Summer 2026

RESONANCE

Newsletter of the

York Consortium *for* Craft and Conservation





Featuring articles from **craftspeople & conservators**, **academics**, and **local businesses**

A Quarterly Insight into York's Heritage Sector

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Message from the Chair

REFLECTIONS ON THE AGM & BURSARY AWARDS EVENING

It was a real pleasure to hold this year's AGM and Bursary Awards Evening in the Merchant Adventurers' Hall. It's one of those buildings that immediately puts you at ease. Surrounded by its wonderful creaky timber bones, you can't help but imagine the people who have gathered there over the centuries. If those timbers could talk, I'm sure they'd have some stories to tell. It felt the perfect setting to bring together a community built around craft, conservation and making.



"...a community of people who continue to support, encourage and inspire one another."

The AGM itself was a great success. It was a pleasure to welcome James Grierson as he chaired the meeting for the first time as President. As always, he spoke thoughtfully and eloquently about the Consortium and the importance of bringing people, skills and ideas together. As Chair, I reflected on another busy year and reaffirmed our commitment to collaboration, growing our membership, creating more opportunities for people to get involved, and encouraging the next generation of craftspeople and conservators.

The evening then turned to the Foundation's bursaries. It was a real privilege to celebrate this year's recipients and formally present their awards, but equally important was the opportunity to bring everyone together. Alongside our bursary recipients were former award holders, trustees, members, supporters, and the charitable organisations and sponsors whose generosity makes these opportunities possible. It felt less like an awards ceremony and more like friends and colleagues gathering around a shared belief —that talented people should be encouraged, supported and given the opportunity to pursue a career in craft, conservation and heritage.

Seeing those connections beginning to form through our growing Alumni Network is exactly what we hoped for when we first imagined it—not simply a list of former recipients, but a community of people who continue to support, encourage and inspire one another.

The evening concluded with talks from three former recipients—Joanne Harrison, Marlène Lagnado and Dan Cheetham. Their work could hardly have been more different, their journeys equally so, and yet there was a remarkable thread running through all three. None described a straightforward path.

Each spoke with honesty about uncertainty, changing direction, setbacks, moments of doubt and the gradual process of discovering where they truly belonged. Their stories were not about arriving fully formed, but about following an instinct that became clearer with time.
Listening to them, I was reminded that many of us who work in craft, conservation and heritage share something similar. We often begin with only the faintest sense of what draws us. Sometimes life interrupts. Sometimes opportunities lead us elsewhere. Sometimes we spend years learning one discipline before discovering that what really captures our imagination lies just around the corner.

Dan's story was one of curiosity, openness and serendipity. From science to the fire service, through a love of timber and ultimately into the highly specialised world of millwrighting, his career has followed an unconventional path. There was something about these remarkable timber structures—their moving parts, mechanical ingenuity and living relationship between material and machine—that clearly resonated with him. His willingness to embrace new opportunities, from restoring historic mills to working in Antarctica, revealed someone who continues to follow his curiosity wherever it leads.

Marlène spoke with an infectious enthusiasm that was impossible not to admire. She lives and breathes craft, describing the physical understanding that comes only through working directly with materials—knowledge held as much in the hands as in the mind. Her delight in making was evident in every story, whether talking about the simple pleasure of mixing a mortar so good you could almost eat it or reflecting on the encouragement that gave her the confidence to pursue the work she truly loved. She spoke with complete honesty, and it was clear that craft is not simply what she does, but who she is.

"All three are accomplished professionals, yet none presented an effortless narrative of success."

Joanne's talk was equally compelling. An accomplished scholar and practitioner, she returned time and again to her enduring fascination with vernacular architecture, the streets and back-to-back houses of Leeds, and the communities that give buildings meaning. She spoke candidly about periods of adversity, taking time to reassess, and the importance of remaining true to yourself even when the path ahead is uncertain. Her love of learning shone through every part of her talk—a quiet reminder that curiosity and scholarship are not destinations, but lifelong companions.

What united their talks was authenticity. All three are accomplished professionals, yet none presented an effortless narrative of success. Instead, they spoke openly about uncertainty, perseverance and the courage required to pursue work that genuinely mattered to them. That honesty was perhaps the most inspiring part of the evening.



