

THE *Piper*



NUMBER 45 SPRING 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

*'A man will turn over half a library
to make one book'*

Samuel Johnson

'If music be the food of love, play on'

William Shakespeare

These quotations relate to the content of this issue of *The Piper*. The articles about the conservation of musical instruments are absolutely fascinating. It must be such a difficult task to conserve fine, old instruments and the work of the Musical Instruments Team is absolutely tremendous and of such importance. We are also highlighting the re-opening of St Cecilia's in the autumn of this year when many of these

instruments will be collected together and on view there.

Samuel Johnson's comment about 'one book' is also very relevant to this issue as Peter Freshwater has given us an article about donations. If you have books – rare or otherwise, one or many – which you think might be of interest and use to the Library then please do get in touch with the relevant people.



The 1769 harpsichord by Pascal Taskin.



An Overview of Conservation

One of the most important tasks at the Musical Instrument Collection is looking after the objects. This can, and does, take several forms like ensuring they do not suffer any form of neglect in the form of extremes of humidity or temperature, or be subject to dust or grime. Sometimes instruments that are not looking at their best need further treatment in order to make them look better for display purposes.

The selection of the instruments to go on display in St Cecilia's Hall after reopening has been established at a series of meetings. This extended to their intended positions in the displays as the various themes were

determined. Once decided, Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet, the conservator of the musical instrument collection, has systematically been going through all of the instruments that will be displayed in St Cecilia's Hall, both to assess their condition, and to improve the looks of items by removing dirt, repairing cracks and replacing small pieces of veneer and other similar work.

One of the important approaches is to not 'over-restore' instruments and make them appear new – part of the character of a musical instrument is that it shows years of genuine use. Instruments often show wear from this – brass

instruments might have small dents from knocks, and wooden instruments will have chips or abrasions. In some instances this can give a researcher information about how an instrument might have been held or played, and also give clues about any alterations the object might have had to keep it up-to-date musically.

When objects come to the museum they can be in a slightly 'sorry' state. The objects may be passed from the person who used it on a regular basis to other family members, and it might well be left in its case in storage. But musical instruments, in common with other





working objects such as clocks and cars, often require regular use to keep them in excellent condition. Some of the common issues will be that moving parts such as keys and levers will seize up, and that organic parts such as leather might change size as it is no longer subject to moisture. Regularly-played instruments are also cared for visually, usually receiving a regular polish or wipe-down. Few instrument cases are airtight, and so instruments will tarnish or attract grime, having a look quite unlike when it was played.

Removing surface grime and tarnish is a safe and simple process,

although the decision about how to proceed must be taken with respect of the instrument's history rather than simply taking it as an object in isolation. Instruments in the collection are used for teaching and research, either of which might involve some examples being played. Although an instrument may have been 'playable' when being regularly used, they do not, as discussed, always remain in that form. During an examination there is often a discussion about if any intervention is needed – or desirable – to the instrument. Usually it is a question of loss versus gain – do the advantages of having the instrument playable

outweigh the loss of ephemeral parts such as pads or cloths.

The general hope is that visitors to the collection will view the objects as well-loved – both when in use as instruments and by the museum now – and they will be displayed in the best condition possible, without trying to give any false impression that the objects are in almost new state. Instruments should show that they have been played and have a history with their own stories to tell.

Dr Darryl Martin
Principal Curator, Collection of
Historic Musical Instruments



Opposite. Trumpet by York (MIMEd 5772)

To remove the tarnish of this instrument I used a solution of calcium carbonate (Precipitate chalk) with water. The chalk is softer than metal but harder than tarnish so it removes it without damaging or scratching the metal.

(Photographs: Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet)



This page. Sanxian (MIMEd 437)

To treat this instrument I used a technique I have recently learned from a workshop given by Caroline Scharfenberg at the conservation studio of the Main Library. The technique is known as Japanese paper toning, and as the name states, it involves the use of Japanese paper to reinforce the torn sections in the folds of book covers. The paper is then coloured using natural pigments to match the colour of the book cover, making the repair inconspicuous. In this case the tears in the instrument were mended and reinforced with Japanese paper and toned to match the colours of the snake skin. Although the tears are still visible, this treatment has made them less noticeable and more stable.

