



Society of Bookbinders (Scotland)

Members Update, Spring 2026

We have had several events and workshops over the past few months; these are great not only to learn new skills but also meet fellow members and bookbinding enthusiasts. We also have a number of sessions planned for the rest of the year in Scotland, as well as the national conference in York in August. A big thank you to Peter Cunningham, our Events Secretary for organising our workshops as well as the 2027 silver salver competition.

We are always keen to get updates from member, and in this newsletter we hear from Orkney member Malcolm Raggett who runs the Artists Book Group, which developed as a SoB side-project during COVID. We are also starting a new feature: "Where We Work- Binders' Workspace" showing the different spaces members have access to, to bind books- they are all very different!

Andrew Shoolbread, Membership Secretary Scotland
scot.membership@societyofbookbinders.com

REMEMBER TO CHECK YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS UP TO DATE!

If for some reason you realise you stop receiving emails from SoB for a while, please check that your membership is up to date- I only operate from current membership lists which I receive from national. You should check your membership status through national.

AGM 2026 – 3rd February via ZOOM

The AGM was attended by 15 members and after a brief review of the year the committee was elected:

Chair – Tom McEwan; **Treasurer** – Mary Asiedu & Susie Wilson; **Membership Secretary** – Andrew Shoolbread; **Events Secretary** – Peter Cunningham
Committee Members – Toben Lewis, Felicity Bristow, Fen Wolters-Sinke, Susie Wilson and Tina Wilson

Gillian Stewart stood down, and we would like to thank Gillian for her commitment to supporting the running of the Society over the years. We would also like to welcome Fen onto the committee. If you would like to be part of the committee in the future or think you have some skills which would benefit the running of the Scotland branch, please get in touch.

SILVER SALVER COMPETITION 2027

The Scottish Branch of Society of Bookbinders has a silver salver traditionally awarded to a bookbinder based in Scotland who has achieved something of note in the past year.

For 2026-2027 it has been agreed to run a competition to decide the next winner which will be announced in spring 2027. We are pleased to announce we have joined with Gutter (<https://www.guttermag.co.uk>), Scotland's leading literary magazine, publishing new fiction, essays and poetry which showcases emerging and established writers from Scotland and beyond, and the competition will be to create a bespoke binding for the next edition of the magazine published in August.

Please note that although the magazine will be launched then, bindings do not have to be completed until December. The book block can be bound however the individual chooses, this includes materials and decoration. It is open to all Scottish members of the society and



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we would encourage anyone, beginner, intermediate or advanced to have a go- working on a project is a great way to gain new skills and confidence.

Submitted books will be judged by a panel from SoB and Gutter, and ownership will be retained by the binder but books may be requested to be displayed in a temporary exhibition.

If you are interested in participating, there will be a £10 entrance fee to cover the cost of the book block and administration. Anyone who is interested in participating must email me at scot.secretary@societyofbookbinders.com by **30th April** so that we can ensure we have the sufficient number of book blocks for everyone who wishes to participate. Book blocks will be available in August, and books are to be completed by 1st December.

The competition is also being supported by Hewits and the prize winner will receive £100 worth of vouchers from Hewits to spend in their shop and £100 from the SoB Scottish branch. The competition is only open to members of the Scottish Branch of the SoB and the Committee have final control on the Salver competition.

SILVER SALVER 2026

This year the committee agreed to award the Silver Salver to Ali Halley an SoB member based in Shetland who in 2025 won the Designer Bookbinders Ludlow Bookbinders prize for The Complete Book, and became a Licentiate of Designer Bookbinders in 2026. In the picture below Ali is seen receiving the salver from SoB Scotland Chair, Tom McEwan.



RECENT EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

Online Christmas Quiz, 9th December

Written and hosted by Gilian Stewart (JuJu Books)

In December we had our first online Christmas bookbinding quiz! It was lots of fun, with members popped into new teams to get to know each other and put their brains together for a range of bookbinding topics and picture rounds. Big thanks to everyone who came along, and to Carrie for donating marbled pencil prizes!



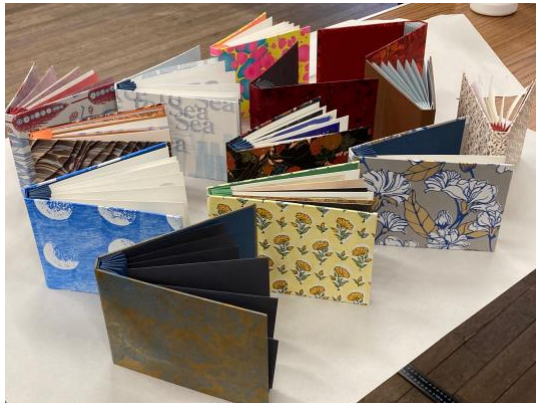
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Elbum Workshop delivered by Fen Wolters-Sinke

31st January @Dunblane

The elbum is an album structure invented by French bookbinder Ben Elbel and inspired by Hedi Kyle's blizzard book. Fen received special permission to teach this binding specifically for SoB Scotland. There was a total of 12 participants in the workshop.

