

Skin Deep

The Biannual Newsletter from J. Hewit & Sons Ltd.

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The first in a series of articles by William Blades, a 19th Century bibliophile who provides us with his views on the enemy within. Fire is the topic of this chapter, but rest assured, bookbinders will not escape his wrath in future issues.

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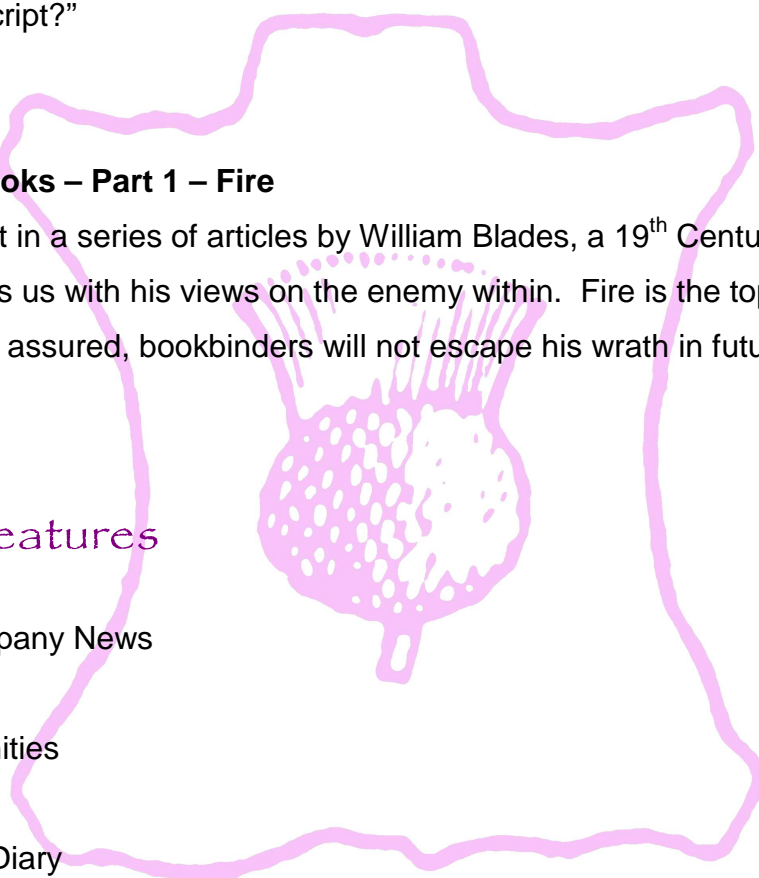
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Extreme Bookbinding

- Preservation in Ethiopia

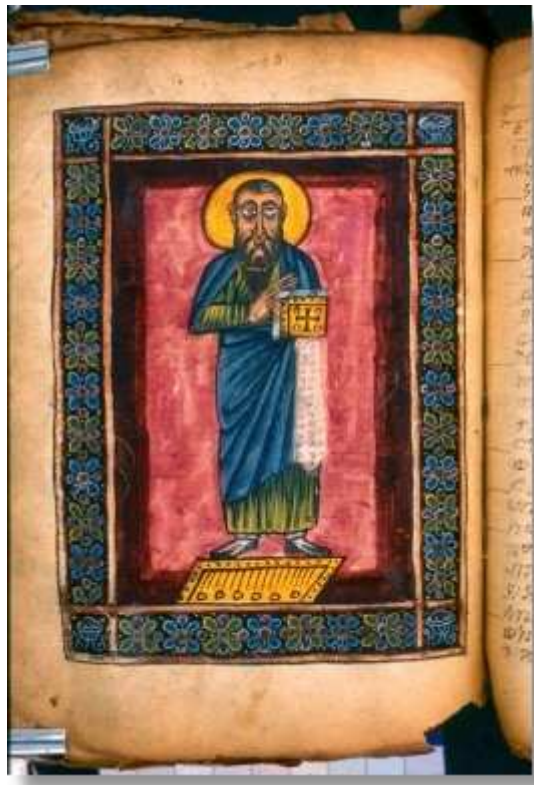
by Lester Capon

It began with a telephone call one Thursday morning in May 2006 from James Brockman. The conversation went something like this :-

J.B. - "Do you want to work in the Ethiopian mountains on a 6th. century manuscript?"

L.C. - " Yes"

When, some months later, I was being hoisted up a sheer rock face a stones throw from the Eritrean border, trusting my prolonged existence to an ancient leather strap and an even more ancient monk, coupled with my laughable attempts at rock climbing on the only day of rain in the whole trip, I had time as I dangled dangerously to reflect, through gritted teeth as it were, on my hasty reply.



St Luke

Introduction

The two manuscript volumes are kept at the Monastery of Abuna Garima in the Tigray Region, that is the Ethiopian highlands, in the north of the country. There are many monasteries and rock-hewn churches scattered around this area in varying degrees of inaccessibility - up mountains, on lakes and miles from anywhere.

They nearly all have 'treasures - crosses, crowns, manuscripts and books' which are shown, though not always, to the few visitors who pass through. It is not uncommon to trek for a day over rough mountainous terrain to reach one of these churches, only to find that the resident monk is disinclined to show its treasures, or that he is simply absent, or, dare I say, sleeping off a home brew tasting session.

Perhaps the most famous one is at Lalibela. This is a group of churches situated in the Lasta Mountains, Northern Ethiopia, which are carved out of, and freed from, the rocks, creating a space around them. They contain striking carvings, friezes and frescoes as well as manuscripts.

Of all the manuscripts in Ethiopia the gospels at Garima are believed to be the oldest and have been dated by European scholars to the sixth century. (They are believed by the Coptic monks there to have been written and illustrated by Abba Garima, their founder and one of the evangelising saints of Ethiopia, in one day!) There are plenty of wild beliefs, I guess, in all cultures. Gabra Manfas Qeddus, born in Egypt, was supposed to have lived for 562 years, neither drinking water nor eating food.

The Charity for the Preservation of Ethiopian Heritage in London were organising this project. They had been advised of the options and viability of any work being carried out. Clearly, the ideal treatment for these manuscripts would have been removal to a conservation unit where it could be analysed, taken apart, repaired and reassembled. This of course would be a huge undertaking - years of work - a massive commitment from an institution or team of conservators. In practice this will never happen - the books rarely see the light of day, and are not even allowed beyond the perimeter of the monastery's Treasure House courtyard. They have never left the monastery in over 1400 years, let alone the country. *

I agreed with the sponsors that a limited amount of consolidation and repair could be achieved without compromising the volumes and that this would result in the manuscripts being safer to handle.

Accompanying me for some of the time would be Jacques Mercier, an expert on Ethiopian manuscripts, icons, healing scrolls and botany, who has spent about thirty years on and off in Ethiopia and was, thankfully, more than capable of dealing with the complicated hierarchy and bureaucracy there and Daniel SeifeMikael, his assistant, an Ethiopian lecturer in Theology who was kindness personified. I was lucky that Mark Winstanley, owner of the Wyvern Bindery in London volunteered his services as assistant. He was unfailingly helpful with all the work, very jolly company and excellent at keeping the monks amused and occupied. (This last skill was very necessary, as we shall see.)

Preamble

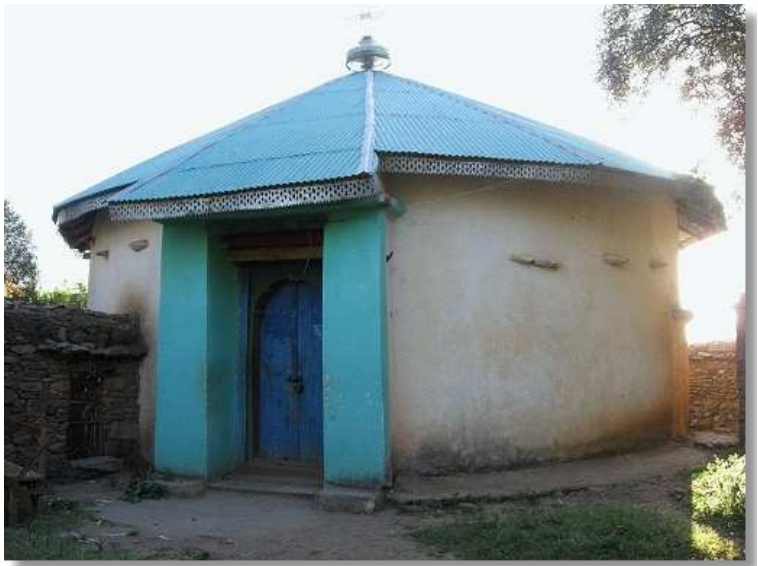
The monastery itself is a group of small stone built huts some circular, some square with turf roofs where the monks live. There is a church, gaily painted on the outside in reds, greens and yellows; having small windows, its interior is dark and atmospheric.



