



Zoe Finlay Paper Conservation

Newsletter #5, October 2012

WELCOME!

Hello and welcome to the quarterly newsletter from **Zoe Finlay Paper Conservation**, an issue which marks a full year of newsletters. I hope you've enjoyed reading them as much as I have writing them.

I hope that your home and possessions have remained dry after all the summer rain. In case you've been unfortunate, I've added advice for dealing with damp paper and books onto my website, or please call me for free advice. Remember to keep a close eye on your treasured paper possessions! Be on the lookout for mould growth from the increase in humidity and check attics and cellars for unexpected leaks.

Finally, this quarter's 'From the Studio' discusses an issue many of us encounter – the pros and cons of sellotape – and I hope that the 'Picture of the Quarter' helps you to recollect your own summer holiday.

Enjoy reading!

Zoe

zoe.finlay@gmail.com

FROM THE STUDIO

Sticky Situations

In the studio, I'm often presented with the sticky problem of removing sellotape from paper, a treatment which is frequently a source of difficulty and concern for conservators.

As I realise that sellotape causes unease for many of you who apply it to your damaged books and artworks, I decided to write this article to explain some of the problems associated with this useful but sometimes problematic invention.

The first pressure sensitive tape was developed in 1845 for medical purposes when a doctor applied natural rubber to a cloth carrier in order to keep bandages in place. It wasn't until the 1920's that 3M made the first non-medical tape, produced to meet a demand from the automobile industry; as the fashion for two-tone sprayed cars developed, a tape was required which would help achieve a high quality finish.

By the 1950's, familiar brands such as Scotch and Magic Mending Tape had appeared and within less than sixty years, an astonishing array of tapes

emerged with over 1,000 types made by one manufacturer alone.

When sellotape degrades, it passes through five distinct stages of deterioration, from the early stage of flaky plastic that can be peeled off to a brown sticky mess that just won't budge.



Sellotape sagas: The all-too familiar sellotape stain held up to the light. The adhesive has sunk into the paper and caused it to become transparent.

Conservators adopt a variety of methods during tape removal with heat, dry ice or toxic solvents often used. Any residual staining may require further chemical treatment and if the correct removal method isn't selected, the adhesive can be driven further into the paper fibres.

However, the main reason for this article is to address another issue. There are many tapes on the market which describe themselves as 'archival' or of 'museum

'quality'. The reality is that this term is loosely applied and largely unreliable. A tape that describes itself as such should be easily removable in the long-term and leave little residue or disturbance to the paper. However, within a few months of application, many of these 'archival' tapes are no longer easily reversible. Furthermore, the residues of some may discolour and cause distortions, acidity or brittleness to the paper as they age.

In short, while manufacturers advertise their product as 'acid free', often there may be undesirable side effects of their product as it ages.

Even the most experienced conservators can be challenged by sellotapes. Identification draws on visual and historical knowledge but with such a vast range available, this can prove difficult. Some 'tapes' turn out to not be tapes at all, but instead, old documents such as prints, letters, ledgers and labels which were frequently cut up and pasted on for a cheap repair.



This old repair, (above), was removed from a clients' 19th century paper item and revealed provenance about the origins of the document.

When removed, these can provide valuable information relating to the provenance of the item. For this reason, I remove repairs with

caution until I am able to inspect the underside.

Of course, it is important to keep some perspective. Given the choice between applying sellotape or risking the complete loss of a torn page or book cover, sellotape offers an undeniable advantage.



Leave it for the Christmas presents...
a 1950's sellotape advert.

The bad news is that a suitable alternative to sellotape has yet to be invented. However, I have put together a free, pocket-sized checklist of some alternative solutions which I hope will be of use to you.

Please contact me if you would like to be sent the checklist or if you would just like some free professional advice.

So, next time you reach for the sellotape, consider if there may be another way you can keep fragments together. An alternative may save you a lot of future expense and regret.

The Rise of the 19th Century Watercolour

I was delighted when **John Nicholson and Dunelm Fine Art**, the North East's largest Fine Art dealers, recently invited me to submit articles for their new website.

The first article discusses some of the reasons behind the vast number of 19th century watercolour paintings we have inherited.

Their production fulfilled more than just aesthetic pleasure alone and it is surprising how much of their history is intertwined with the development of Britain as we know it today.

