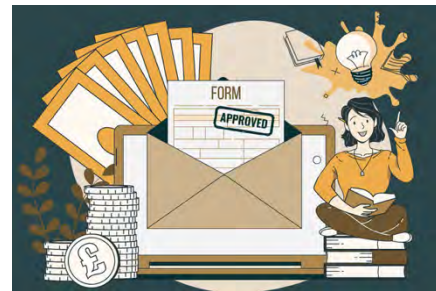




The Newsletter of the North Wales & North West Region

Bursaries . . . Grants . . . Awards . . . Apply!

The closing date for our regional 50% bursaries for Conference this year has now closed - and we are funding four members this year. However, national bursaries are still available. [Click here](#) to apply for the **Paul Delrue bursary** available to a young, early-career binder, and [click here](#) for details of the **Gordon Hartley bursary** available to a more mature person who is changing their career to bookbinding. Closing date for both is 15 June. In our region, thanks to a generous anonymous donation from a fellow member, we now have **Conference Travel Grants** available. If you feel your travel costs are onerous and would like some financial assistance please email our secretary (jacq.payne@oakbankmill.com) giving the cost of your travel to York; by 15 June please.



Members have already been reminded nationally of the **Maureen Duke Educational Award**, jointly sponsored by the SoB and the Norie Trust, and this year worth £5000. The recipient of the award should be: a bookbinder, book conservator, book restorer or book artist; who is working professionally in the UK; and plans to start or continue to teach and pass on their skills, both to individuals and groups. [Click here](#) for more information; the closing date is 3 July.

*And the Society has recently adopted a major new open-ended **Grants Programme** to support education, accessibility, and innovation in bookbinding. The programme reflects our charitable aim to advance public education in the craft and to help bookbinding skills flourish, evolve, and reach wider audiences. The intention is to fund activities that: support learning, skill development, and innovation in bookbinding; reduce barriers to participation; promote diversity, outreach and the sharing of knowledge. Eligibility is not restricted to SoB members but open to any UK-based individuals and organisations, including members and non-members, students, early-career practitioners, and those retraining in the craft. There are no fixed sums, but applicants for small sums, up to £250, complete a simplified and quicker application process. It is envisaged that awards will be made for:*

- * Equipment & Materials – Tools and supplies needed for practice or training
- * Training – Courses, workshops, and professional development
- * Access Support – Travel, accommodation, or other costs that enable participation
- * Projects & Innovation – Exhibitions, resources, and community initiatives
- * Outreach – Activities engaging new or underrepresented audiences
- * Research – Work exploring the history or teaching of bookbinding.

The national trustees have appointed a **Grants, Bursaries and Awards Panel** to consider all applications. In their decision-making the Panel will take into account: *Impact and benefit to the craft, Applicant commitment, Reach and audience engagement, Equity and accessibility.*

The Panel first meets on 25 June, and about every two months thereafter. For more information and the necessary application forms [click here](#).



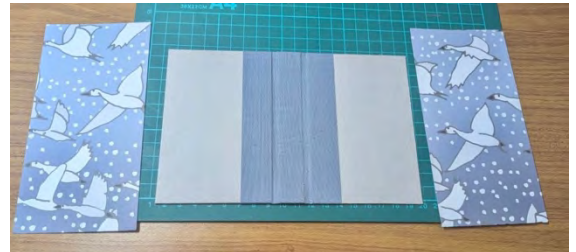
Helen Moss prints and publishes an Incline Press re-discovery

In Helen's own words: *During the unpacking of the Incline Press workshop in the new building at Creetown, I found two scruffy boxes of engravings which turned out to be an animal alphabet carved by Enid Marx and printed by Graham in 1996. The first publication of these blocks had been in 1985 by Douglas Cleverdon as a Clover Hill Edition, entitled An ABC of Birds and Beasts. I believe Marco (as her friends called her) had died before the Incline Press version was finished and I expect Graham put the blocks away not knowing what to do with them.*

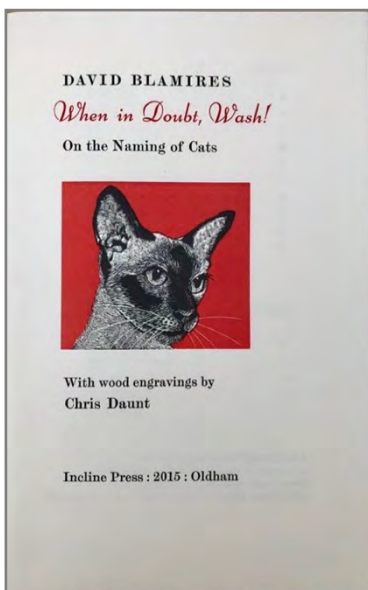
The book is printed with 25 alphabetical images, directly from the original wood engravings, plus one zinco on the frontispiece. The paper is a very old handmade Barcham Green, dampened and printed on an 1846 Albion press. The book measures 11.5 x 15cm. The main hardback edition is £150, and there are 50 unbound sets of sheets for binders priced at £60; all post free in the UK. For more about the book, its making and Enid Marx, [click here](#); a major exhibition about Enid Marx opens at [Compton Verney](#) later this year.