This was usually locked shut although occasionally a monk could be heard within reading aloud from the gospels - using not the early manuscript but one of the many other later manuscripts they have, bound in wooden boards with heavy leather outer covering and fabric inner lining, substantially hidden by the large turn-ins. They usually have illustrations at the beginning of St. Giorgis, their patron saint (our own man, the very same) slaying a dragon, and the Virgin Mary with Jesus at the end. I believe it is quite a common practice to have the illustrations 'freshened up' every so often.

Part of the monastery church

Near to the church was the Treasure House, a charming circular blue painted building. This also was often locked. It housed not only the manuscripts but also, in a huge glass fronted cabinet, dozens of books, old and new, made in the same Coptic style of binding. There were seventeenth and eighteenth century ornate crowns, a fourteenth century ceremonial silver spoon, early silver crosses, robes and fabrics, silver and pewter jugs and trays, faded curling photographs all crammed together. On the floor were faded and flea infested rugs.



Treasure House where bible is kept

Hanging everywhere were the bright multi-coloured umbrellas they use as sun protection, each section a different fabric, and wonderful book bags of very tough leather and vellum. Mahda, I believe they are called. I will never forget my first entry into this dark and magical room as, watched intently by the Keeper of the Treasures, I sat on a stone seat built out from the wall and let my eyes grow accustomed to the dim light that gradually revealed all these wondrous objects.

But I am ahead of myself....

We arrived at Addis Ababa and took an internal flight over the Simeon Mountains to Aksum. Here we discovered that half of Mark's luggage had stayed with the plane and was on its way to Gonder. Well, it could have been worse - it could have been my luggage. We were driven to Adwa, the nearest town to the monastery. The scenery was stupendous - a mixture of mountains and grasslands and Acacia and Olive trees with some cultivated areas. According to Sidney Cockerel many of the boards used for bindings are of Olive wood.

The main crop is Tef, a sort of wheat, with which they make their staple diet of injera. This grew everywhere, greeny gold, blowing in the breeze like our fields of wheat. So much more attractive than what it eventually produces. Injera is basically an edible plate - spicy meats are placed on it and the injera, which has the look of an old damp grey kitchen rag, is broken off in order to pick up the meat. A good sociable system but I fear I never adapted to the taste and consistency.

On our first day at Adwa it was the Festival of Abuna Garima so there was no chance of getting over to the monastery. The monastery, however, had come to Adwa. Dozens of monks looking splendid and imposing in robes and crowns, carrying huge crosses and books, were in a procession through the town, gathering as they went half the inhabitants, plus three Europeans - or faranji - Jacques, Mark and me.

We arrived at a hill top church and watched with the large, noisy and excited crowd the monks dancing and singing, with groups of women complementing the extraordinary sounds with continuous ululations. We were told by locals, with pride and pleasure that the old church had been torn down, and replaced with this one, with brand new murals.

This was a rich and colourful event that continued the next day. The Patriarch, or Pope, of Ethiopia was in town. He had originally come from the Garima monastery, and was visiting Adwa to speak to the masses, which he did at length. To the monk's disappointment and annoyance he did not visit the monastery and the last we saw of him was as he was driven away, throwing handfuls of tiny crosses, like sweets, out of the window, to enthusiastic children chasing the car. As absorbing and thrilling as it was it did mean that two days had gone by and I hadn't even seen the

monastery, let alone the manuscript.



Procession preparation

The next day came and still we were told it was not possible to go there. Daniel was working hard waving the necessary documentation in front of the necessary noses and I think it was a frustrating and dispiriting experience for him.

Finally that Wednesday afternoon we were driven in an ancient Toyota van by the normal team of three - one to drive, one to take the money and one to open the sliding door - along the rocky road up into the hills to Abuna Garima. We were greeted with a sort of nervous and wary

friendliness.

After some discussion - I say some discussion, - it was about 3 hours of talking. Mark and I took the time to climb the slopes above the monastery and gained a terrific view of the surrounding valley standing on the holy spot where Abba Garima spat on the ground and created a permanent spring - the manuscript was produced and I had my first breathtaking sighting of the beautifully bright colours of the illuminated pages which were at the beginning of each volume, although some were loose. I'd seen photos previously in London when I was preparing for this work - but seeing this book in real life was truly astonishing.

It was big - you could fell an ox with it, it was beautiful - the colours were vibrant - and it had, as I said to Mark at the time, the look of a burst mattress. The text pages were written in Ge-eze, the earlier language spoken in this area, but no longer in use. They speak Tigrinya now in this region.

The monks even at this stage were still undecided about how to proceed. The problem was that although they are the custodians of the books, the ownership rests with His Holiness, the Patriarch. The hierarchy of the various diocese also felt it necessary to give their permission. This was further complicated by the fact that the Ministry of Culture maintained that the government owned these types of artefacts and only they could give permission. We were pawns in the political power struggle between Church and State, as were the monks. I felt sorry for the Abbot who kept peering at all our letters of authenticity in a manner that suggested that he couldn't actually read.



Part of the monastery

Eventually we left - the monks were to have another meeting that evening, and we were to return the next morning.

The next day, we were allowed to start. I took out the materials I had brought and explained with the help of Daniel that these were the finest skins of vellum and the best papers from Japan.

The books were brought out into the courtyard of the Treasure House which was to be my 'bindery'. Not ideal, we had to move the benches (which consisted of an old table and two funeral biers) twice daily to avoid the sun whilst also contending with a gentle breeze. Other slight differences between this work space and my workshop at home included the occasional visits of donkeys and the regular visits of monkeys. I kept an eye on them as I was fearful that one may jump down from the roof, grab a folio, scrunch it up and run off down the hill.

Unwanted assistance from the Abbott

At the start of work nearly all the monks gathered round, eyes fixed on me, Jacques started photographing from all angles and the Abbot sat down close next to me. Of course at this moment I wished them all elsewhere. Mark did his best to distract them. He did this brilliantly on many occasions as the monks were constantly wanting to sit virtually in our laps watching us work. He would engage them in conversation, even though they knew no English and we had about five words of Tigrinya, he taught them to ride a bike, which he had hired for a few days, he showed them how to burn their hands with the sun and my magnifying glass, and generally entertained them.



Old repairs through folded Image

On this first occasion, however, there was nothing for it but to proceed with dozens of eyes following my every move. Having taken some initial photographs I picked up my 2B pencil to lightly collate the folios that were to be removed. I was alarmed to have my hand stopped by the Abbot. He did not want me to add anything to the great man's work. However, after a while he started to relax and to my amazement and even more alarm picked up one of my scalpels and started trying to cut some of the threads. My turn to stop his hand.

Gradually we settled into a routine of Mark and I working as a team. There were always at least 2 or 3 monks lingering casually as close as they could get, occasionally trying to examine the verso of the page we happened to be on. I called them neh nehs the name of a type of Hawaiian goose - the name translates as - lets sit around and chat.

We arranged our makeshift benches - the funeral biers - as much as possible keeping them back. One morning one of the biers was missing - it was in use in the nearby village. Like the flies that

continually pestered us, they had to be swotted. I did not blame them for this close interest. They made it clear they were grateful for the work. This work, in the most extraordinary circumstances and situation, Mark and I undertook in the most professional and responsible manner we could.

Condition and Treatment

The Abba Garima Gospels are three manuscripts bound into two volumes. The first (AG1) contains the sixth century manuscript. The second volume (AG2) also contains the sixth century manuscript which is bound together with a later manuscript, from the 14th. Century.

AG1 – Front board and spine

AG1 is sewn with two pairs of sewing stations with a hard 2 ply linen thread. The boards are copper with holes that would presumably have displayed coloured glass or jewels originally. On the inside of the back cover are the remains of a deteriorated papyrus board. The metal boards are attached loosely by the sewing threads from the sections, as well as from the tacketing at head and tail, being wrapped around the hinge rod. The spine is three separate pieces of much more recent vellum, brought round under the boards and sewn through the preliminary pages approximately four



cms. from the back fold, with parchment strips. This prevented satisfactory opening of these pages. Further damage had been effected by vellum guards being sewn into the pages, with parchment strips, diagonally through the images, thus preventing proper opening, and the formation of creases where attempts had been made to fold the vellum leaves back. With this secondary sewing, intermingled in places with a tertiary sewing of a soft 2 ply linen thread from some later repair, the most important and attractive folios were rendered inaccessible and vulnerable. On one occasion the page was creased in two places and sewn through the doubled part. All four edges of

each page had damage and missing areas through use over fourteen centuries. Insect damage was found throughout the main text block.



AG2 is also sewn with two pairs of sewing stations with linen thread. The wooden boards are covered in a chased metal of a later date than AG1. The spine edges of the wood are chamfered. There are no holes horizontally through the boards (in keeping with later Coptic bindings) but there are many holes vertically through the boards suggesting later additions for repair purposes.

AG2 – Front board and spine

The illuminated and text folios in AG2 had suffered the same treatment as in AG1, and were in a similar condition.

Of the illuminated folios in AG1, three had to be moved to their correct place which was in AG2; two had to be moved to their correct place within AG1 and three had to be reversed, having been sewn in along the foredge.

