policy offers all Local Clusters this initial pump-priming grant for local initiatives of their own choosing. *Further* grants will be available, but will require a short statement of the purpose and nature of the activity, and the particular need for financial assistance. There will be no fixed amounts or time periods. The committee will consider each and every request on its merits.

All members undertaking bookbinding activity on behalf of the SoB are covered by the Society's public liability insurance. Risk assessments have to be undertaken but need not be onerous. And committee members are happy to support and advise any member wishing to promote bookbinding activity in their own locality.



Reduced price early bird bookings for this year's [Conference at York University on 14-16 August](#) end on 30 April. *NW2* are offering 50% bursaries to regional members who would be financially hard-stretched to attend. Apply to Secretary Jacqueline Payne by *Friday 25 April*. Speakers/ demonstrators include:

- * Kate Holland / design bindings
- * Dominic Riley / Tudor Style leather work
- * Ann-Marie Miller / exhibition preparation
- * Gillian Stewart / magnetic box closures
- * S Schmolgruber / articulated bindings.

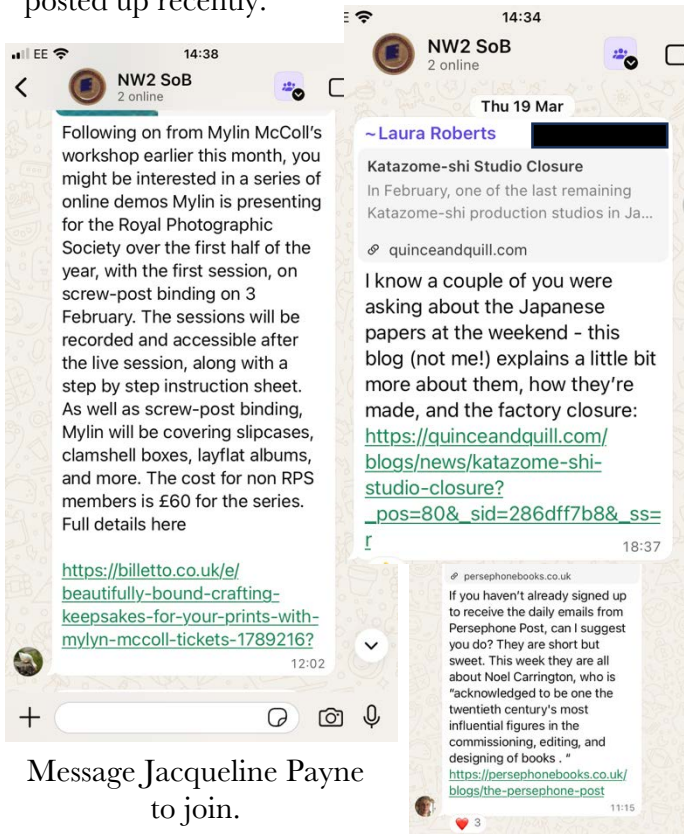
For Conference details [click here](#).



Missed Nesta Davies' Kelsall workshop with us in November 2023, or fancy a re-visit? Now with a catchy title, [The Wrappy Snappy](#), Nesta takes the next Wednesday Webinar on [Wednesday 15 April](#). For more details and (free) booking, [click here](#).

News from the NW2 Whats App group

Our regional Whats App group has been up and running for a couple of years now. It's useful for asking a quick favour, or for sharing a snippet of information. Here are a few items that have been posted up recently:



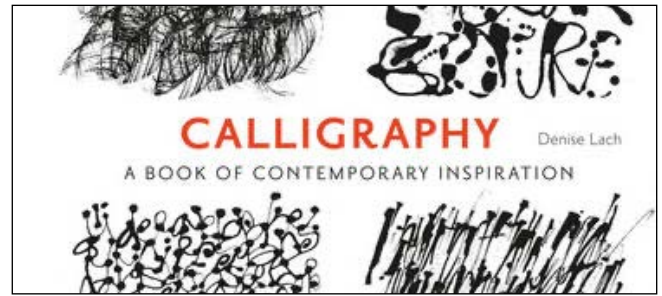
Message Jacqueline Payne to join.

Glenys Latham 1946-2026



Glenys admiring a binding in the Tregaskis collection at our NW2 visit to the Rylands in 2015.

Sadly we report the recent and sudden death of regional member Glenys Latham. Introduced to bookbinding at Bolton Secondary Art School and later the Art College, Glenys returned to bookbinding via Higham Hall in the lakes as she worked on her short runs of self-published editions of poetry and drawings. In between she inspired many students as Head of Art at the old Leigh Girls' Grammar School, before becoming a full-time self-employed artist. We featured Glenys and some of her bookbinding in our January and March 2021 newsletters. A past President of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts, read her profile [here](#).



Ruth Brown writes: Many years ago I came across the work of the Canadian calligrapher [Denise Lach](#) and was entranced by it. Her work can perhaps be summarised with the phrase **text as texture**. In other words, her text is not meant to be read in a formal way but is used to represent texture or pattern. I was delighted to find that [Claire Benn](#), a well-known textile artist, who had studied with Denise, had been authorized to teach her methods here in the UK and was running a five-day course.