2026 Bursary Awards Ceremony in the Merchant Adventurers' Hall

It also reminded us why the Foundation's bursaries matter so much. Financial support is, of course, valuable in practical terms, but encouragement can be just as important. Knowing that others believe in your work, your curiosity and your potential can provide exactly the confidence needed to keep going when the path ahead feels uncertain.

As a charity, this is ultimately what we hope to foster. We want more people—particularly those at the beginning of their careers—to feel that there is a place for them in craft and conservation, and that their enthusiasm, curiosity and talent are worth investing in.

Perhaps what made the evening feel so special was that many of us spend our working lives quietly making, conserving and repairing. We rarely stop to explain why we do it. Our work often speaks for itself. We don't sign the buildings we repair or the objects we conserve; the work is almost always part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Evenings like this create space for a different kind of conversation. They allow people to reflect on the experiences, influences and decisions that have shaped them. They remind us that there is rarely a single route into these professions, that careers are built through unexpected turns as much as careful planning, and that the journey itself becomes part of the craft.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, and especially to Joanne, Marlène and Dan for speaking with such generosity and honesty. Their stories reminded us that there is no single way into this world, only a shared commitment to making, conserving and continually learning. We hope this evening continues to grow in the years ahead, welcoming new bursary recipients into a community that will continue to support them long after the awards have been presented.

Kibby Schaefer, Chair

York Perspectives

Research, practice, and reflections from across York's craft, conservation, and heritage community

YORK CIVIC TRUST 80th ANNIVERSARY

As York Civic Trust marks its 80th anniversary, the organisation is reflecting on eight decades at the heart of the city's heritage, conservation and civic life. Founded in 1946, the Trust was created to champion York's historic character while helping shape the future of one of Britain's most remarkable historic cities.

Over the years its influence has reached far beyond conservation alone. The Trust has contributed ideas for everything from bus stops and public seating to the founding of the University of York. Restoration and reuse, however, have remained central to its work. Projects have included the restoration of the Mansion House and Fairfax House, the rescue of redundant medieval churches and historic buildings, and even the relocation and preservation of some of York's finest historic interiors and ceilings.

Now entering its ninth decade, the Trust is increasingly focused on working directly with communities to understand what local heritage means to them today. Building on the success of its Citizens' Heritage at Risk Register, the Trust has helped raise awareness of threatened buildings across the city, including playing an important role in efforts to save the historic Holgate Carriage Works Canteen Building from demolition.

Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Trust has recently launched Our Place: Acomb and Westfield, a new community heritage project exploring the

"...eight decades at the heart of the city's heritage..."

buildings, spaces and landscapes that local people value most. Although still in its early stages, the initiative is already resulting in conversations about what heritage is, whose stories are represented, and how local identity is reflected in the everyday environment. The project will ultimately support a community grants programme, helping residents and local groups conserve, restore and bring heritage assets and green spaces back into active use.

The Trust's well-known plaque programme also continues to grow. More than 150 plaques have now been installed across York — and even one in Amsterdam — commemorating the people, places and events that have shaped the city's history. As part of a major new website project, the Trust is reviewing and refreshing the research behind every plaque, considering not only the stories they tell individually, but also what they collectively reveal about York's evolving history and identity.

This work will feed into a new guidebook to York's plaques, bringing together fresh research, lesser-known stories and new perspectives on the city's past. Early discoveries have already uncovered some surprising connections with many more stories still waiting to be told.

Andrew Morrison, CEO of York Civic Trust

In Hand: Materials + Making

Close readings of materials, tools, and techniques, exploring how knowledge is held and developed through making