Of the illuminated folios in AG2, three were loose and needed to be reinserted, and one needed to be moved to its correct position.

There was one extant double folio in each volume.

The vulnerable edges of the illuminated folios were to be repaired where possible to prevent further damage.



Restricted opening from previous repair

The illuminated pages needed to open more freely. With all the added repairs the main advantage of Coptic binding - the ability to open the book completely flat - had disappeared.

AG1

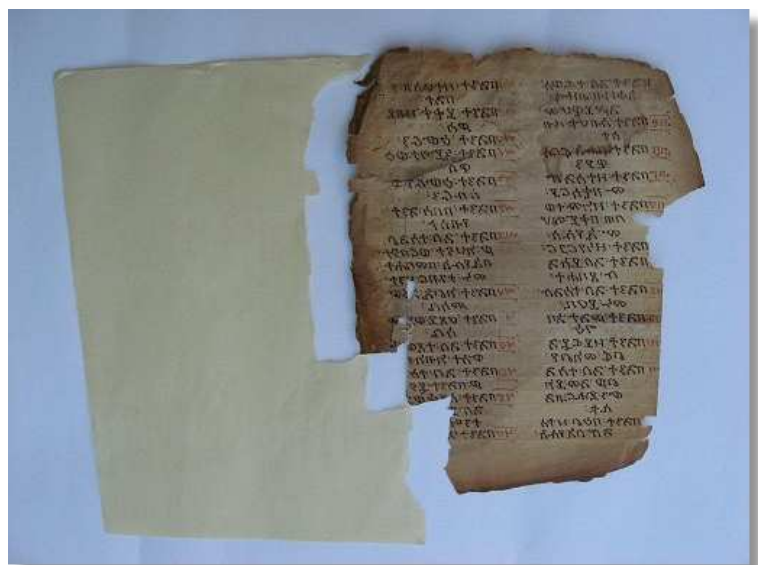
The front board was removed by untying threads that were wrapped around the hinge rod. The spine vellum pieces, which were sewn into the first pages, were unthreaded where possible, releasing them, and creating access to the spine folds. The first twelve pages - illuminations and text - were detached and the repairs running across some of the pages were unthreaded.

The torn and damaged edges were repaired in small areas with laminations of Taizan 36gsm smooth toned Japanese paper using a parchment size adhesive.

I had taken with me a variety of Japanese papers - different weights, tones, textures, and a selection of

differing thicknesses and tones of vellum. Although I had seen photographs of some pages it was difficult to be sure which material would be most suitable until I actually confronted the manuscript. The Taizan was a sympathetic match.

It would have been inappropriate to build up the large missing areas with new vellum as the stresses created would have transferred through to the original vellum causing more possible damage. Also the new pieces of vellum would have been largely unsupported by the rest of the volume and would therefore be vulnerable to damage, again possibly transferring through to the original. The torn edges and small vulnerable areas were consolidated with the toned Japanese paper.



Profiled Taizan Paper

Two laminations of Taizan paper were profiled to the spine edge shape of each single folio, edge pared and attached to the vellum page. No single folios were guarded together to create a double folio, the validity of which I could not be certain of.

A loose vellum guard was added around the outside of the spine folds to strengthen and support the sewing.

The loose text pages were repaired similarly and reassembled in their correct order. New sewing hemp cord was connected into the existing sewing of the text block, and the newly arranged and repaired folios were sewn in using the normal Coptic sewing method which had been employed throughout the rest of the book.



A blank, toned vellum flyleaf was sewn in to protect the first page from the inside of the copper board.

The three later vellum spine pieces were sewn into the stub of the new flyleaf enabling freer opening, and not hindering the opening of the first few pages.

The front board was reattached using the threads from the sewing which were wrapped and tied around the hinge rod securely.

Reattaching Front Board on AG1

Before I go on with describing the second volume work I should interrupt myself by mentioning that we were interrupted in the second week by a visit from the Mr. Fissela Zibola from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism looking very fierce, and telling us in no uncertain terms that we did not have permission to be working on the manuscript. We should stop immediately and return to Adwa with him. We proffered a letter that Jacques had left with us. Jacques and Daniel had left us several days before to oversee the conservation of an icon in another monastery several hundred miles away. Mr Zibola and Jacques obviously had some history. . He wasn't impressed and we had to leave the book - pages loose - and we were driven back. If we could not prove we were legitimately working we were told it was prison for us. Fortunately Jacques sorted this out and we had quite a pleasant afternoon being treated to some sort of coffee ritual at the hotel.

Anyway to return to the book -

AG2

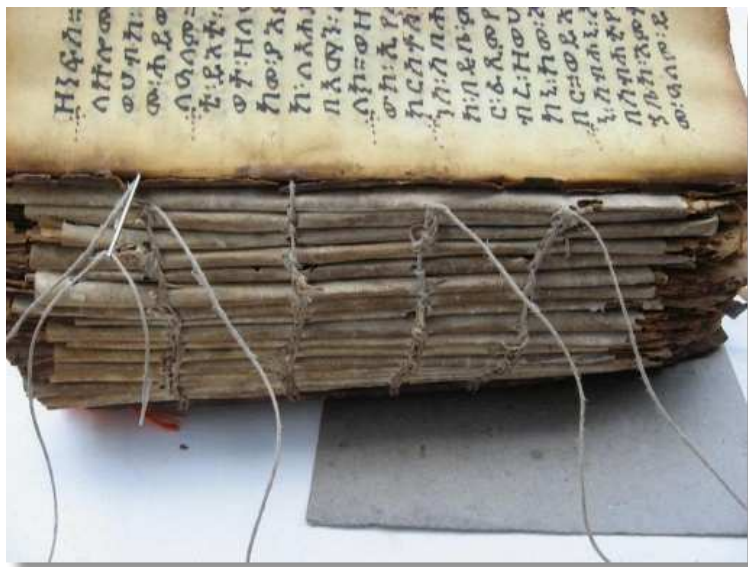
The early part of the manuscript was separated from the later part. The illuminated folios were treated as AG1. Again there was only one extant double folio. The existing sewing was pretty shaky so it was strengthened with new hemp cord being sewn in, using the original sewing stations, and the newly arranged and repaired folios were added. A new toned vellum flyleaf was sewn in for protection against the board. The early manuscript was at the back of this volume so the front board was detached and sewn onto the front of the early part using existing attachment holes in the wood.

By returning the sewing to its original structure the illuminated pages could be viewed completely and with no real strain on the vellum. No evidence has been destroyed of what has happened to the books over the centuries - the holes from the misguided repairs using the parchment strips are still there, and samples of those strips and other sewing materials have been retained. Extensive

amounts of debris - dust, leaves, insects etc. were found in the back folds of all the sections throughout the book. These were left in situ, partly as evidence for some possible future study and also because the removal would further loosen the sewing.

Repaired Sewing on AG2

The pigment of the images was not flaking, and the vellum of the illuminated folios, despite being worn away in areas, was sound and more robust than the vellum of the text folios. It had also aged differently by becoming darker and more greasy. It may be that these pages were produced elsewhere, possibly in Egypt, and brought into Ethiopia. The differing appearance may simply be due to the more constant handling of these pages.



When the work was completed the monks were generous in their appreciation. We had decided to take them gifts, and noticing that they only had 2 drinking glasses for their tea - they had plenty of large cups for their home made beer - we bought a set of twelve. This was fortuitous as they looked on them as symbolic for the 12 Apostles. Jacques had suggested a more dramatic gift - a sheep for a feast. We got our taxi chaps to buy one which they brought out on the last evening. Mark presented the glasses and some other items showing great deference to the Abbot which surprised and pleased them. A small ceremony of thanksgiving for the work took place in the courtyard. Mark and I and all our families were blessed. Prayers were offered, counted out by the Abbot on his finger joints - as a Catholic will do on his rosary.

The books were returned to the wooden chest that had previously been made to house it. I understand it may be made more accessible to travellers - not for handling, but for viewing - bringing in some much needed funds.

Although I have worked on many early manuscripts this is by far the oldest and I felt privileged to be temporarily a part of this unchanging culture of poor and dignified Coptic monks. Repairing old books, I always feel I am touching history. With this book it was ancient history.

Postscript



I mentioned being suspended by a leather strap at the beginning of this article. This occurred on a trip out (we couldn't work on Sundays) to visit Debre Damo, an important early monastery, founded in 4th. Century by Arigawa, one of the main 9 saints, about 100 miles from where we were. Miraculously, considering the terrain and the condition of our vehicle, skilfully driven up and down rocky steep slopes and through rivers by our cheerful team of chauffeurs we reached this distant site. One of the local boys came up to me as I walked from the van and said solemnly 'You are a very old man and I will help you'. Nonplussed, I gratefully handed him my knapsack to carry.

The monastery is on a plateau reached only by scaling a sheer cliff face. The arrangement is that, being secured by the strap from the top, one climbs up the face of the cliff utilising another rope. Mark shinned up first, making it look easy.

For the whole three weeks that I was in the fabulous country of Ethiopia I had a nasty debilitating chest infection which I somehow picked up just before leaving England. I did feel at my lowest ebb that day, in the pouring rain, at the foot of the cliff. I really wanted to see the monastery with its books and ceiling carvings so it had to be done. I struggled up but was of little help to the monk holding onto the strap. When, with one final effort, he hoisted me over the top edge I looked up into his kindly grinning face to see that he must have been at least eighty. Feeling, and I'm sure, looking foolish (Mark has a photo) I recovered enough to enjoy this remote religious site where the monks are self sufficient, even having their own livestock and reservoirs of water hewn into the rock . The trip down was, as I suspected, just as vertical and I was accompanied by many whoops of encouragement.

I would like to thank Jacques Mercier, Daniel SeifeMikael and Mark Winstanley for all their much needed help and support. Also thanks to Tova Irving at William Cowleys who was extremely helpful with suggestions regarding the vellum.



Lester at Work

Lester Capon trained at Camberwell School of Art and Crafts from 1975 - 1977. He trained with and worked for James Brockman from 1977 - 1993. This involved working on a wide range of books, repairing manuscripts and early printed books and fine binding and presentation boxes. From 1993 - 2000 he was Programme Manager for the Fine Binding and Conservation course at Guildford College. Since 2000 he has worked as a self-employed bookbinder in Tewkesbury;

He was elected a Fellow of Designer Bookbinders in 1986 and was President from 2003 - 2005. Collections include - British Library, HRHRC Texas, John Rylands University Library Manchester, Liverpool Library, private collections in U.K. and abroad.

Product & Company News

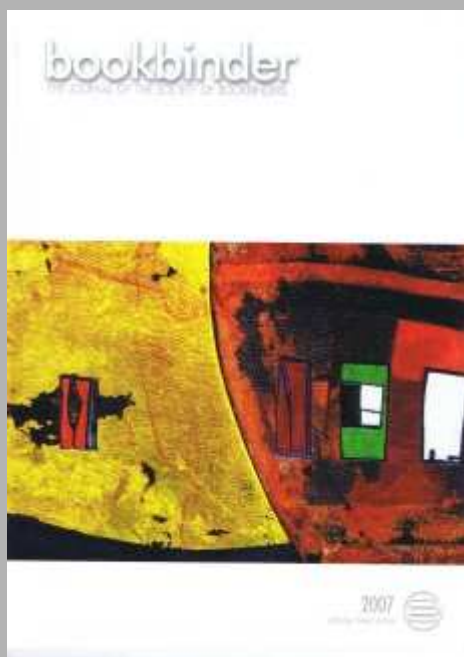
Budget Spokeshave

We are pleased to offer this low cost, inexpensive cast iron flat-bottomed spokeshave, with blade. This spoke shave has a wider throat than the Stanley 151, and will therefore require little modification.

Only £10.80 each



Society of Bookbinders Journal 2007 - Volume 21

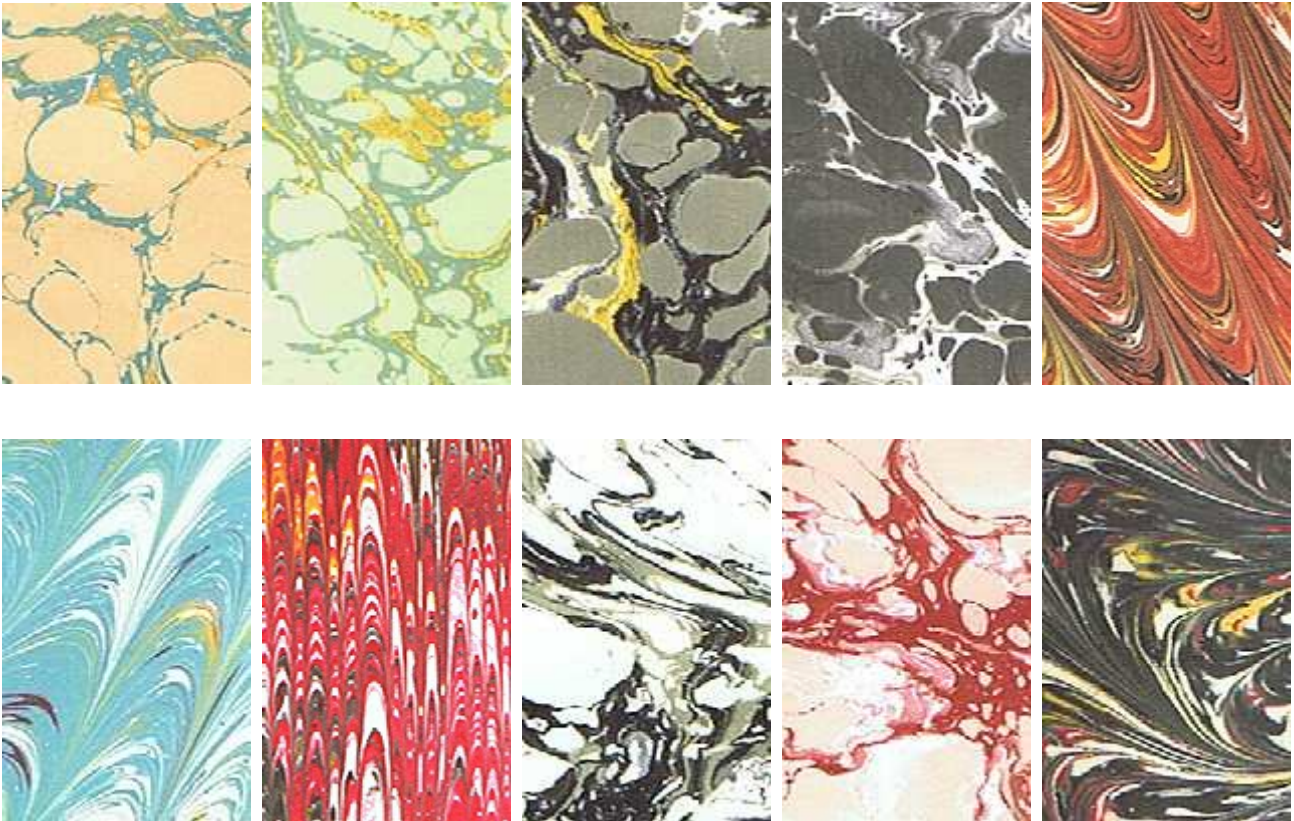


Is now available to purchase at a cost of £18.00

All prices are subject to shipping charges and VAT where applicable.

10 new designs to our range of JHS Papers

We are delighted to announce that we have added 10 designs to our very popular range of JHS Marble Papers, bringing the total number of designs to 45.



Prices:

Singles - £2.38/sheet
25 to 49 sheets - £2.16/sheet
50 to 99 sheets £2.00/sheet
100 to 499 sheets - £1.84/sheet
500+ sheets £1.67/sheet

New Bone Folder

By popular request we bring you a new shaped bone folder. This handy 5" long-pointed folder is very useful for getting to those places other folders can't reach.

Prices:
Singles - £1.51 each
50+ - £1.24 each



All prices are subject to shipping charges and VAT where applicable.

***** Health Warning *****

Asbestos Finishing Tool Handles

The following message was received from one of our customers, a major institutional library.

"Do you remember that I contacted you earlier in the year about my suspicions of having asbestos handles in our collection? It turned out that they were confirmed and we have recently gone through the fairly expensive (£3,000) process of having 300 of them removed and all of our collection decontaminated. The asbestos involved is Chrysotile and is fairly serious stuff to have around if it deteriorates. I thought you might like to put a warning to other binders in Skin Deep. There must be 1000s more out there."

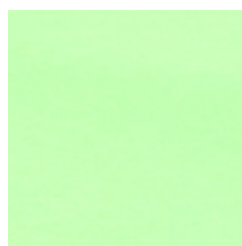
If you suspect that you may have Asbestos Tool handles, you should seek professional advice regarding their safe removal.

Kaskad Paper

We are pleased to advise that we have added two new shades in our Kaskad range plain papers, increasing the selection to 12 colours.



K11
Bunting Yellow



K12
Leafbird Green

Prices:

Singles - £0.83/sheet
25 to 99 sheets £0.50/sheet
100 to 499 sheets - £0.44/sheet
500 to 999 sheets £0.39/sheet
500+ sheets £0.33/sheet

All prices are subject to shipping charges and VAT where applicable.

Alum Tawed Pigs

We delighted to announce that after a break of nearly 7 years we have found a new source of pigskins suitable for the production of Alum Tawed leather. Our first batch has been finished and skins may now be ordered from us.

Alum Tawed Leathers are produced entirely in our tannery by a method combining the best of old traditions and modern machinery.

The skins used are "wet-salted" stock, which means the skin from the animal is fresh, but preserved with salt until required. The processes that follow are carried out in a revolving wooden drum which can have the liquors changed without removing the skins until the processing is finished.

The first stage is to wash out the salt, then the skins are limed to remove the hair and grease, this part of the process also swells the fibres and has the effect of separating them. When this process is completed, the skins are partially neutralised and subjected to an enzyme process that removes some of the unwanted proteins between the fibres.