All students were each asked, in advance, to choose a short simple phrase that we would use for the whole of the course. It was explained that, rather than learning a particular 'hand' or style of writing, we would be using our normal handwriting, however good or bad we thought it was.

We used a variety of pens/tools that included a standard gel pen, a glass pipette, a piece of scrim rolled up and taped to a stick to make a 'swizzle stick', and a 'cola' pen made by us from a drinks can - hence the name, a wooden tongue depressor and some duct tape. We also used shims of wood to give a 'runic' look to the text, one of my favourites. With each of these we played with different sizes of text, overlapping, compressing and extending letters to give different 'weights' to the marks and made our words fill different shapes. We also experimented with making the text extra 'loopy', 'spikey' or 'boxy' and sloping the letters backwards and forwards.



Finally we tried using coloured backgrounds, dampening both the backgrounds and the text to give a soft focus effect on a variety of papers, and even on fabric treated with soy milk.

It was a very intense few days and I'm not sure how or where I'll use it, but I will . . .

A Flexible Leather Binding with Tanja Bolenz



There was a full house at Kelsall on Saturday 14 March for this workshop, with many observers too. Tanja had provided beautifully scripted notes in advance so we had some idea of what to expect. Extra on the day was the display of wonderful examples of the multiple different ways this binding can be adapted [*opposite*]. Tanja said her aim was to encourage us to experiment. To this end she provided a generous range of leathers, papers, buttons and threads for us to choose from.

We began by selecting two different leathers for the cover and two different papers for the lining and the end papers. Buttons (optional) and threads could then be chosen to match, complement or contrast. There followed quite a well-mannered scrum considering!

Tanja demonstrated each stage before we returned to our benches to complete it. The key steps were:

- * Laminating the leather and paper, nipping and allowing to dry
- * Tipping on end papers
- * Trimming the cover then adding the second layer of leather
- * Designing the sewing, pricking sections and cutting slits in the spine
- * Sewing in the sections (up and down each one)
- * Adding a closure method.

Various optional decisions were ours:

- * Did we want equal fore edges or a wrap around?
- * Should the wrap be geometrical or organic in shape?
- * Where did we want to apply the second layer?
- * Should it be completely adhered or only at the spine?
- * Should it be 'tacked down' at intervals, with sewing or buttons?
- * What sewing pattern did we want on the spine?

I chose a randomly shaped wrap round using the edge of a skin; a second layer aligned with the top edge but with offset curved edges; adhered at spine only but tacked down at key points with french knots; four stitches down the spine with a central button and a braided thread closure incorporating all three colours [*images below*].

The regional shop was available, and many members brought equipment / tools / materials for sale - the opportunity to shop (and pick up some free offerings) during the day was an added bonus. Thanks to Tanja and all who helped with organisation on the day.



Our collective results: all 15 participants made quite different choices. Tanja certainly achieved her aim of encouraging us to experiment and we all had fun even with some frustration when sewing!



With thanks to Jane Sheppard for this workshop review

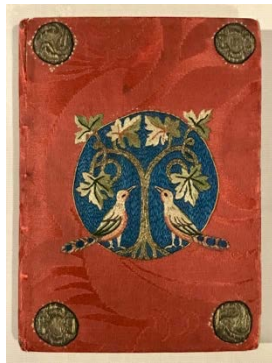
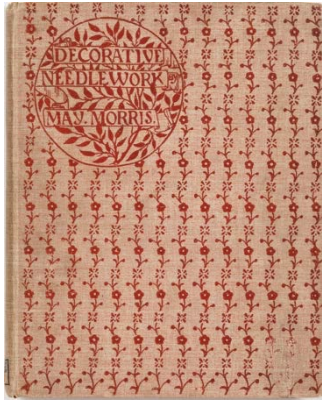


Opening soon, this exhibition is a celebration of the wide-ranging creative output of Arts and Crafts designer and maker, May Morris, the younger daughter of William Morris. A vibrant display of embroideries, wallpapers, watercolour designs, costume and jewellery will showcase her many talents. A talented designer and needleworker, she elevated the embroiderer's craft from a trivial hobby to a serious art form worthy of recognition. But in her lifetime her nature-inspired designs were often misattributed to her father, resulting in the underestimation of her artistic influence.

A vigorous advocate for women artists, she co-founded the Women's Guild of Arts in 1907. This created a much-needed professional forum for women, decades before they were admitted to the Art Workers' Guild. May went on to advocate traditional craft practice to a wider audience, delivering influential lectures across the USA on the history of jewellery and medieval embroidery.

May Morris designed and executed many embroidered book bindings (opposite right) and book bags, as well as the covers for two publishers' bindings including the cover for her own book, *Decorative Needlework* (opposite left).

For more information, [click here](#).



Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery and York Art Gallery both focus on Japanese woodblock prints this summer. The Whitworth invites us to *step into Japan's floating world and explore the art of Hokusai and Hiroshige, two visionary artists whose images have shaped how we see nature, landscape and everyday life.* Their exhibition, *Beneath the Great Wave*, runs until 15 November with a programme of free events running alongside, [click here](#) for details.

The York exhibition *covers over 300 years of printing history from 17th to 21st centuries and features over 100 striking and iconic works by world-renowned artists including Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige and Kūtagawa Utamaro, amongst many others.* The exhibition also features a Japanese dry landscape garden, or *karesansui*, directly behind the Gallery. The events programme includes a one-day bookbinding workshop with book artist Lucy May Schofield: *An Introduction to Japanese Bookbinding (Ori-hon & Toji-hon).* [Click here](#) for details.



Making Waves

The Art of Japanese Woodblock Print

27 February – 30 August 2026

York Art Gallery

My Bookbinding Beginnings – Laura McLaughlin

Back in the early months of 2014 I was searching for somewhere to experience the joys and tribulations of bookbinding, near enough for me to travel - I'm one of the region's few members located in Northern Ireland! This search led me to The Grange in Ellesmere, Shropshire - and what was to be the beginning of seven years of wonderful courses, memories and friendships. That first year, I remember completing the Summer School with Christopher Rowlatt in the most gorgeous setting, surrounded by lovely people and excellent food. Even now, some part of my brain harks for cake at around 4 in the afternoon. But I digress...

Early summer days at the Summer School at The Grange, Ellesmere (not my desk).



A double slipcase design; a quarter leather binding; and a quarter leather, off boards binding all made at The Grange.



All in all, while I don't get the time to bind as much as I would like to at the moment, I can safely say that my days at The Grange [*alas, it is no more*] solidified my love of books, the art of making them and the friendships and experiences I gained along the way. I hope that with time, I will get back to binding more often where I can continue to develop and share in this wonderful slice of artisanal craft.

That first course introduced me to the intricacies and joys of creating a functioning and beautiful book and really opened my eyes to the skills and talents needed to create what is quite simply, my favourite thing. Over the course of the next seven years, I completed many courses, developing skills in different types of binding, decorative techniques, repair work and self-directed projects. Learning under different binders taught me so many different skills and problem-solving approaches and has helped shape me creatively and practically. When Glenn Malkin arrived to take us all under his wing, I found a love for fine binding and designer binding that even now has made me a discerning critic of modern day bindings, marvelling in a binder's design approach, how they have realised that design into an end result and how well it relates to the story or text within. I even spent some time in one-to-one tuition with Glenn in his fantastic workshop, something that I would recommend to anyone looking to step up their binding game. Quite frankly, if Glenn could survive teaching me with my tendencies to go off script and not have it end in injury, then he can teach anyone!



A design binding [*Of Mice and Men*] with handsewn headbands and sprayed edges created during one-to-one tuition with Glenn Malkin.



John Cooper-Poole writes: apropos copying of letters in the old days, I came across the note below which I made some years ago. It was done to describe the little Watts press which is in the Agent's office at the National Trust property Erddig. Unfortunately I cannot recall what my source was - it may well have been an article in an SoB national newsletter.

Watt's that Press?

Have you ever wondered about the purpose of the little black iron press in the Agent's Office? Well, it stems from an invention by the famous engineer, James Watt, at the end of the 18th century of a method of copying documents. The letter to be copied was written in special copying ink; then a piece of very thin copying paper was placed on it, and on top of that a sheet of damp blotter. Then on either side was placed a sheet of waterproof oiled paper. Then the whole "sandwich" was pressed in the press. The ink should offset onto the copy paper, which was thin enough that it could be read from behind giving an image in the correct orientation. The invention was very successful and these presses were found in nearly every office during the 19th century. *And now are re-purposed as an essential piece of kit in bookbinders' workshops.*

For a discussion of the early use of this precursor to the photocopier, [click here](#).

The bluebells are soon in bloom - time to make some glue?

Another interesting snippet from John: *my wife was reading Broadleaf the journal of the Woodland Trust recently, and came across a statement that bluebell bulbs were once ground to make glue for bookbinding. Have you ever heard of this? I certainly never have. And I can't find any reference to bluebell bulbs in Bernard Middleton's History. He mentions a surprising number of other things which were added to glue to prevent it setting too hard, but no bluebells, either on their own or as an additive. Anyhow, it strikes me as one of those superfluous pieces of information which make life interesting and which are worth passing on.*

However, google *bluebells* and *bookbinding* and one soon discovers the truth of the statement. And not only bluebell bulbs but hyacinth too.

[Click here](#) to explore more.



A less than successful repair job?

Peter Criddle discovered this 'repaired' book in a second-hand bookshop in Wales not that long ago. Binder not known, and best left that way.

The Committee for 2026

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SOCIETY of BOOKBINDERS

1961



2024

FOUNDED in MANCHESTER



the Society
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