PRODUCING A MATCHING DECORATIVE BRICK MOULDING

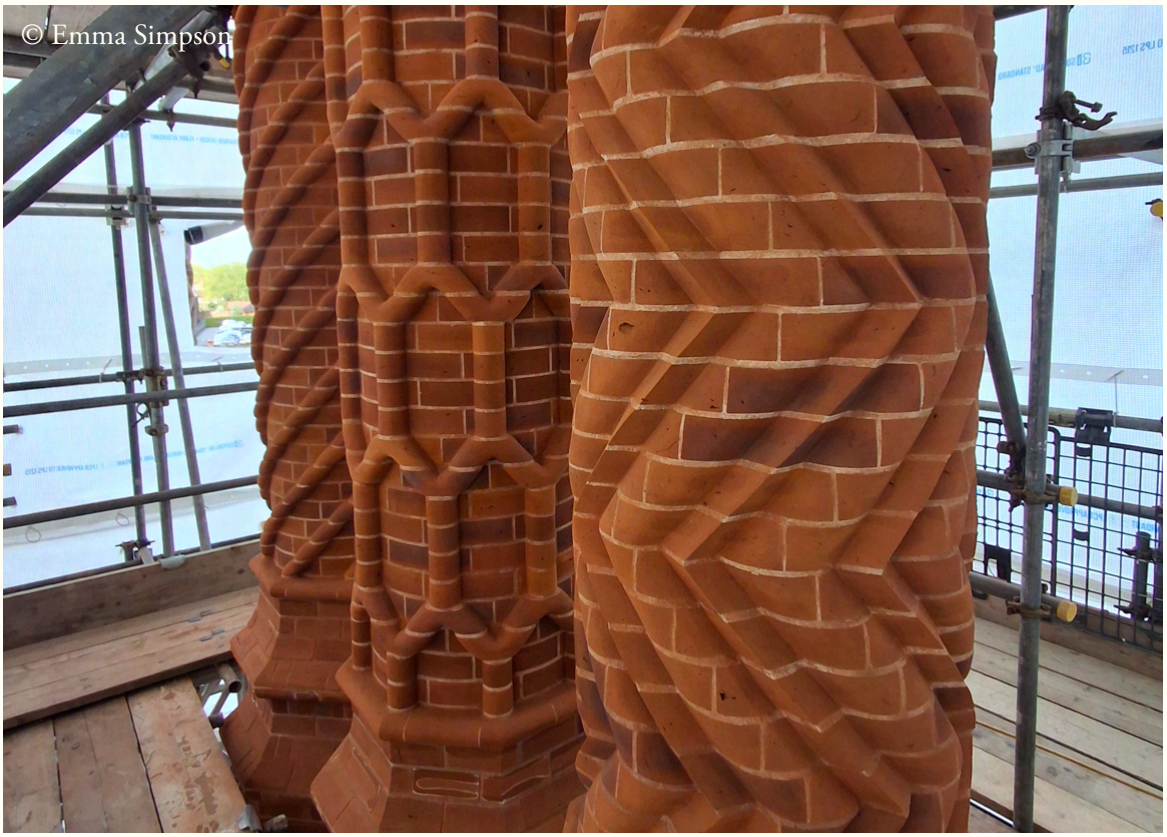
This involves several processes, starting with making templates from an original brick moulding. The templates are used to make a timber cutting box. A blank brick is placed in the box and cut, following the profiled sides of the box to produce the shape. A wire bow saw is used for the cutting, and final finishing is conducted with fine files, rifflers and sandpaper.

I start by looking at the best example of the existing brick moulding, trying to understand the shape. Working on decorative chimneys, the patterns are sometimes complex. As the chimney shafts are cylindrical, the patterns must curve horizontally and twist vertically, which I find challenging to think about. Sometimes I can discover a logical way forward with the help of practical geometry, sometimes I am mystified and I progress only through trial and error.
First, I set out the existing bricks on a board exactly as they were, however damaged. This





helps me to understand the 'flow' of the shape as it rises up the shaft. I make a template for the bottom and top beds of the brick.
Once happy with the templates, I make the cutting box. With chimney mouldings for a shaft which is circular on plan, the relative distance of the two sides on the box is critical as this will dictate the angle of the slanted shape as it moves up the chimney shaft.
Cutting and shaping the oak so that the wire bow saw blade travels accurately across to form the correct shape is a challenging process. I start by measuring the angle and using a mini-bevel to get the angled cut of the oak going in the right direction. I then place the two sides of the box on the bottom and top beds of the brick I am trying to match and continue fine-tuning by filing the oak in a vice. I then assemble the cutting box.
Working in 'cut and rubbed' brickwork is very demanding in terms of tolerances, so it is essential that the sides of the boxes are fitted square to the base. They must also be robust as up to 270 bricks may need to be cut in one box. It is essential to maintain control of the precision. There are many steps in the process where a fraction of accuracy can be lost through carelessness or complacency.