(Photographs: Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet)



**Viol Converted to a
viola (MIMEd 1057)**

This instrument was cleaned using cotton clothes dampened with a 20:1 Vulpex solution (Vulpex is a soft, non-acid, non-foaming detergent), and then blotted with a dry microfiber cloth. The cleaning involved only the removal of dirt accumulation. A new bridge was made and then it was restrung with new gut strings. (Photographs: Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet)

Conserving the Collection

Since the closure of The Musical Instruments Museum of Edinburgh (MIMEd) in September of 2014, the focus of my work as conservator, is directly linked to the Saint Cecilia's Hall Redevelopment Project. The new displays and layout of the museum will exhibit several hundred objects of MIMEd's collections, and all of them need to be ready to be displayed for the re-opening of the museum in November. Whilst the museum is closed to the public, I have undertaken the gargantuan task of treating every single object to be displayed: anything from dusting,

cleaning, and changing strings, to full treatments that can involve several weeks of delicate and intensive work.

Deciding what has to be done is not always an easy undertaking, every instrument is different, and we need to ask ourselves several questions before we start any treatment. What is important about it, why do we want to preserve it, or what is important to preserve? Its sound, its functionality, its appearance? Sometimes not doing anything is the best we can do, and sometimes a full-on treatment is absolutely necessary to prevent further damage. This decision making process often requires a

dialogue between conservator and curators to assess what is the best route to achieve a satisfactory result.

However, the actual treatment needs to happen, and to achieve this I have been working with volunteers and interns who can help to carry out simple but time-consuming tasks, whilst I complete the more challenging treatments. By the time Saint Cecilia's Hall re-opens its doors to the public, the instruments will reflect all this work by looking as good as they deserve.

Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet
Conservator, MIMEd



Refurbishment of St Cecilia's Hall

St Cecilia's Hall is due to re-open – following its refurbishment – in November 2016. For the Musical Instrument Museum team this will be a major milestone, although by no means the end of the process – there will be evaluation and refinement to ensure that the visitors have the best possible experience during their time in the building.

There is no doubt that the collection will be completely transformed by the move, and in particular to the experience of visitors. Before the re-development the musical instrument collection was housed in two separate buildings – St Cecilia's Hall (which housed the keyboard instruments and – most recently – bagpipes) and the Reid Concert Hall, in which all of the other instruments types were displayed.

In telling the story of musical instruments this could perhaps be described as two 'half-stories' which, out of context from each other, did not easily add to a full story. One of the major objectives in designing the gallery displays for the reopened St Cecilia's Hall will be the chance to tell the complete story.

To an extent the collection is limited in how it might do that, but it also aims to pay homage to earlier displays. There will be four galleries of instruments, two on the upper floor which surround two sides of the concert hall, and two on the ground floor. The upper floors will – as previously – house the keyboard instruments. The number of displayed instruments will be reduced, but this is aimed to allow the presentation of instruments into

different themes – sections on different types of instrument, then displays looking at 'Copies and counterfeits' and 'Meet the makers.' The centrepiece is the gallery in which will be the 1769 harpsichord by Pascal Taskin. The second gallery will include sections on 'Decoration' and 'From home to hall'.

The two galleries on the ground floor look at instruments from contrasting approaches. The third gallery takes its inspiration from the Reid Concert Hall and presents instruments grouped by type. This is particularly useful when considering the collection in its teaching role, where undergraduate and postgraduate students study the instruments as part of their coursework. The display in the Laigh Room will be arranged according to different themes, generally according to use. Four displays will cover 'Ritual', 'Traditional', 'Popular', and 'Classical' uses of instruments, and there will also be displays of

instruments according to groups including some of our finest renaissance instruments, a classical orchestra, and a jazz band from the mid-1920s.

Not only will the whole story be told in the one building, but the museum will be open for a much longer period each week, we are presently hoping the museum will open for five days each week, Tuesday to Saturday.

Dr Darryl Martin
Principal Curator, Collection of Historic Musical Instruments



The 1769 harpsichord by Pascal Taskin.



Presenting books to the University Library

One of the main aims of the Friends of EUL is to act as a channel for purchases and gifts of books and manuscripts to enhance the Library's collections. Over its first 54 years the Friends have collectively contributed to an impressively wide range of additions to the Library. Many of them went on display two years ago in the Friends' 50th anniversary exhibition: 'Fifty Years, Fifty Books.' The most splendid among them must include the second Halliwell-Phillipps collection of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama; and the literary