New member Natalie Macintyre shares her first impressions

I came to bookbinding the way I suspect many people do: sideways, and slightly by accident. By day I work in Learning and Development, designing training programmes and supporting people through change. However, for a while I had been quietly feeling like something was missing - the particular pleasure of making something with your hands. After spending years helping others learn, I decided it was time to become a proper beginner at something myself.



A brief reminder: our NW2 2027 binding project will be launched at the next year's Spring Gathering / AGM. The unbound sets (book below) were generously donated by Helen Moss who we hope will join us for the display of the resulting bindings at our Autumn Gathering.



My first workshop was earlier this year, and since then I have been making up for lost time. I have had the privilege of learning with some extraordinarily generous tutors. With Glenn Malkin I made a chemise and slipcase; Mike Springall guided me through a hardback notebook and slipcase. Barry Clark introduced me to sewing on tapes, which is one of those techniques that looks deceptively simple until you are actually doing it, and Dominic Riley (at whose workshop I had the good fortune to meet several of you) walked me through a small leather box that I am still slightly amazed I managed to produce.

The workshops themselves have been wonderful, but what has genuinely surprised me is the community. Everyone I have met has been kind, encouraging, and openly passionate about the craft in a way that is immediately infectious. There is no gatekeeping here; only people who are happy to share what they know, answer a slightly embarrassed question about knife types, and point you in the right direction.



I have more to look forward to: a cloth re-back with Doug Mitchell and a leather spine journal with Anna Yevtukh are both on the horizon, and I am already excited for the conference in August as my first chance to meet more of you in one place. I am very much still at the stage of unpicking my mistakes and pretending they were intentional; but I wouldn't have it any other way. If any of you have tips for a determined beginner, I will be at the conference and very happy to be taught. *[And Natalie has just landed a place on Tom McEwan's workshop with us later this month].*

Local Clusters - an update

Our April newsletter reported that several of our Local Clusters were meeting and planning activities in their localities: Morecambe Bay, North Cumbria, Clwydian, Cheshire and Northern Ireland. And that two had claimed their pump-priming £100 Cluster Grants. These two Clusters both had activities in April. Here's an update.

Jacqui Dodds writes on behalf of the Chester Cluster:

We held our first event, a workshop at Chester College at the end of April and it went very well. We ran a **Japanese Stab binding workshop** for two groups of BTec Art & Design students at the college for World Culture Day. There were approximately 50 students over two sessions and they made about 75 books. They were all beginners and slightly unsure of what we were going to teach them, but they soon came out of their shells and responded with enthusiasm and were very eager to make the books. Some of the teachers and student helpers also made their own books, which they really enjoyed. We also gave a brief history of Japanese Bookbinding and also a short talk on Haikus. The day was very positive and we are excited to do more. As well as myself, regional members Julie France, Liz Kenny and David Scanlon were involved.



Helen Golding Miller writes on behalf of the Morecambe Bay Cluster:

So far we have had two social meetings at member Liz Wheeler's little craft shop *Wavecrest Crafts* in Morecambe, resulting in two workshops also held at the shop. The first was a simplified **sewn boards binding** and in April we workshopped the **Bat-wing box**. A further workshop is being planned for July. The funding from the region has helped to keep the price of the workshops down. We are also organising a publicity event at Lancaster Library which will take place in June. This will be run in a similar way to the 50th anniversary events in Manchester Central Library: a small display, some demos, and an opportunity for visitors to make their own simple bindings.