This structure works on the principle of narrow rectangular pockets laid out in the height of the book, parallel with the spine, in which cards can be inserted and held solely by friction. Once the documents are in place, it is possible to manipulate the whole binding like a book, while retaining the possibility to remove or swap the cards at all times.



Members Get-Together – 28th February @Dunblane

We held our second annual “Get Together” in Dunblane which was well-attended by members from across Scotland including Shetland, Inverness, Aberdeenshire as well as more central locations. Hewits were also in attendance with a pop-up stall where people were able to purchase bookbinding equipment and resources on the day as well collect pre-orders.

SoB Member Gillian Stewart (JuJu Books), who is also a licentiate Designer Bookbinder, started the day by giving an informative presentation on Designing for Bookbinding which took us through the design and binding processes she uses on her commissions. Gillian also brought copies of some of her books for us to look at and handle. After lunch members were encouraged to participate in a “Show and Tell” of their own work.



A selection of Gillian's books can be seen in the foreground



Show & tell



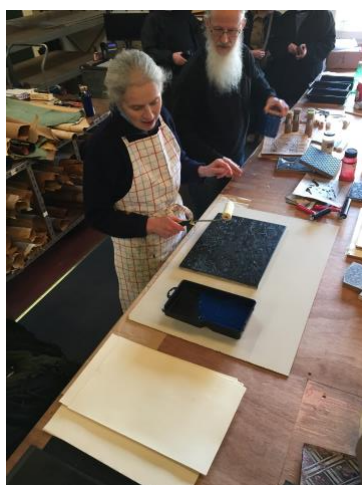
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Bookbinding Seminar- Saturday 21st March @Hewits

This was another well-attended event held at Hewits' workshop and tannery, with members having travelled from across Scotland as well as from Shetland, Iona and Northern Ireland. In the morning Hewits showed us around the tannery and demonstrated the various processes involved used in creating their leathers; they also talked about the different leathers and their uses.

In the afternoon John and Jane Jeffery gave a demonstration on how they produce their unique hand-printed papers- from cutting lino to creating print blocks, to mixing the dyed paste and then the actual printing process. We were also encouraged to have a go at printing our own papers.

We would like to thank Hewits for supporting this event and also the Jefferys for sharing their work with us.





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UPCOMING EVENTS FOR SCOTTISH MEMBERS- SAVE THE DATES!

Edge Decoration with Tom McEwan

Saturday 25th April, Dunblane

SoB Scotland Chair Tom McEwan will be delivering a workshop on edge decoration on Saturday 25th April at St Marys Church Hall in Dunblane. The cost for this workshop is £30. If you are interested in attending, please contact Peter Cunningham via scot.events@societyofbookbinders.com

Find out more about Tom's work: <https://sbg.ed-co.net>

Additional Forthcoming Workshops and Events

Sewing & Board Attachment methods: with Nesta Davis

Online Zoom 09.00-12.00 Sunday 17 May

Please express your interest to be sent Zoom details - £10 cost

Gold Tooling: Isobel McGowan

Dunblane, Friday & Saturday 25 & 26 September - Cost £60

Japanese Trick Book: Lucy May Schofield

Saturday 31 October – Cost £30

MEMBERS' MARKETPLACE

Joint workshop Society of Bookbinders and Designer Bookbinders

25th & 26th April @Juju Books studio, Glasgow

£185 for members

Drum leaf binding - variations and play

Drum leaf binding is a great structure for any bookbinder to know. It allows double pages to be bound from single page prints, making it a good option for thicker paper or art prints. It's versatile, offering the chance to use heavy or light papers, and the sculptural form offers many design opportunities.

In this 2 day workshop you'll make multiple versions of the structure, with several tweaks and design interventions to inspire your future books. Various methods of board attachment will be explored, including a sewn boards variation and a pop out spine. You're encouraged to



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bring some of your own prints/paintings to bind into one of the books, but this is optional and all materials will be supplied.

Suitable for beginners and experienced binders, as well as book artists and printmakers looking to incorporate books into their practice.

Further information and booking:

<https://designerbookbinders.org.uk/shop/workshop/drum-leaf-binding-variations-structure-and-play/>

Bookbinding workshop with Toben Lewis

13-16 September, Iona

Four-day fish skin parchment bookbinding on Iona, 13-16 September

<https://www.bailemor.co.uk/event/iona-fish-skin-binding-workshop/>

SOCIETY OF BOOKBINDERS – NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

Society of Bookbinders National Conference - 14-16 August 2026 @ York University

The 2026 conference takes place at York University on 14–16 August. Speakers will cover a wide range of subjects from design binding to conservation and history, with demonstrations on useful aspects of construction. After each talk or demonstration, you will have a chance to speak further with the speaker and see their work. Speakers include Kate Holland, Dominic Riley, Gillian Stewart, Suzanne Schmollegruber and Ann-Marie Miller.