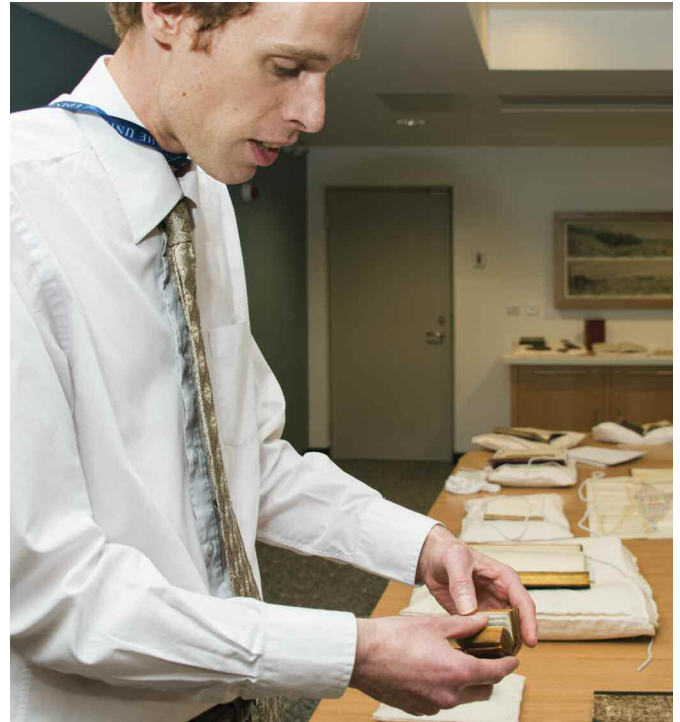
papers of Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman MacCaig and other Scottish Literary Renaissance writers. In addition to these were the letters of Thomas and Jane Carlyle; the Gordon Wright photographic archive; the superb second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*; the Hamish Henderson archive and, most recently, an edition of *The Psalms of David* with a binding designed by Phoebe Anna Traquair.

Many individual Friends have also presented books from their own collections and these too have added significantly to the Library's

strengths. The Library's collections of pre-1960 Penguin publications, examples of fine printing, illustration and binding and modern English poetry – especially W. H. Auden's poetry – have all benefitted from Friends' gifts and bequests. Many more Friends have presented interesting single volumes and small collections that have filled gaps in the Research Collections.

We are still encouraged to offer books from our own collections to the Library but how we do it has had to change. As the Library no longer





Right.
Dr Joseph Marshall, looks at new purchases.

Opposite and below.
Display of CRC new purchases in the Viewing Room, 5th floor, Main Library.



maintains the post of Donations Librarian, through whom individuals could give or bequeath large collections, we are now asked to consult members of Library staff with proposals of books that we want to offer and this has to be more selective than ever over which books can be accepted.

The Library is interested in accepting specific items of interest for adding to existing collections but not simply roomfuls of books unless, of course, the room is full of early printed books, manuscripts, or other

rarities and items of special interest!

Authors and subject areas in which the Library has a special interest and books which may be represented on your shelves at home and which you might like to present to the Library, include:

- First or unusual editions/ printing of, for example, Sir Walter Scott, John Buchan and W.H. Auden
- First editions, association copies, letters and manuscripts of any/ all modern Scottish writers
- Private press books

- Colour plate books
- Fine bindings
- Historical books on medicine, veterinary medicine and science, especially those with good illustrations and of visual quality
- Books on Asia, particularly the Middle East, China, India and Japan
- Original manuscripts, and unrecorded, unusual or annotated printed books, on any topic
- University of Edinburgh memorabilia *(continued overleaf)*



Dr Joseph Marshall, looks at new purchases.



Do come and join us!

For a membership form see our website or contact our Administrator:

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Email:
a.roberts@ed.ac.uk

Website:
<https://friendsofeul.wordpress.com/>

We are also now on Facebook!

Forthcoming Events

April 28th at 18.00

Charles Withers

This is a partnership event with the National Library of Scotland and will take place there when Charles Withers, Professor of Historical Geography at the University of Edinburgh will give a talk to the Friends. More details to follow.

June 10th

A visit to **Queen Margaret University** to view archives and a tour of the building. More information to follow nearer the event.

If you are considering donating books or papers to the Special Collections, the first approach should be by letter or by email to Dr Joseph Marshall, Head of Special Collections and the Centre for Research Collections (joseph.marshall@ed.ac.uk) with a list of books on offer and checked, if possible against the Library catalogue. If you think the books on your list are more appropriate for adding to the Library's general collections, you should contact the relevant Academic Librarian.

If you do not use a computer, or have difficulty finding the information you require, the Friends' Committee can help. Please contact the Friends' Administrator, Alason Roberts, by letter or email (a.roberts@ed.ac.uk) who can ask a member of the Friends' Committee to help you.

Further information is available on the Friends' website.

Peter Freshwater
Member of Friends' Executive Committee



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