Local Clusters: a reminder

In July 2025 our secretary launched our NW2 Local Clusters initiative creating an opportunity for members living close to each other to come together as you wish. We now have twenty geographical clusters, and new members are linked to their Local Cluster through their 'welcome' e-mail. It may be that some in Local Clusters will share transport to Kelsall, or maybe meet up informally in their locality, or organise outreach activities, or run local workshops / demos, or indeed do whatever you choose. *It is an informal addition to, not a replacement of all-region activity. It is for members of each Local Cluster to decide what, if anything, that you wish to do.*

Since then the committee have agreed to provide each Local Cluster with a £100 grant to pump-prime local initiatives of your choosing. It could be used to pay for whatever activities suits you and the others in your locality (as long as it is consistent with the Society's charitable objectives: to advance education in the craft of Bookbinding for the public benefit). All members undertaking bookbinding activity on behalf of the SoB are covered by the Society's public liability insurance. *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 request on its merits.*

If you would like to move this forward in your Local Cluster do contact your fellow Local Cluster members and/or chat to any member of the committee - by e-mail, by phone or at Kelsall. We're keen to support local bookbinding initiatives around the region.

Precise Leather Paring and Covering with Dominic Riley

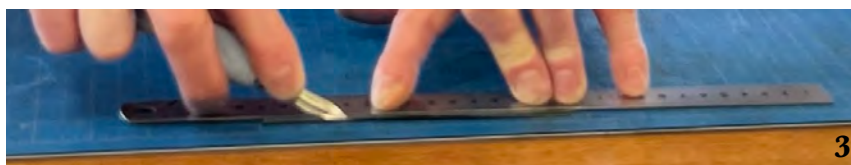


Despite my grandfather having been a foreman box-maker in the famous 'No-Nail Box Factory', I struggle with boxes. Little genetic ability seems to have come down the family tree. So I was very interested in attending Dominic's workshop to see what I could learn. About 20 of us assembled in Kelsall. Fortunately, Dominic had made the boxes in advance. They were waiting there for us, all ready to cover. So all box-making terrors - wonky sides, bits not fitting - instantly disappeared.

Dominic's completed example [1] had a lovely hefty expensive-feeling solidity in the hand. Inside was some equally lovely marbled paper by our own Jill Sellars. No wonder stuff like this can sell for hundreds of pounds at a certain boutique stationers on New Bond Street.

Our task was to cover this box with leather. We used some very handsome fine-grained black Harmatan Grade 2 (Grade 1 no longer being available) with Dominic explaining how, if we buy a whole skin, which bits to avoid when we cut it up. Next we made a paper template to cut the piece of leather to cover the 4 sides of the box, with extra at top and bottom. There was lively discussion of whether the 'wax pencil' on Dominic's equipment list, used to mark the suede side, was really a wax pencil, or a chinagraph. I am none the wiser.

The first technique was edge-bevelling at a 45degree angle with a straight-bladed scalpel. This takes some force - the blade might bend. I enjoyed snapping my blade in two repeatedly! That is not the accepted procedure. Then we moved onto 'abrupt paring'. This was an entirely new technique to me. First you score the leather with a folder; then fold it over and give it a light hammering to produce a sharp crease. This is nowhere near as easy as Dominic made it look. Then the task is to pare a strip off the whole length of the covering leather, up to the crease, leaving a turn-in thickness of about 0.4ish mm [3]. A whole room full of people [2] cursing under their breaths whilst bent over their Scharffix and Brockman machines is always something to behold. But we all muddled through. Michael demonstrated the Scharffix with great insouciance, and was able to help those of us who cannot resist pulling too hard, or who do not change their blades often enough.



Then came the covering. Wet and paste the leather, leaving space for it to stretch, and then roll it over the sides of the box. That moment in binding when something all-of-a-sudden starts to look like the finished item is always a lovely moment! The final bit of paring is some feather paring, with a paring knife on a paring stone, producing a slightly ragged edge which bevels invisibly onto your starting point [4]. Trim and turn in head and foot: et voila - you have a lovely little box for your 'messages'!

This is a fun and versatile thing. I went and bought some Ritzy personalised correspondence cards for a recently-married friend, and those will go nicely into one of these. A slightly larger box, using the same paring techniques, could perhaps make a lid.

With thanks to Chris McNall for this workshop review.

Sheila Phillips shares her *Bookbinding Beginnings*

It was being a weaver, and a member of the Lancs & Lakes Guild of Weavers Spinners and Dyers, that brought me to bookbinding. Kendal Parish Council own a wonderful little book containing 498 tiny textile samples dating from 1769 [1]. In 2009 the book was sent for conservation and it was decided to have some copy samples on display while the original was away. The Guild was asked to weave a few samples and, under the supervision of the conservator Brenda Dreghorn, I was given access to the book. The little gem (about A5 size) was so inspiring we decided to copy the whole book but not at the same scale and not every colour way. A year later the samples were ready and needed to be bound. I pasted the samples onto archival card, which was then covered with more card to hide the raw edges; hinges and spine pieces were added; and with the considerable help of Ged Brady at the Lancaster University Bindery the book was post bound.



