

CBBAG - OTTAWA VALLEY

Minutes

October 10, 2018

Theme: John Holmes speaks about his apprenticeship

Chair

We welcomed two visitors to our meeting: Emily and Lynn.

Financial Report

The bank balance is good, standing at \$8714. All rentals have been paid, for workshops and rooms. Some money was lost on the finishing course, however, things even out over the year. A visit to the bank is necessary to change the signing officers.

Workshops

Spike explained the late start to Bookbinding 101 on September 29, due to the building's being locked. Eventually, someone from Sandy Hill came to open the doors, offering an extra hour for instruction, to compensate for the inconvenience. Four people attended, including one person from North Bay. Spike showed the books from the workshop, one of which was a leather book. The next workshop will feature Spike again, this time teaching miniatures on October 13. Seven people have enrolled, with room for three more.

One revision to the workshop list is that Susan will teach her treasure boxes class on November 17, instead of in January. Spike asked her to send a blurb and a picture for the website.

Nancy French will do a 2 day workshop on marbling.

Swap

Since there was an interest in having a swap this year, a few members have arranged one. The theme is mapping, a process that our brains use to work. Criteria were briefly given, and later Deidre handed out sheets with full details. These will appear on our website. The deadline to join is November 15, with pages due on February 13.

Show and Tell

Val showed the work she had done in Dan Mezza's finishing course, gold tooling on the spine and a sample of inlay and onlay. She described the course, which was very intensive. Michael Parkin had an unusual hexagonal box, covered with Japanese paper, and with 2 drawers inside. He was interested in the challenge of the shape. Lynn attended Bookbinding 101, but did not have any of her work at the meeting.

Wendy mentioned a new book, with Heidi Kyle's work in it, written by her daughter, Ulla. [The Art of the Fold](#) has precise instructions and is available on Amazon. Jason Logan's book, [Make ink, a forager's guide to natural ink making](#), was another one that Wendy found quite useful.

Program

John Holmes spoke about his apprenticeship in bookbinding and conservation, which started in 1955 at the National Library of Wales. He gave a short history of apprenticeship, which became more popular in the 12th century and continued thereafter. It was set up by master craftsmen. Actually, it became a means of cheap employment, and children were often used. In the 13th to 15th centuries, guilds formed, and crafts and trades competed with each other. Examples of contracts were shown, and the reason for the wavy cut edge was explained. The worker only got the other half when the contract or time period was complete. These were written on vellum. Indentures often ran for 7 to 9 years, but now they are shorter. John's was for 5 years. There were rules of behaviour indicated, sometimes quite stringent, such as being forbidden to marry or play dice. Some parents paid the employer to take their child as an apprentice, with the employer having the responsibility for clothing, food and housing. Some apprenticed children were orphans or came from poor houses. The church also handed over children in order to ease their burdens.

John described his beginnings at the National Library, starting each day sweeping floors and making tea. There were new sights, sounds and smells, with leather, paper, paste and cloth. He learned library style bindings, craft binding and conservation. During that time, he did go away on courses and attend conferences. His apprenticeship finished and he stayed on at the Library as a fully qualified journeyman. In 1969, he immigrated to Canada, and worked at the library at McMaster University in Hamilton. From 1986 to 1991, he was the director of conservation at the National Library in Ottawa. In 1991, he returned to Wales, where he was the preservation development officer, later on becoming the prevention conservation manager. He compared this to having come full circle, being back at square one. In 2003, he retired, and moved to Scotland, staying a short time only, and returning to Canada in 2005.

Some samples of his bindings were shown, as well his own apprenticeship contract. How did his duties develop over time? The people he worked with assessed his skills, and when he was ready to move on, he did. John preferred bookbinding to paper conservation, as he got a better idea of the end result. Also preferable was doing a book from start to finish, and not handing things off to someone else for the next step.

Apprenticeships are still available, but they are harder to find. John had an advertisement for one, needed at Windsor Castle.

Next Meeting

November 14, Dan Plourde from Columbia Finishing Mills

20 in attendance