The first article is now available online at:

www.johnnicholsonfineart.co.uk
under 'Latest News'

Tynemouth Secondhand and Antiquarian Book Fair

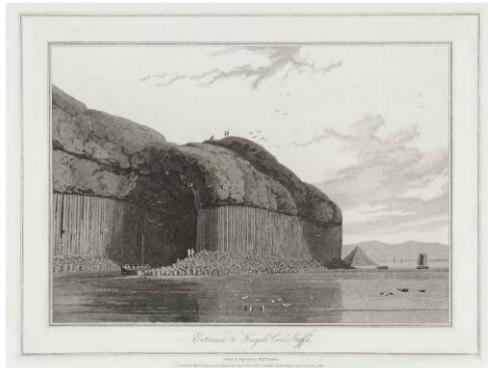
The final Tynemouth book fair of 2012 will take place this **Sunday 21st October, 10-4pm** in Tynemouth Metro station. Visit my stall for free paper and book related advice ... or just to say hello!

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK MY WEBSITE FOR LINKS TO LOCAL AUCTIONEERS, FRAMERS, ANTIQUE SHOPS AND BOOKSELLERS, AS WELL AS FOR MY REGULAR BLOGS.

PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS CAN BE FOUND ON MY WEBSITE.

PICTURE OF THE QUARTER

'Entrance to Fingal's Cave, Staffa' by William Daniell, (1769-1837)



Aquatint etching on paper, (date unknown) 162mm x 241mm). © Tate, London 2012

This summer, many of us will have enjoyed a holiday where we captured beautiful scenery with our digital cameras and smartphones.

But try to imagine the days when such conveniences didn't exist.

Before the widespread use of photography, the only means available for tourists to document their destinations were drawings, paintings and engravings. During the 19th century advances in shipping and rail transportation allowed people to travel further afield than ever, visiting foreign lands for the first time.

Engravings such as the example pictured above were often produced in large quantities. Tourists, eager to relay to friends and family back home the wonders they had seen, would buy cheap engravings and mount them into portfolios. These would be shown to friends during dinner parties and

provided not only a source of entertainment but, more surreptitiously, a demonstration of wealth and status.

I was made never more aware of these Victorian tourists than on my own recent summer holiday to Staffa, a small, uninhabited island off the West Coast of Scotland.

Our small boat, heavily laden with sightseers, made its way from Mull through the Atlantic swell. Bypassing seals and whales, it eventually dropped off its excited load onto the island. As we gripped the handrails, we explored the ancient basaltic columns and, pausing at the edge of Fingal's Cave, we stood on the precarious ledge to listen to the booming waves only inches away from us. Centuries earlier this spot had inspired Mendelssohn, Sir Walter Scott and painters such as J.M.W Turner.

The boat returned an hour later to collect us from the island and it was during the return journey to Mull that I came across a leaflet. The cover featured a photograph of Victorian tourists on the island, posing for the camera while holding the rails where we had just been. Formality had ruled then, even in this wild place, and hands clutched long skirts, frilly blouses and wide-brimmed hats where ours had held rucksacks and digital cameras.

There seem to be few corners of the earth which have not been

immortalised in Victorian engravings and paintings. They mark the turning point where the days of admiring friends' engravings at the dinner table were coming to an end and the thirst for exploration had begun.

LOCAL EVENTS:

- **EXHIBITION: Paper, Pens, Pigments**, Bedes World, Jarrow. Exhibition of Northumbrian Scribes, 05th October – 10th November 2012. www.bedesworld.co.uk
- **EXHIBITION: Autumn Exhibition at the Biscuit Factory**. See the latest up and coming artists at this lovely venue. Newcastle upon Tyne, 07th September – 12th November 2012. www.thebiscuitfactory.com
- **EXHIBITION: Tiny Tales**, Laura Johnson, Lindisfarne Castle, 08th September – 04th November 2012, www.nationaltrust.org.uk

... AND FURTHER AFIELD:

- **EXHIBITION: A Soviet Design for Life**, Cambridge University. A unique tour through the Soviet century with a beautiful and insightful collection of posters and ephemera, July 04th 2012 - April 06th 2013 www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/a-soviet-design-for-life
- **EXHIBITION: On The Road, Jack Kerouac's Manuscript Scroll**, British Library, London. View the 120-foot long continuous scroll of this cult classic novel in its first ever UK exhibition. 04th October – 27th December 2012, www.bl.uk/whatson/exhibitions/kerouac