"...rubbers are a consistent, exceptionally fine material, capable of being rubbed, cut and carved by hand."

Once the box has been made, production of the mouldings begins. The bricks used for this class of work are fully washed red rubbers. They are different from standard hand-made facings and are fired to a slightly lower temperature (typically 1000 - 1100 degrees Celsius). The clay goes through a tightly controlled screening process to eliminate stones. As a result, rubbers are a consistent, exceptionally fine material, capable of being rubbed, cut and carved by hand.

A blank rubbing brick (already accurately cut to size) is placed in the cutting box. The wire bow saw is then used to cut around the box, with the blade resting on the sides of the box, following the profile. The bow saw blade is made from a length of galvanised wire, doubled up and twisted to make a softly serrated cutting blade which is fitted into place and tensioned on the saw frame. Final finishing is carried out with files and sandpaper.

Emma Simpson

Emma Simpson MBE is Director of Simpson Brickwork Conservation Ltd, where she leads a specialist team undertaking the conservation and repair of historic brickwork. Alongside her practical work, she is widely recognised for her contribution to training, consultancy and the promotion of excellence in traditional building crafts.

Form + Structure

Exploring the patterns, systems, and principles that shape objects, buildings, and places



ON ISLAMIC ORNAMENT

The intensive study of Islamic pattern is a relatively new phenomenon, and has perhaps been unhelpfully dominated by the unproven assumption that it is a vehicle of meaning. Yet opinions about what that meaning might be differ radically from each other. Moreover, they are mere assertions because they are unsupported by Islamic textual sources. It seems that medieval Muslims did not write down what they thought of the patterns they created. So one is forced to speculate.

The sheer quantity of ornament on many an Islamic building can serve to dissolve mass, to hide structure, and to invite close scrutiny on its own terms regardless of its wider context. Thus successive discrete panels tempt the viewer to linger and to contemplate as if taking in one picture after another in a gallery. Patterns can be superimposed one upon another, thereby creating complex palimpsests, as in certain carpets. Changes in colour can emphasise different patterns within a single frame.

While many patterns based on intersecting polygons can be easily read thanks to their use of 8, 12 or 16 sides, the viewer can also be flummoxed by patterns with 11, 13 or 17 sides, and studies of the geometric patterns in the Alhambra have revealed the artist's familiarity with mathematical structures of unexpected complexity. Craftsmen used compasses and straight edges but the standard kit for architects could be as simple as a peg and string. In the hands of an expert that simple tool could ensure consistent symmetry and proportionality.

Often enough geometry makes itself felt in vegetal and epigraphic ornament, and may only be revealed as a result of intensive scrutiny. But that same geometry imposes order on both a tiny and a gigantic scale, as much in a border band which articulates an elevation as in the enormous vegetal scrolls which cover entire domes. That order remains recognisable even when interstitial spaces are filled with dense ornament of no consequence. The overall effect is akin to a body draped in a patterned textile, and indeed many an Islamic monument is dressed to kill, or is so covered with inscriptions that the building becomes a book.

Professor Robert Hillenbrand
Professor Robert Hillenbrand is one of the world's foremost historians of Islamic art and architecture. Formerly Professor of Islamic Art at the University of Edinburgh and Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University of Cambridge, he is internationally recognised for his outstanding contribution to the study of Islamic art and architecture.

Nature + Environment

Reflections on the natural forces that shape materials, making, and conservation practice

NATURE, CRAFT AND CONNECTION

I came to basketry through a love of natural materials, but over time I have come to understand that my relationship with nature is much deeper than simply using willow and hazel in my work.

As a basket maker, I work with materials that are entirely shaped by the natural world. Hazel and willow are both coppiced crops, harvested in cycles that have changed little over centuries. I co-manage a small hazel coppice, cutting a section each winter and using the rods for basket rims, handles and garden structures. Coppicing is a remarkably sustainable practice. By periodically cutting trees back to ground level, it mimics natural woodland disturbance, allowing light to reach the woodland floor and encouraging biodiversity.