Following this I found a very simple YouTube video by Shepherds, and following their instructions made a single section hardback pamphlet-stitched book. I loved the fact that I could successfully use materials I already had, creating something both useful and aesthetically pleasing. I think by this stage I was hooked! I sought out further instruction - with Doug Mitchell at [Higham Hall](#). I started on the beginners' course which included several easy bookbinding methods. As is always with Doug one course followed another and more comprehensive skills were added [2].

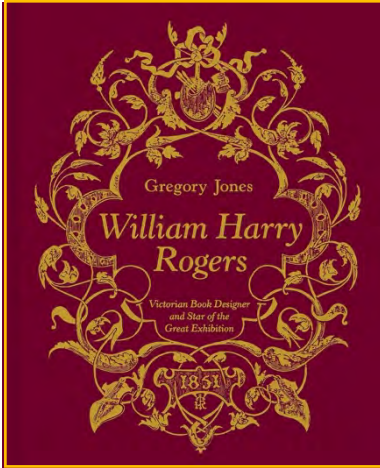
Then came Covid-19, and I turned right at the lights. As well as weaving yards and yards of fabric, I bought Hedi Kyle's *The Art of the Fold* (Laurence King, 2018) and worked my way through many of her structures. I also decided to create my own pop-up book using her [Crown Book](#) structure. The folded down points which hold the pages in place are bulky and give a lot of width; filling that space with what can be bulky pop-ups was just right [3]. If you have never attempted a pop-up it is just the thing to fill in a whole shed-load of time! Each page must have taken me about a month, and then another 6 hours to assemble, hence an edition of only 5.

Covid ended and I was on another course at Higham with Doug learning yet more skills, soon followed by two courses with a more artistic influence tutored by [Tom McEwan](#) [4].

I practice the skills I have learned frequently and make small hardback notebooks that I pass on to a friend who sells them on behalf of a local charity. I continue to go off-piste as seen by this small concertina book [5] entirely made of woven tapestry pages.

Throughout my bookbinding journey I have used and been most grateful to internet resources especially YouTube, [DAS bookbinding](#) and [Four Keys Book Arts](#) in particular. Joining the SoB in mid-2025 and attending workshops at Kelsall has opened many new avenues to explore, and I am looking forward to continuing the journey.

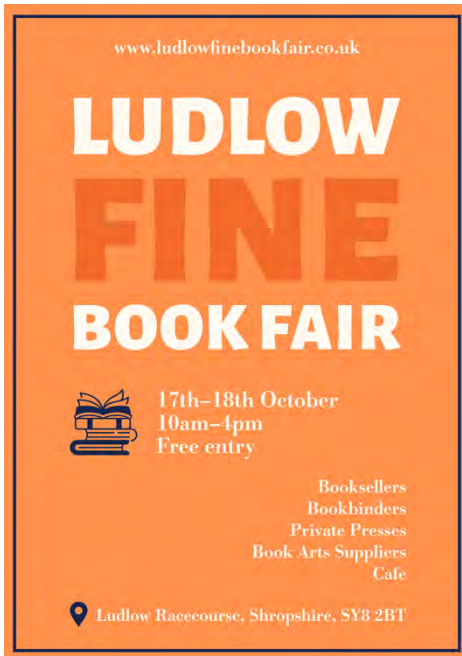




Some members will know of William Harry Rogers as one of the outstanding commercial book cover designers of the mid 19th century, and it's not surprising that this major biographical study offers a thorough analysis of his bindings. All 244 are illustrated in colour with full descriptions demonstrating the remarkable variety of Rogers' cover designs.

However Gregory Jones' wide-ranging biography also shows that Rogers was one of the finest artist-designers of the Victorian period in Britain. His designs won several prize medals at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Whilst he specialised in book cover design, and his work in this field in the 1850s and 1860s was unrivalled, he also designed in other areas including wood carving, silver and jewellery.

The book was published by [Unicorn Publishing](#) in 2023 at £50. Recently remaindered, it can now be found for the [bargain price](#) of just £10! Or, for a detailed review [click here](#).



Could you fill this space?

A vibrant newsletter needs variety - of topics, of contributors, of styles . . .

Maybe send in a short piece about a workshop that you have attended, an upcoming event that may interest others, a book that you have read, a website that you love . . . The choice is yours, but do write something, and add variety to our monthly bookbinding conversation.

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