



# Zoe Finlay Paper Conservation

Newsletter #4, July 2012

## WELCOME!

Hello and welcome to the quarterly newsletter from **Zoe Finlay Paper Conservation**.

In this edition, 'From the Studio' brings you the history behind transparent papers. These items have long been overlooked by individuals and institutions alike, with the result that the race is now on to understand and preserve them while we can.

From page two, I look at how a recent trip to Paris unearthed some fascinating treasures, and there is the usual round up of local art and book-related events on page three.

The recent heavy rain has sadly taken its toll on at least one of my customers' artworks. If your house has suffered any leaks, it's well worth checking your pictures and other artefacts for damage. It's amazing how water can find a way in; check attics, cellars and any pictures hung on exterior walls. If you have concerns, act quickly and get in touch so I can advise you on how to save them.

Enjoy reading.

Zoe

## FROM THE STUDIO

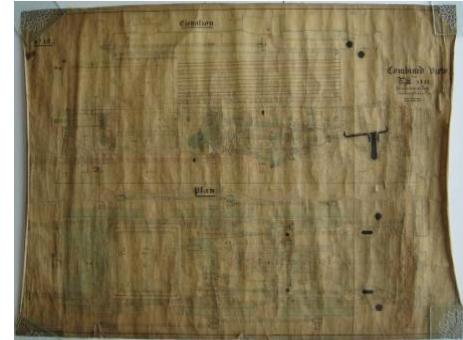
### Tracing History

Recently, I had a 19<sup>th</sup> century railway engineer's drawing on tracing paper arrive into the studio. As transparent papers are so often the unsung heroes of our industrial heritage, I decided that this item deserved a newsletter article.

Conservators often hold their head in their hands when presented with a transparent paper due to their challenging nature. However, I am intrigued by the sheer variety of papers, the beautiful rich brown tones they develop over time and the endeavours that these utilitarian objects represent.

With today's printers, design software and photocopiers, it's difficult to imagine that it was once so laborious to reproduce an image or text. It wasn't until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that copying became easier and faster, thanks to innovations in the use of transparent papers.

Industrial designs, dress patterns, architects' and engineers' drawings and newspaper layouts are just a few of the



**(Above) Before treatment:** 'The Combined View of Locomotives, Shilden Stock', (1840), 920mm(W) x 642mm (H). Ink and watercolour drawing on transparent paper with original cotton lining.



**(Above) Before treatment:** The rolled paper, on arrival into the studio, fragile and discoloured.

things that can be found on transparent papers.

As beautiful as they often are, these were drawings with a function. They were rolled up, folded up, pinned up, carried outdoors and relied upon daily by craftsmen to whom they were essential.

As a result of this, distortions, tears and missing areas, (losses) are common problems as well as a tendency for the papers to want to revert to their original rolled condition.

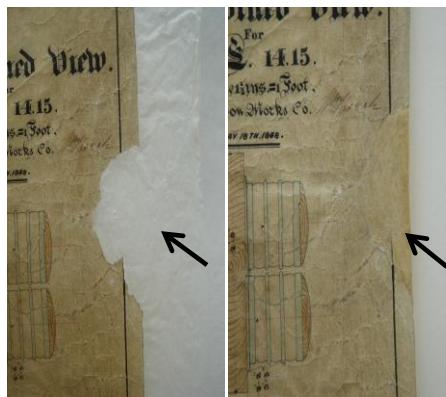
Paper is made transparent using various methods. Chemical processing of the fibres meant that strong alkalis and acids were often added into the pulp vat.

Mechanical processing was also used; often, the paper was beaten until the flattened fibres allowed more light through and transparency was attained. Often, oils such as cherry and linseed were rubbed onto the finished surface of ordinary cotton or linen rag paper.

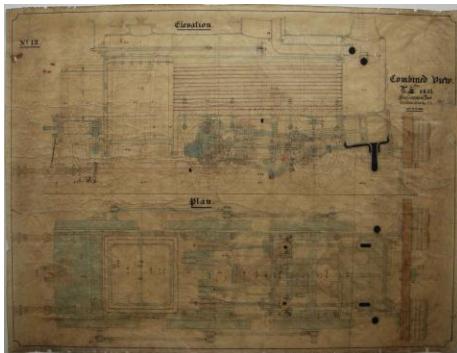
While one or all of these methods could be combined, it's now clear that there was a lot of experimentation and very little of it was documented.

Such heavy handed methods result in poor ageing for these papers, with a high proportion now brittle and discoloured as the oils age chemically.

This particular drawing, of a locomotive from the Shildon railway stock near York, exhibited many of the typical problems. Losses occurred



during each unrolling and an original supporting cotton lining had become almost detached. The drawing was carefully re-lined with Japanese paper to allow



**(Above)** The Shildon Railway Stock drawing, after conservation.

handling and prevent further tearing. The adhesive used also increased the internal strength of the paper while pure water rinsed out the accumulated years of dirt and discolouration. Finally, the saved losses were reattached, missing areas in-filled with a sympathetic paper and an appropriate housing method was designed for the client to his specifications.