Working in the coppice has taught me that making begins long before weaving. It begins with observing seasons, weather, growth patterns and habitats. The woodland also provides many of the other materials I use: honeysuckle for rims, wych elm bark for weaving and decorative details, and occasionally naturally twisted hazel rods that become unique features within a basket. These are materials gathered through an ongoing relationship with a particular place.

"I work with materials that are entirely shaped by the natural world."



© Rachel Rimell

This connection between people and nature is often described through the idea of biophilia: the theory that humans have an innate affinity with the natural world because we evolved within it. Rather than seeing ourselves as separate from nature, biophilia suggests that we are part of it. I find this a helpful way of understanding both my work and the response it often evokes in others.

Alongside my basketry practice, I tutor a willow weaving group for adults attending an ecotherapy programme. We work outdoors with natural materials, and the benefits are immediately apparent. Participants often speak about the pleasure of handling willow, learning practical skills and spending time immersed in a natural environment. Making and creating seem to fulfil something fundamental in us.

Perhaps this should not surprise us. For most of human history, people made the objects they needed from materials gathered close to home. Craft, nature and everyday life were inseparable. Although modern life has distanced many of us from those relationships, the appeal of natural materials remains strong. When people encounter baskets made from coppiced hazel, woven willow or lichen-covered woodland materials, they often respond emotionally before they understand how the object was made. I suggest this is because such materials carry with them a sense


© Rachel Rimell



© Rachel Rimell

of place, season and landscape. They remind us of our connection to the natural world. For me, that is one of the greatest values of craft. Beyond function and aesthetics, it offers a tangible way of reconnecting people with nature through objects that are both useful and deeply rooted in the environment from which they came.

Angela Cole, Past Bursary Winner

Angela Cole is an award-winning Yorkshire basketmaker whose work bridges traditional basketry with contemporary design. Widely recognised for her craftsmanship and commitment to sustainable making, she has established herself as one of the leading voices in contemporary British basketry.

In Conversation

Conversations with practitioners, researchers, and makers about their work, experiences, and perspectives

WITH BETHAN GRIFFITHS



Can you briefly describe your current role and the work you are most involved in?

I run The Ironwork Studio, an independent design and conservation consultancy specialising in decorative architectural ironwork. My work focuses on the planning, design and procurement stages of projects. It includes advising on the conservation and repair of historic ironwork, as well as developing new designs that respond to and enrich their architectural setting.

Clients come to me because decorative architectural ironwork is an important part of their project, but not their specialist area. My role is to provide the specialist knowledge and guidance that helps clients make informed decisions from the earliest planning stages. While my work is broad, much of it involves assessing existing ironwork, developing conservation strategies, and producing designs and specifications. My work brings together a breadth of knowledge across design, conservation and craftsmanship.

How did you come into your field of practice, and what first drew you to it?

My metalworking career began in jewellery while I was studying three-dimensional design at Manchester University. Over time, my work grew in scale until it became, in effect, jewellery for buildings.

I had little involvement with historic work until I began working with Chris Topp. My first survey of a pair of eighteenth-century gates proved to be a real turning point. I found that I could immediately read the ironwork and understand how it had been made and constructed, but what truly struck me was the extraordinary level of craftsmanship. I hadn't fully appreciated it before, and I found myself in awe of the skill, ingenuity and thought of the craftsman who had made it. Since then, I've never been able to walk past historic ironwork in quite the same way.

I also became fascinated by the detective work involved: understanding what had gone wrong, why it had happened, what changes had been made over time, and what the original maker had intended.

Is there a tool, material, or technique that is particularly central to your work?

The most important tool in my work is close observation. Historic ironwork carries evidence of how it was made, altered and used, and these clues guide decisions about repair and conservation.

However, reading historic ironwork is not always straightforward, even in what may appear to be simple railings. While the core blacksmithing techniques of forge, hammer and anvil have remained essentially unchanged for centuries, modern tools and technologies have changed how work is made and understood. As a result, the advanced skills and ways of thinking that were once commonplace have been lost, along with the ability to fully read and interpret historic ironwork in detail.