For further information including costs and booking, please visit:

<https://www.societyofbookbinders.com/events/conference2026>

THE ARTISTS BOOK GROUP

Malcom Raggett, SoB Member based in Orkney

The book as an artistic medium does not receive a great deal of attention and artists who use the book as their means of expression are relatively few and seem to be widely spread. This makes creating a support network for them a bit of a challenge but when my Society of Bookbinders (SoB) regional committee asked for ideas for topics that could take place online during COVID-19 lockdowns I volunteered to run some sessions on artist books. Six others joined me to meet online once a month. We showed each other our work and we talked about anything related to artist books. By the third meeting we had grown to 14 members and the word spread to include artist book-makers from other parts of the country. I had no expectation of the group lasting beyond the COVID lockdowns but membership continued to grow and here we are six years later with 87 members. Most of these are from the UK but we include members from France, Portugal, Hungary, New Zealand and the USA. Not everyone attends online meetings regularly though; we typically have about 20 at a monthly meeting but I send out a group message with meeting summaries or when something newsworthy comes to my attention to keep all members informed.

Makers of artist books differ from bookbinders by creating the content of the book as well as its binding, which is why group membership is open to anyone involved in making, teaching, researching, collecting or cataloguing artist books, not just SoB members. We welcome those taking their first steps or with a lifetime of experience in artist books.



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Our meetings are social events similar to meeting in a pub or cafe. They take place using Zoom on the third Monday of every month at 19.00 UK time. Meetings last about an hour. There's no formal agenda but if there's a topic someone wants to discuss or a book they want to show they often tell me in advance so that I can allocate some time to it. The only 'condition' of membership is that everyone is willing to share their email address with others in the group; this is so that individuals can contact others if they want more details about something that's been discussed or they have an idea for a collaborative project. One of the earliest benefits of the group was that it helped geographically isolated artists meet others with a similar interest; they realised they weren't alone in using the book as a means of artistic expression and that other artists can be great sources of inspiration and solvers of problems they may be wrestling with.

If you think the Artist Books Group might be relevant for you, check our website www.artistbooks.group where you can find out more about us and see some of our members' work. There's a Contact page where you can send a message if you'd like to join.

Malcolm Raggett

WHERE WE WORK – BINDERS' WORKSPACES

The membership of SoB (Scotland) is very varied – we have some full-time professional bookbinders, as well as keen amateurs, hobbyists or those who simply have an interest in books. In addition to bookbinders we have book artists, print-makers, photographers, graphic designers and paper makers (amongst others). Some people have undertaken recognised qualifications, and others have participated in workshops, whilst many are initially self-taught- everyone has a different story and journey but a love of making books binds us together.

We are keen to hear more about our members' stories and see where they work- most of us will not have a professional bindery at our disposal, so where do we work? Is it the kitchen table, a corner in the dining room, a converted guest bedroom, a shed or a cupboard? And what does a professional bindery look like? (I think a green cutting mat is one thing we shall all have in common.) In the first of this series, some of our committee members share their stories and spaces. If you would like to share your story and space, please send some text and a photograph to Andrew:

scot.membership@societyofbookbinders.com

Fenneke (Fen) Wolters-Sinke

"My journey into bookbinding started in 2017, when I did a 3D printing course at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen. Until that time I was mainly printmaking. For my final project I lasercut and laser engraved a plywood bookcover for my intaglio prints which were handpulled from laser engraved plates. To my big surprise it was selected for and then sold during the RSA Annual Exhibition. With the money earned, I organised a one-to-one session with Susie Wilson to learn more about the different bookbinding structures. That's now 9 years ago and I'm still loving this continuous journey!"





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Andrew Shoolbread

“After completing a weekend book-making workshop at Streetlevel Photography Gallery (Glasgow) in 2005 I realised I wanted to learn more about bookbinding and so later that year enrolled in the Fine Book Binding HNC at the Glasgow Metropolitan College, the final year this course was delivered. I completed the year-long course whilst juggling full-time employment but with a young family, limited time and space, my life was pulled in a very different direction and I was only ever able to dabble in bookbinding. I’m still only a dabbler and still only have a very limited workspace- a shambolic desk space in the corner of a more shambolic room but I do what I can, when I can, whilst all the time dreaming of a dedicated studio space. One day...(sigh)”



Peter Cunningham

“I started with Saturday classes at Downie Allison Downie Bookbinders in Glasgow with John Alison in 2016 and then mixed classes wherever I could find them. I have attended many classes at Book Camp, DB and SoB run workshops and gone to SoB conferences. I attempt and enjoy all sorts of bindings from leather designer to art form bindings.”



CONTACTS

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