The result is the preservation of a beautiful and unique drawing which stands as a testament to our industrial heritage.

*(The photographs in this article were printed with the kind permission of the owner).*

**(Far left)** Detail of a loss from the edge of the drawing. **(Left)** The same area infilled with two pieces of Japanese paper combined to match the transparency and weight of the original. The new papers were toned with acrylic paints.

## BOOK OF THE QUARTER

### Hasegawa's Fukuro-Toji

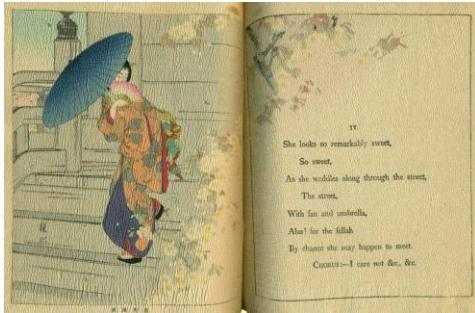
On a recent trip to a Paris antiques market, I spotted a lonely item – a tiny, thin, limp, paper-bound booklet lying precariously on rows of serious-looking, leather-bound books. On closer inspection it turned out to be a children's book, printed in French onto crepe paper. It was adorned with the most beautiful Japanese coloured woodblock engravings, still fresh and vibrant in colour. This was to be my first introduction to these Fukuro-Toji bound picture books, printed in Tokyo by the printer, Takejiro Hasegawa (1853-1938) for the children's book market.

Hasegawa printed many titles, all of which were illustrated Japanese fairy tales but they were produced only in small runs of four to five hundred. The popularity of the tales saw them translated into eight languages and exported around the world.



Their construction alone is beguiling and beautiful and always from quality materials. As a result, they remained pliable yet strong and were advertised as being printed on 'untearable crepe'.

The quality components didn't end there as Hasegawa employed Meiji-period artists to provide the illustrations.



**(Above)** A page from, '*Oyuchasan*'.  
(1892), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. 170.5mm x 202mm

The woodblock prints were first printed onto ordinary mulberry paper before being interleaved with cardboard which had special grooves. Once moistened and wrapped around a vertical device, pressure was applied, resulting in the crinkly texture of crepe paper which reduced the paper size by up to 30 per cent.

Fukuro-Toji means 'pouch-binding' as the pages were folded over double to make a pouch before being bound using traditional Japanese side stab-stitch methods and secured with a silk tie. However, in Japan, the books are also referred to as 'chirimen-bon', (literally 'crepe paper book' in Japanese).

Hasegawa began studying English in 1869 and was taught by foreign missionaries. These contacts introduced him to eminent Western academics, some of whom later became his translators.

Hasegawa's chirimen-bon were key in helping to spread Japanese culture and customs outside of Japan – despite Hasegawa himself never once leaving his country.

## Tynemouth Secondhand & Antiquarian Book Fair

The next Tynemouth Antiquarian book fair will take place on Sunday 19th August 2012, 10-4pm in the now fully-restored Tynemouth metro station.

## Parisienne Plates

No, not the type piled high with delicious food, but rather these wonderful 19<sup>th</sup> century book steel plate engravings complete with original sleeves that I discovered at the Paris antiques market.

Book plates such as these were essential to the burgeoning illustrated printed book market across Europe. Plates had to be resistant to wear and early soft copper engravings were eventually replaced by the harder steel from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



## LOCAL EVENTS:

- **EVENT: Lit & Phil Summer Book Sale** Books, CD's & printed ephemera. 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 10am – 4pm, £1 entry [www.litandphil.org.uk/events.html](http://www.litandphil.org.uk/events.html)

- **EVENT: Adult Drawing & Pastel classes**, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012. [www.ncl.ac.uk/events/noticeboard/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/events/noticeboard/)

- **EXHIBITION: As Large As Life, Quentin Blake**, The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 07<sup>th</sup> July – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2012, [www.twmuseums.org.uk/laing](http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/laing)

- **EXHIBITION: Jane Lee McCracken, The Woodcutters Cottage**, Intriguing biro pen on paper drawings, The Customs House, South Shields, 23<sup>rd</sup> June – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2012, [www.customshouse.co.uk/whats-on/Gallery/826/the-woodcutter-s-cottage](http://www.customshouse.co.uk/whats-on/Gallery/826/the-woodcutter-s-cottage)

## ... AND FURTHER AFIELD:

- **EXHIBITION: The John Ruskin Collection**, The Millennium Gallery, Sheffield. A re-vamp of this stunning collection is a must-see and definitely on my summer list. [www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/collections/ruskin-collection/](http://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/collections/ruskin-collection/)

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