Understanding historic construction methods therefore requires a different mindset from modern fabrication.

Can you describe a recent project or moment where material or practical considerations shaped your decisions?

A recurring practical consideration in my work is first identifying the material I am dealing with. Cast iron, wrought iron and modern mild steel each have very different properties and require different approaches to repair. Wrought iron, in particular, is often misunderstood and treated as though it were simply the same as modern steel.

Understanding the material therefore shapes every subsequent decision, from how the ironwork is assessed, to the conservation strategy adopted, and ultimately how it is repaired.

How do you approach the balance between established methods and adaptation in your practice?

While not a single project, a recurring judgement in my work is whether to dismantle historic ironwork in order to carry out like-for-like repairs, or to leave it assembled and carry out interventions in situ using more modern techniques.

This is particularly challenging with functional ironwork such as gates and railings, where keeping the ironwork in use is an important part of its significance. Dismantling can allow access to components and enable like-for-like repairs, but it also introduces risk to historic fabric that has survived for decades or centuries. Leaving work intact may reduce that risk, but can limit the methods available and require compromise in how repairs are carried out.

The judgement therefore lies in balancing different conservation values: retaining original material and historic construction techniques, while ensuring the ironwork can be repaired safely, continue to function for future generations.

What does care mean in your work, particularly when working with historic material, objects, or built fabric?

If I had to single out one thing, it would be recognising that architectural ironwork is not simply a decorative feature but also a record of human skill. What care means in relation to this is taking the time to fully understand the craftsmanship that has gone into its construction.

This is often overlooked by those unfamiliar with the construction and detailing. Each piece carries evidence of how it was made and how it has been altered and used over time. My role is to help ensure that as much of that evidence as possible is understood and retained, as a record of the skills and technologies of previous generations—forging techniques and construction methods that reflect a level of understanding and capability that is increasingly rare today.

What changes have you observed in your field over time, and what has remained essential?
When the National Heritage Ironwork Group was established in 2009, relatively few practising blacksmiths were familiar with conservation philosophy or how it could be applied in practice. While conservation principles were well established within the wider heritage sector, very few blacksmiths were aware of them.
Over time, the National Heritage Ironwork Group has worked hard to promote best practice, and there is now a much greater awareness and understanding of conservation principles among practising blacksmiths.
What remains essential, however, is the continued training and CPD within the sector, specifically focused on applying conservation philosophy to the conservation of historic ironwork.

Is there an object, material, or piece of work that has particularly shaped your understanding of your practice?
The Queen Anne summerhouse railings at Shuttleworth in Bedfordshire were a turning point in shaping my understanding of historic ironwork. We tend to expect highly ornate work to demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship, yet by modern standards these railings appear deceptively simple.
Modest as they are, the railings have a remarkable story to tell if you know how to read them. The bars themselves are forged rather than rolled, and the methods used to assemble them reveal construction techniques and ways of thinking that are no longer part of everyday practice.
Working on this project reinforced for me just how sophisticated historic ironwork can be. By analysing the construction through exploded drawings, I was able to reveal the logic behind the assembly and the ingenuity of its design. It demonstrated that understanding historic ironwork requires a very different mindset from approaching modern fabrication.

What do you feel is most important to carry forward into the future of your discipline or practice?
Historic ironwork has to be understood before it can be conserved. The most important thing to carry forward is knowledge: understanding historic materials, valuing traditional craft skills, and ensuring that both the practical skills and ways of thinking behind ironwork are passed on to future generations.
There is a danger that ironwork is judged through a modern lens, without recognising that it was designed and made using materials and construction methods very different from those used today.
By encouraging a greater appreciation of these often-overlooked details, we can ensure that it is better understood, more appropriately conserved, and that the remarkable achievements of past craftspeople continue to inform future generations.

Bethan Griffiths, Foundation Trustee
Bethan Griffiths is Founder and Director of The Ironwork Studio, an independent consultancy specialising in the design and conservation of decorative architectural ironwork. A highly respected heritage blacksmith and consultant, she is a founding trustee of the National Heritage Ironwork Group and has played a leading role in developing national standards, training and best practice for the conservation of historic ironwork.

Bursaries + