

SHORT CONTRIBUTIONS

Farina Fructum

Practitioners of the relatively new field of paper conservation seem to have largely forgotten or ignored a product whose merits have been known to members of the Old School for decades. I refer, of course, to that most useful of products, *farina fructum*. Its prime function is for the removal of extraneous material, such as surface dirt, from prints and documents and is best used after it has been rolled into small balls and set aside to mature for several days. First, you take these balls and knead them with your fingers; this will allow for the right degree of plasticity and elasticity when applying them to the paper's surface. This may have given rise to the expression "conservators knead balls".

Application is with a rolling motion and it will be observed that much of the dirt will have been taken up by it. It will, however, pick up ink or other pigment from a printed page or engraved image, although this may be easily remedied by rolling the ball in the opposite direction, thus transferring the ink back onto the paper in the manner of off-set lithography. (Indeed, the use of farinaceous products is seriously being considered as a more economic alternative to flong in the printing industry.)

Needless to say, the choice of product is subjective and must be selected according to the artifact to which it will be applied. In making such a selection, the degree of breadness must be considered as a priority; not all documents can withstand the abrasive qualities of a Black Russian, or a stone-ground wholemeal, but a good Rye is the one most favoured by conservators of the Old School.

Extracted from:
Algernon Pomeroy F.S.A., *Chats With Restorers Society for Cultural Material (SCUM)*, c.1906.

Block Lifting

Overburden is the archaeologist's biggest problem; at almost every dig I've done I have spent inordinate amounts of time removing layers of recent rubbish before getting to

the good stuff, which is always at the bottom. On consultation with a conservator I was once acquainted with I learnt of the technique of block lifting. With this technique you slop on some stuff which hardens (he wasn't specific, or my memory's going) lift the whole thing out, turn it upsidedown, and go at it from underneath. It seemed to me there was no reason why this technique should not be scaled up. At the Wailing Sight at Green Bay we did just that. We employed the local Greek cement contractor and had an even layer of reinforced concrete 18" thick poured over the entire beach and levelled out like a parking lot. Once the stuff had set we jacked the whole thing up and overturned it using two naval tugs with winches anchored offshore. Now with the entire archaeological site upsidedown all the good stuff stuck out like the peanuts in one of those lumpy candy bars. In this way the archaeologists could skim off the nice stuff first and leave the "underburden" to students and suchlike. (The IIC-CG Code of Ethics defines an archaeological site as an "immovable object" so clearly this definition will need rewording.)

Some problems have been encountered with writing reports as, of course, the conclusion always comes first. Also, when upsidedown, it is easy for the uninitiated to confuse the orientation of the material. East is west and west is east and the twain meet when the whole issue is teetering on edge waiting for the big splash.

Howard Carter,
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Boiled Eggs

In the last issue of *Recent Setbacks in Conservation* you printed an article concerning the use of plover's eggs in the restoration of steam locomotives. I consider this article timely. However, I take exception to the suggestion that the eggs of the gannet are unsuitable. Anyone who has studied these lovely birds in their natural habitat would know that the stuffings and packings used in double-expansion steam chests can withstand pressures in excess of 250lb/sq in. In this

light, the rubber eagle illustrated on page seventeen is clearly superfluous. Incidentally, it was James Watt who deliberately dropped his home-made, elliptical wooden hat, not Richard Trevithick. Thank you for allowing me the space to let off steam.

Brigadier P. Albert Smedley,
The Sidings,
Basingstoke.

The Lining of Paintings - a Review Paper

Much has been written (1-73) on the subject of lining of paintings, including a number (74) of reviews (75-83). In view of this extensive coverage of the subject one might question the need for yet another reference in the literature (84). But, as this is one of the few methods available for the incompetent on this side of the Atlantic to justify overseas conference attendance, it seems well worthwhile. In a nutshell, there will be a paintings conservation conference in

Cannes, or Nice, or even Montecarlo next year (85-86) and by hook or by crook I'm going. What this means is, I need references to fill the above numbers so I can shake together a paper for the conference and if I can use somebody else's work I'm damned if I'll do my own (87). Could you all supply me with references as soon as possible so I can cut and paste an original work from them? If insufficient replies are received within two weeks on the topic, I will put something together on *Adhesives in Conservation*, or *Treatment of Metals*, or perhaps *Recent Developments in Paper Conservation* - the topics are endless. I will send out personalized begging letters on my word processor if the need arises - I know you will all help me out. Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation - you suckers!

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