The next stage is to acidify the skin in the presence of a large quantity of salt that prevents any acid damage. When equilibrium is reached this acid pickle is drained away and replaced with a mixture of salt, potash Alum and oil which is drummed into the skins for two days, after which they are removed and piled to drain. The skins are then hung to dry and piled to age for at least three weeks.

The finishing processes start by damping the skins again and straining them on frames to dry so that the product is now flat, the thickness is levelled off by fluffing the flesh side on an emery wheel and finally the skins are back boarded to soften them.

The natural white colour can be tinted if required to simulate the creaminess produced by age and the effect of handling.

Hewit's Alum Tawed Leathers are sold throughout the world and were used in the rebinding of the Domesday Book.

Approximate prices based on average skin sizes for white or cream skins:

Grade I - £234.00 per skin

Grade II - £186.00 per skin

All prices are subject to shipping charges and VAT where applicable

Study Opportunities

Courses

Joint Designer Bookbinders and Society of Bookbinders Weekend Workshops



The fifth series of workshops offered jointly by Designer Bookbinders and the Society of Bookbinders for 2008/09 is announced as follows:

- 25th - 26th October 2008 **Creative Printmaking with a Difference Tutor: Janine Pope**
Venue: Kelly Street, London, NW1
- 8th - 9th November 2008 **Rebacking Leather Bindings Tutor: Lester Capon** Venue:
Birmingham University Bindery, Edgbaston
- 24th - 25th January 2009 **Long & Link Stitch Binding Tutor: Adam Larsson** Venue: Kelly
Street, London, NW1
- 14th - 15th February 2009 **A Fresh Look at Stub Binding Tutor: Lori Sauer** Venue: York
Minster Library
- 21st - 22nd March 2009 **Forwarding Techniques: From Tradition to Innovation Tutor:
Mark Cockram** Venue: Conway Bindery, Halifax

All courses cost £120 plus a materials fee. For further information with full details of each workshop, tutors, registration and booking forms please see the societies' websites below:

www.designerbookbinders.org.uk/teaching

or

www.societyofbookbinders.com/events

CBBAG Workshops - 2008

2008-WKSP-036 - Non-toxic Image Transfer

Instructor: Mira Coviensky
Location: CBBAG Bindery
Duration: 1 day: Wednesday, Oct. 15
Hours: 9 a.m – 5 p.m.
Course fee: \$95
Materials fee: \$30 payable to the instructor
Prerequisite: none

This is a workshop that would appeal to book artists, photographers, quilters, painters, graphic designers, calligraphers, printmakers, collage artists, and scrapbookers. Participants will learn the basics of solvent transfer (with non-toxic solvents), polymer lift, heat transfer, and direct photocopy (even with thin papers) to transfer photographic, text or drawn images to their art materials. Changes of scale, translucency and overlay will be explored allowing participants to see the different effects with each technique. Bring images to transfer in photocopy form.

2008-WKSP-037 - Expressive Paste Papers

Instructor: Don Taylor
Location: CBBAG Bindery
Duration: 1 day: Sunday, Oct. 19
Hours: 9 a.m – 5 p.m.
Course fee: \$95
Materials fee: \$20 payable to the instructor
Prerequisite: none

Take a day and loosen up with a little paper decorating. This class will acquaint the beginner with the traditional basics of making paste papers and allow the more experienced practitioner to try out some new tricks. You'll be working with various water based paints, lots of combing and texturing tools, metallic washes, leaf and a variety of papers. Paste papers as an expressive medium will be the order of the day.

2008-WKSP-038 - Photo Album

Instructor: Louise Granahan
Location: CBBAG Bindery
Duration: 1 day: Saturday, Oct 25
Hours: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Course fee: \$95
Materials fee: \$20 payable to the instructor
Prerequisite: none

This one day workshop focuses on one album structure, covered in Chiyogami with a hinge of Japanese bookcloth. Simple decorative sewing and beadwork complete the project.

2008-WKSP-039 - Rough & Tough

Instructor: Louise Granahan
Location: CBBAG Bindery
Duration: 1 day: Sunday, Oct. 26
Hours: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Course fee: \$95
Materials fee: \$20 payable to the instructor

This one day course is great for beginners. Participants will make a rough, unembellished, leather-bound book consisting of five individually sewn sections in a wrap-around leather cover with leather thongs or corded ties. This style of book can be made at home with minimal materials and makes a great diary for trips.

2008-WKSP-040 - Bookbinding II

Instructor: Brian Maloney

Location: CBBAG Bindery

Duration: 6 days: Saturdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Dec. 6

Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Course fee: \$480 members/ \$540 non-members*

Materials: fee \$30 payable to instructor

Prerequisite: Bookbinding I or permission of the instructor

This course introduces intermediate techniques, such as rounding and backing and sewn endbands, necessary for traditional binding structures. Participants will sew two models, completing one as a German case binding and the other as either a Bradel or split board binding.

2008-WKSP-041 - Japanese Stab Bindings

Instructor: Louise Granahan

Location: CBBAG Bindery

Duration: 2 evenings, Friday, Nov. 7 & 14

Hours: 6 – 9 p.m.

Course fee: \$95

Materials fee: \$20 payable to the instructor

Prerequisite: none

This workshop will teach 4 variations on the traditional Japanese stab binding. This elegant binding is a wonderful way to bind single sheets of paper. Few tools are needed to continue making this structure at home.

2008-WKSP-042 - Four Amusing Boxes in Five Days

Instructor: Don Taylor

Location: CBBAG Bindery

Duration: 5 Sundays, Nov. 9, 16, 23, Dec. 7, 14

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Course fee: \$400 members /\$460 non-members*

Materials fee: \$50 payable to the instructor

Prerequisite: BB I, or permission of the instructor

Stretch out your box making skills on a series of satisfying exercises that will impress your friends.. You'll start with a simple box with a hinged lid and move on to one with a drawer, a hexagonal box for your hexagonal objects and then a shadow box frame with glass for housing shadows. Work with leather, cloth, and decorated paper and go away with the skills you'll need to put pretty much anything in storage.

2008-WKSP-043 - Full Leather

Instructor: Dan Mezza

Location: CBBAG Bindery

Duration: 5 days: M-F, Nov. 17 – 21

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Course fee: \$400 members/ \$460 non-members*

Materials fee: \$30 + cost of leather

Prerequisite: BB III

This course is a great follow up after BB III. Students will produce one book covered in full leather. Leather Parings, hand sewn end bands, end papers, and sewing structures will all be reviewed.

Further information and booking at: www.cbbag.ca/workshp.html

Learn to bind in Surrey

For those wishing to learn bookbinding, The Otter Bindery now offers 1st Saturday in the month bookbinding mornings, which are for all levels from beginners upwards. If you would like to come on one of these workshops please email marysa@otterbookbinding.com or telephone 01932 845976.

These workshops are designed to offer bookbinding in a relaxed cottage setting. There is no need to pre-book, but please email or phone, to confirm your attendance two days in advance so that I know numbers. The purpose of these workshops is to afford a cost effective and enjoyable half-day of bookbinding for those wishing to pursue this craft. Ideas can be discussed and projects undertaken gradually at the pace of the student with interactive discussions between tutor and students so that everyone's project is a learning tool for the other students. Students can start on books and continue to work on them throughout the Saturdays available.

The day starts at 10am and finishes at 2pm. Students may wish to bring a packed lunch with them. The cost is £50. The dates available are below.

- Saturday 1 November 2008 10am-2pm
- Saturday 6 December 2008 10am-2pm
-

In addition to these workshops and subject to interest and demand, The Otter Bindery organises longer weekend workshops bringing in outside professional bookbinders with different expertises. Subjects covered include paper repair, book restoration, gold finishing, box making and fine binding. For those wishing an intensive in one of these areas please email an acknowledgment of your interest via email to marysa@otterbookbinding.com. The price for the intensive one day course is £150. This is subject to two or more individuals wishing to partake.

One day individual tuition is available by appointment between 10-4pm at a cost of £170 and half day for £85. This is for those wishing to further the craft with more tutor support. This has proved popular as a gift and Gift Vouchers are available on request. Otter Bindery is available to tutor groups, schools, art centres, business and institutions in creative bookbinding. Please ask for details and prices.

Oxford Brookes University - Evening Classes

These non-vocational classes provide an introduction to bookbinding, examining the techniques, materials and equipment needed to bind and repair books. Traditional methods are considered in conjunction with practical alternatives. Students will achieve an understanding of the requirements and processes involved in producing clean, neat, basic work. Students work at their own pace and are individually tutored.

For further information, please contact:

Ian Ross - Tutor and Organiser, Bookbinding Evening Classes

Oxford Brookes University, School of Arts & Humanities, OXFORD OX3 0BP

Tel: +44 (0) 1865 793083 or e-mail : binding@ianaross.f2s.com

Leeds College of Technology, Yorkshire, UK

Last year with great success, Leeds College of Technology, Yorkshire, UK, ran a basic craft bookbinding course. They had a good response, with eight enrolling on the course, most of who would like to move on to more advanced level. They have also had a few interested enquiries for the next basic course. This has prompted them to set up an Intermediate Craft course, which will start in February, following on from the beginners course in September. The new course will again have a certificate from NCFE after successful completion. They intend to move on to quarter and half bound case books and quarter and half bound leather bindings.

The courses will run on Wednesday evenings, 5.00-8.30 pm., 18 weeks each course. The fee will be £150 plus a small enrolment fee.

For more information: Contacts: Mick McGregor at Leeds College of Technology

Tel: +44 (0) 113 297 6438, e-mail m.mcgregor@lct.ac.uk

Leatherwork Courses with MacGregor & Michael, Tetbury. UK

MacGregor & Michael are professional designer-makers of hand-stitched leathersgoods with more than 30 years experience. Their short course builds upon the techniques described in 'The Leatherworking Handbook' by Valerie Michael. The maximum number of students is five, so each person receives individual tuition. All tools are provided for use on the courses.

Provisional Dates for 2008 and further information on the whole range of our courses, including courses on:-

- Decorated Leather
- Moulded Leather Flowers
 - Leather Carving
- Leather Boxes and Containers
- Design and Construction of hand stitched bags
 - Wallets-Organisers-Purses

can be found on our website at www.leathercourses.co.uk or by contacting
Val Michael at MacGregor & Michael
37 Silver Street
Tetbury
Gloucestershire
GL8 8DL

UK e-mail: info@leathercourses.co.uk - Tel: +44 (0)1666 502179

La Cantoria Scuola di Restauro, Firenze, Italy

For summer 2008, La Cantoria is pleased to provide new courses. Beside the 2 - 4 weeks introductory courses to conservation techniques, they are also offering workshops of a duration of 1-2 weeks in artistic fields related with conservation: fresco and mosaic techniques, wood gilding, oil painting, and others.

Check new summer opportunity following this link to their [web site](#) . Their Secretary is at your disposal for any further question on dates and other information.

LA CANTORIA – SCUOLA DI RESTAURO
Via Chiantigiana 158 – 50012
Grassina FIRENZE

Autumn 2008 - Workshops in Gloucestershire

Chipping Campden - 6 week course running on Thursdays 11th and 18th September, 2nd, 9th and 30th October and 6th November

Time: 3.30 - 7.30 pm

Cost £116.00

*John Pursey from Hewits will be visiting us on the 18th September.

Ruskin Mill, Nailsworth - 5 week course on 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th November, 1st December

Time: 9.30am – 2.00pm

Cost: £100.00

For further details and to enrol please contact Anne Weare 01285 760328

The Society of Bookbinders London & South Region Programme for Autumn 2008

25th October Nichola Oliver - Head/end banding

Nichola Oliver will give a practical workshop demonstrating two simple headbands - a single and a double. If time allows she will also demonstrate 'capping up' and explain why it is necessary. If possible, members should bring; at least one book approx 1" to 1 1/2" thick - rounded and backed with boards, a finishing press, needles, and coloured thread. Spare equipment will be available, but please check availability when booking.

In 1995 Nichola attended Bath Spa University Colleges studying graphic design and illustration. After graduating She worked in a number of London binderies and also attended the London College of Printing where she studied the part time HND in Bookbinding. In October 2000, she was asked if she would like to become part of a Bindery that was just starting up, this was The Chelsea Bindery, where she has been since. Apart from the cleaning, repairing, sewing, and end papers of all the books that come through The Chelsea Bindery, Nichola is also responsible for the head/end banding, onlays and box making. Nichola has her own workshop in Stoke Newington, north London, and is an occasional attendee of Studio Five.

The class will be held in room C32 of Morley College, 61 Westminster Bridge Road, SE 1. The nearest Tube station is Lambeth North. The college cafeteria will be open.

6th December - Christmas Bash

Maureen Duke - the Societies President and Nick Cowlshaw - Regional Chairman, will hold a bookbinder's question time. Bring along a binding problem or technique that you have been struggling with and get some expert advice. Problems great and small guaranteed a good reception.

The class will be held at the Congregational Chapel, Kelly Street, Kentish Town, NW 1. See above for directions. Afterwards we will visit the local tavern, The Junction, for some seasonal refreshments. Please indicate on the booking form if you would like to join us for this part of the day. PLEASE NOTE: This event will start at 2:00 p. m.

All masterclasses start at 10.30am (unless otherwise indicated) and finish at 3.00pm, with a break for lunch.

If you would like to attend any of the masterclasses please contact:

Ray Newberry, S. o. B. Regional Treasurer Silverwood

8 Wildwood Close, Woking

Surrey, GU22 8PL

e-mail - ray.newberry@ntlworld.com

CBL Ascona, Switzerland

The Association centro del bel libro in Ascona is the parent institution of an internationally known and recognised technical school with the specialised areas of Bookbinding and Design and Book and Paper Conservation. The Association exists for the continued development and ever higher qualification of its instructors in both areas. Competitions and exhibitions help inform the public about their activities and expand public awareness of the book. The Association makes it possible for experts in related fields and for interested laypeople to acquire knowledge and skills pertaining to the book through special courses of instruction. The Association is a not for profit organisation. Its departments assure the smooth functioning of the school and an especially well organised office assists course participants with their stay in Ascona. The Directorate, among other duties, is charged with attracting new supporting members for the Association to ensure the continued work and development of the School. Should you be in agreement with the stated goals of the Association – we would be pleased to welcome you as a new member!

Department of Bookbinding and Design - The study areas of Bookbinding and Design offer discerning bookbinders the opportunity of technical and creative challenges. Course participants have the opportunity to further their qualifications through learning internationally recognised

methods and techniques, are able to hone their skills and increase their knowledge, evaluate themselves and be inspired by colleagues. They will exchange ideas and find paths in creativity and through self reflection; paths which open up by being away from job demands and daily stress, away from routine, and the pressures of time and expectations of productivity. The annually changing course offerings are continually enhanced by timely developments to expand students' depth of understanding. They include classic hand bookbinding techniques, such as the French full leather binding, the Bradel technique, as well as hand gilding. Another area of program concentration is the contemporary design of bookbindings, in which design, technique and material complement each other and fulfil the functional and qualitative aspects of a book.

Department Book and Paper Conservation - The study of book and paper conservation at the centro del bel libro ascona assures further education specifically for book and paper restorers and delivers timely, inclusive and internationally recognised competencies in theory and practical applications. Scientific bases of restoration, restoration ethics, as well as documentation and decision making are encouraged and fostered in order to increase the knowledge of course participants in these areas. The opportunity to engage in dialogue in related disciplines, support and evaluation of innovation, and most of all development of practical skills to assure correct restoration and conservation measures – all are addressed in this context. The exchange of ideas among experts, and the addition of highly specialised guest lecturers provide the best conditions for exploring all relevant subjects in depth. Highly qualified teachers, a pleasant study and work environment, course participants from countries world wide, and the much renowned southern joie de vivre facilitate learning, ignite the desire to learn and communicate, and reward the student with improved self confidence. Building on these facts, it becomes an easy task to develop conventions for the protection of our cultural heritage, the book – a task which the centro del bel libro ascona has set itself and which it fulfils.

Further information regarding courses programs can be found on the school's web site at:
www.cbl-ascona.ch

London College of Printing, London, UK

BA(HONS) Book Arts and Crafts - a course designed to develop a creative and innovative approach to the art and craft of designing and making books, as functional artifacts and art pieces. This programme of study is unique in the United Kingdom, being the only course available specifically in book arts & crafts. The course is spread over three years, year one is mostly skills based and covers a variety of bookart areas, year two includes a range of electives allowing the student to focus on certain areas in detail. This year also includes work experience. Year three includes 2 major practical projects and a dissertation in a related area. The course starts in year one as tutor led and gradually becomes student led.

During the course visits are arranged to museums and galleries, field trips abroad and the possibility of engaging in the college exchange programme. A range of methods delivers the course: e.g. practical demonstration, lectures, seminars and tutorials.

Bookart projects are practically based and detailed feedback is always given on student's work either through assessment sheets or in tutorial. Written projects are required in the Cultural Studies and Personal and Professional Development modules.

Here is an outline of each year

Year 1 - Modules include basic skills in Printmaking, Craft bookbinding, craft printing (letterpress and screen), visual studies (drawing & illustration), photography and creative bookarts. Computer studies (computer-aided design), Cultural studies and Professional development. (CS & PPD run throughout the course). Year one is intense and requires attendance over 3/4 days.

Year 2 - Modules include advanced bookart structures and fine print production, electives include advanced printmaking & illustration, design bookbinding, artist's books, historical / oriental structures, conservation techniques and CAD etc. Students may now focus on particular area or

specialism and drop areas they do not wish to pursue. PPD not only helps arrange work experience, but sets up student exhibitions in various galleries and the London Artists Bookfair each year.

Year 3 - This year is assessed over 2 major projects and 2 lesser projects. You will be expected to produce a dissertation of around 5000/6000 words and produce a Major Elective Study, which is assessed by exhibition. Projects are student led, this year of the course using a supervision/tutorial system for major projects. Students also set up their own exhibition in a private gallery during this final year. Technical help and advice is always available and most tutors operate an "open door" policy for students who need one-to-one help.

Exit Profile - Over 70% of graduates find employment in areas related to the course programme,(2002). Some have gone into teaching (PGTC) some onto post graduate education, (MA Bookarts, MA Fine Art, MA Product Design and MA Publishing etc.) This art and design course using as it does a range of 3D graphics and the book as a medium has a wide range of applications. Graduates work as makers in bookbinding, printers in Fine press (Limited Edition), printmakers, illustrators, book designers using the latest computer applications, in art departments for publishers, paper engineering (pop-ups), board-game and package design, book & card production and as exhibiting book artists. Students have exhibited to acclaim in major galleries and won international awards in France, UK, USA and Holland. This (undergraduate) course has been generally recognised as being the best available in this field. Resources are second to none, fully equipped workshops coupled with experienced staff all of whom practice within their specialism, professionally, (e.g. printmaking is taught by Tessa Holmes, exhibiting printmaker and Visual studies by the artist Daphne Plessner) Full-time students at the LCC (lcp) ,also have the advantage of being offered a large range of related "bolt-on" courses, free, to enhance their studies. The course is relatively small, targets for each year being only 25. The age range is from 18 years, at present there is a 65/35 ratio women to men. Retention rate is 92% (2002/03). HEFC inspection rating is 22/24. Students come from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds, e.g. Taiwan, Germany, France, Sweden, USA, Brazil, Spain, Greece, Japan and Korea. Prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the college. For full curriculum details and further information, please contact Mike Brunwin at: m.brunwin@lcp.linst.ac.uk or telephone on 0207 514 6500 (ex.6660) or write to:

UCAS entry codes;
route A Linst L65 WW27 Ba/BArts
Route B Linst L65 EW 27 Ba/BArts

London College of Communication (formally London College of Printing) School of Printing & Publishing, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6SB
(The London Institute becomes the "University of the Arts,London" in May 2004)

**Please let us know if
you would like to have your courses
listed in future editions of *Skin Deep***

The Enemies of Books

Part 1 - Fire

By William Blades



Originally Published as a serial in 1879 in the August, September and October editions of the 'Printer's Register' – "A monthly serial devoted to the interests of printers generally" First published as a book with revisions and additions in 1880.

THERE are many of the forces of Nature which tend to injure Books; but among them all not one has been half so destructive as Fire. It would be tedious to write out a bare list only of the numerous libraries and bibliographical treasures which, in one way or another, have been seized by the Fire-king as his own. Chance conflagrations, fanatic incendiarism, judicial bonfires, and even household stoves have, time after time, thinned the treasures as well as the rubbish of past ages, until, probably, not one thousandth part of the books that have been are still extant. This destruction cannot, however, be reckoned as all loss; for had not the "cleansing fires" removed mountains of rubbish from our midst, strong destructive measures would have become a necessity from sheer want of space in which to store so many volumes.

Before the invention of Printing, books were comparatively scarce; and, knowing as we do, how very difficult it is, even after the steam-press has been working for half a century, to make a collection of half a million books, we are forced to receive with great incredulity the accounts in old writers of the wonderful extent of ancient libraries.

The historian Gibbon, very incredulous in many things, accepts without questioning the fables told upon this subject. No doubt the libraries of MSS. collected generation after generation by the Egyptian Ptolemies became, in the course of time, the most extensive ever then known; and were famous throughout the world for the costliness of their ornamentation, and importance of their untold contents. Two of these were at Alexandria, the larger of which was in the quarter called Bruchium. These volumes, like all manuscripts of those early ages, were written on sheets of parchment, having a wooden roller at each end so that the reader needed only to unroll a portion at a time. During Caesar's Alexandrian War, B.C. 48, the larger collection was consumed by fire and again burnt by the Saracens in A.D. 640. An immense loss was inflicted upon mankind thereby; but when we are told of 700,000, or even 500,000 of such volumes being destroyed we instinctively feel that such numbers must be a great exaggeration. Equally incredulous must we be when we read of half a million volumes being burnt at Carthage some centuries later, and other similar accounts.

Among the earliest records of the wholesale destruction of Books is that narrated by St. Luke, when, after the preaching of Paul, many of the Ephesians "which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it 50,000 pieces of silver" (*Acts xix, 19*). Doubtless these books of idolatrous divination and alchemy,

of enchantments and witchcraft, were righteously destroyed by those to whom they had been and might again be spiritually injurious; and doubtless had they escaped the fire then, not one of them would have survived to the present time, no MS. of that age being now extant. Nevertheless, I must confess to a certain amount of mental disquietude and uneasiness when I think of books worth 50,000 denarii—or, speaking roughly, say £18,750, of our modern money being made into bonfires. What curious illustrations of early heathenism, of Devil worship, of Serpent worship, of Sun worship, and other archaic forms of religion; of early astrological and chemical lore, derived from the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks; what abundance of superstitious observances and what is now termed “Folklore”; what riches, too, for the philological student, did those many books contain, and how famous would the library now be that could boast of possessing but a few of them.

The ruins of Ephesus bear unimpeachable evidence that the City was very extensive and had magnificent buildings. It was one of the free cities, governing itself. Its trade in shrines and idols was very extensive, being spread through all known lands. There the magical arts were remarkably prevalent, and notwithstanding the numerous converts made by the early Christians, the <gr ‘Efesia grammata>, or little scrolls upon which magic sentences were written, formed an extensive trade up to the fourth century. These “writings” were used for divination, as a protection against the “evil eye,” and generally as charms against all evil. They were carried about the person, so that probably thousands of them were thrown into the flames by St. Paul’s hearers when his glowing words convinced them of their superstition.

Imagine an open space near the grand Temple of Diana, with fine buildings around. Slightly raised above the crowd, the Apostle, preaching with great power and persuasion concerning superstition, holds in thrall the assembled multitude. On the outskirts of the crowd are numerous bonfires, upon which Jew and Gentile are throwing into the flames bundle upon bundle of scrolls, while an Asiarch with his peace-officers looks on with the conventional stolidity of policemen in all ages and all nations. It must have been an impressive scene, and many a worse subject has been chosen for the walls of the Royal Academy.

Books in those early times, whether orthodox or heterodox, appear to have had a precarious existence. The heathens at each fresh outbreak of persecution burnt all the Christian writings they could find, and the Christians, when they got the upper hand, retaliated with interest upon the pagan literature. The Mohammedan reason for destroying books—“If they contain what is in the Koran they are superfluous, and if they contain anything opposed to it they are immoral,” seems, indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, to have been the general rule for all such devastators. The Invention of Printing made the entire destruction of any author’s works much more difficult, so quickly and so extensively did books spread through all lands. On the other hand, as books multiplied, so did destruction go hand in hand with production, and soon were printed books doomed to suffer in the same penal fires, that up to then had been fed on MSS. only.

At Cremona, in 1569, 12,000 books printed in Hebrew were publicly burnt as heretical, simply on account of their language; and Cardinal Ximenes, at the capture of Granada, treated 5,000 copies of the Koran in the same way.

At the time of the Reformation in England a great destruction of books took place. The antiquarian Bale, writing in 1587, thus speaks of the shameful fate of the Monastic libraries:--

“A greate nombre of them whyche purchased those superstycyouse mansyons (*Monasteries*) reserved of those librarye bookes some to serve their jakes, some to scoure theyr candelstyckes, and some to rubbe theyr bootes. Some they solde to the grossers and sope sellers, and some they sent over see to yeS booke bynders, not in small nombre, but at tymes whole shyppes full, to yeS, wonderynge of foren nacyons. Yea yeS. Unversytees of thys realme are not alle clere in thys detestable fact. But cursed is that bellye whyche seketh to be fedde with suche ungodlye gaynes, and so depelye shameth hys natural conterye. I knowe a merchant manne, whych shall at thys tyme be namelesse, that boughte yeS contentes of two noble libraryes for forty shylynges pryce: a shame it is to be spoken. Thys stuffe hathe

heoccupied in yeS stede of greye paper, by yeS, space of more than these ten yeares, and yet he bathe store ynoughe for as manye years to come. A prodygyous example is thys, and to be abhorred of all men whyche love theyr nacyon as they shoulde do. The monkes kepte them undre dust, yeS, ydle-headed prestes regarded them not, theyr latter owners have most shamefully abused them, and yeS covetouse merchantes have solde them away into foren nacyons for moneye.”

How the imagination recoils at the idea of Caxton’s translation of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, or perhaps his “*Lyf of therle of Oxenforde*,” together with many another book from our first presses, not a fragment of which do we now possess, being used for baking “pyes.”

At the Great Fire of London in 1666, the number of books burnt was enormous. Not only in private houses and Corporate and Church libraries were priceless collections reduced to cinders, but an immense stock of books removed from Paternoster Row by the Stationers for safety was burnt to ashes in the vaults of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Coming nearer to our own day, how thankful we ought to be for the preservation of the Cotton Library. Great was the consternation in the literary world of 1731 when they heard of the fire at Ashburnham House, Westminster, where, at that time, the Cotton MSS. were deposited. By great exertions the fire was conquered, but not before many MSS. had been quite destroyed and many others injured. Much skill was shown in the partial restoration of these books, charred almost beyond recognition; they were carefully separated leaf by leaf, soaked in a chemical solution, and then pressed flat between sheets of transparent paper. A curious heap of scorched leaves, previous to any treatment, and looking like a monster wasps’ nest, may be seen in a glass case in the MS. department of the British Museum, showing the condition to which many other volumes had been reduced.

Just a hundred years ago the mob, in the “Birmingham Riots,” burnt the valuable library of Dr. Priestley, and in the “Gordon Riots” were burnt the literary and other collections of Lord Mansfield, the celebrated judge, he who had the courage first to decide that the Slave who reached the English shore was thenceforward a free man. The loss of the latter library drew from the poet Cowper two short and weak poems. The poet first deplores the destruction of the valuable printed books, and then the irretrievable loss to history by the burning of his Lordship’s many personal manuscripts and contemporary documents.

“Their pages mangled, burnt and torn,
The loss was his alone;
But ages yet to come shall mourn
The burning of his own.”

The second poem commences with the following verse

“When Wit and Genius meet their doom
In all-devouring Flame,
They tell us of the Fate of Rome
And bid us fear the same.”

The much finer and more extensive library of Dr. Priestley was left unnoticed and unlamented by the orthodox poet, who probably felt a complacent satisfaction at the destruction of heterodox books, the owner being an Unitarian Minister.

The magnificent library of Strasbourg was burnt by the shells of the German Army in 1870. Then disappeared for ever, together with other unique documents, the original records of the famous law-suits between Gutenberg, one of the first Printers, and his partners, upon the right understanding of which depends the claim of Gutenberg to the invention of the Art. The flames raged between high brick walls, roaring louder than a blast furnace. Seldom, indeed, have Mars and Pluto had so dainty a sacrifice offered at their shrines; for over all the din of battle, and the

reverberation of monster artillery, the burning leaves of the first printed Bible and many another priceless volume were wafted into the sky, the ashes floating for miles on the heated air, and carrying to the astonished countryman the first news of the devastation of his Capital.

When the Ofor Collection was put to the hammer by Messrs Sotheby and Wilkinson, the well-known auctioneers of Wellington Street, and when about three days of the sale had been gone through, a Fire occurred in the adjoining house, and, gaining possession of the Sale Rooms, made a speedy end of the unique Bunyan and other rarities then on show. I was allowed to see the Ruins on the following day, and by means of a ladder and some scrambling managed to enter the Sale Room where parts of the floor still remained. It was a fearful sight those scorched rows of Volumes still on the shelves; and curious was it to notice how the flames, burning off the backs of the books first, had then run up behind the shelves, and so attacked the fore-edge of the volumes standing upon them, leaving the majority with a perfectly untouched oval centre of white paper and plain print, while the whole surrounding parts were but a mass of black cinders. The salvage was sold in one lot for a small sum, and the purchaser, after a good deal of sorting and mending and binding placed about 1,000 volumes for sale at Messrs. Puttick and Simpson's in the following year.

So, too, when the curious old Library which was in a gallery of the Dutch Church, Austin Friars, was nearly destroyed in the fire which devastated the Church in 1862, the books which escaped were sadly injured. Not long before I had spent some hours there hunting for English Fifteenth-century Books, and shall never forget the state of dirt in which I came away. Without anyone to care for them, the books had remained untouched for many a decade-damp dust, half an inch thick, having settled upon them! Then came the fire, and while the roof was all ablaze streams of hot water, like a boiling deluge, washed down upon them. The wonder was they were not turned into a muddy pulp. After all was over, the whole of the library, no portion of which could legally be given away, was *lent for ever* to the Corporation of London. Scorched and sodden, the salvage came into the hands of Mr. Overall, their indefatigable librarian. In a hired attic, he hung up the volumes that would bear it over strings like clothes, to dry, and there for weeks and weeks were the stained, distorted volumes, often without covers, often in single leaves, carefully tended and dry-nursed. Washing, sizing, pressing, and binding effected wonders, and no one who to-day looks upon the attractive little alcove in the Guildhall Library labelled "Bibliotheca Ecclesiae Londonino-Belgiae" and sees the rows of handsomely-lettered backs, could imagine that not long ago this, the most curious portion of the City's literary collections, was in a state when a five-pound note would have seemed more than full value for the lot.

William Blades - [printer](#) and [bibliographer](#) was born in [Clapham, London](#) on the 5th December 1824. In 1840 he was apprenticed to his father's printing business in London and was subsequently taken into partnership. The firm was afterwards known as *Blades, East & Blades*. His interest in printing led him to make a study of the volumes produced by [Caxton's](#) press, and of the early history of [printing](#) in England. His *Life and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer*, was published in 1861-1863, and the conclusions which he set forth were arrived at by a careful examination of [types](#) in the early books, each class of type being traced from its first use to the time when, spoilt by wear, it passed out of Caxton's hands. Some 450 volumes from the Caxton Press were thus carefully compared and classified in chronological order. In 1877 Blades took an active part in organizing the Caxton celebration, and strongly supported the foundation of the [Library Association](#). He was a keen collector of old books, prints and medals. His publications relate chiefly to the early history of printing, the [Enemies of Books](#), his most popular work, being produced in 1881. He died at [Sutton in Surrey](#) on [April 27, 1890](#)

Dates for your Diary

16th – 18th October 2008

***The Guild of Bookworkers (in association with CBBAG)
Standards of Excellence Seminar, Toronto, Canada**

The Standards of Excellence in Hand Bookbinding is an annual Guild of Book Workers seminar. Leading experts in the fields of book arts present 3 hour demonstrations. Tours of binderies, conservation facilities, rare-book libraries and papermaking establishments are regularly arranged in conjunction with the seminar. The proceedings are videotaped and made available to members.

For information about upcoming Standards of Excellence, contact Christopher McAfee, Standards Committee Chair at standards@guildofbookworkers.allmail.net.

8th – 9th November 2008

***Bookbinders Fair, Pieterskerk, Leiden, Holland**

Always an inspiring exhibition and a cosy meeting place for hand bookbinders, restorers, paper artists, calligrapher and all other interested parties (amateur or professional).

For more info: go to www.boekbindbeurs.nl

15th November 2008 – 18th January 2009

Designer Bookbinders Competition Exhibition, The John Rylands Library, Manchester

Further details at: <http://www.designerbookbinders.org.uk/home.html>



Designer Bookbinders Lectures 2008-2009

Tuesday 7th October

6.30pm - Sebastian Carter - Bound for Higher Things

The experience of the Rampant Lions Press in designing edition bindings for fine books.

Tuesday 4th November

6.30pm - George Kirkpatrick - The Invisible Binder

"Where have you been hiding all these years?" is a frequently asked question to which George will give an explanation, illuminated by slides, of his binding-related work over more than forty years.

Saturday 10th January

10.30am - Ewan Clayton, calligrapher The Written Artefact as a Contemplative Space

In this talk, which features a number of projects made in collaboration with Peter Jones, Ewan explores his thinking about the place hand-work has in a digital age and its importance in our lives.

12noon Jenni Grey - Design Basics

Adopting contemporary design tools and processes in your work and as a way of life.

2pm Simon Brett, wood engraver - The Painfull Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre

Simon's collaboration with the Barbarian Press on an edition of Shakespeare's Pericles, and their attempt to combine text and illustration meaningfully.

3.30pm Maureen Duke A Longlife Binder

Experience and experiences.

Tuesday 3rd February

6.30 pm Eri Funazaki A Bookbinder's Approach to Book Arts

How I incorporate design- binding techniques in book arts and why I am involved in making artist's books.

Dominic Riley A Bookbinder's Journey

From student days to post-Fellowship, Dominic's travels, teaching and working life in America and his adventures in the Lake District. Unusual requests, strange bindings, interesting folk and a little TV.

Tuesday 3rd March

6.30pm Dr Marianne Tidcombe The Middleton Lecture

Katharine Adams, her Life and Work: An account of England's foremost woman binder in the early 20th century. She was at the centre of the Arts and Crafts movement and bound books for the leading private presses and major collectors.

The Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1

Nearest underground stations: Holborn and Russell Square

Admission: DB members £5, non-members £7, students £2.50 per lecture.

Four Tuesday lectures or all day Saturday: DB members £18, non-members £26 and students £9.

Eight lectures: £36/£52/£18

Further details from Julia Dummett and Rachel Ward-Sale 01273 486718

Website: www.designerbookbinders.org.uk E-mail: lectures@designerbookbinders.org.uk

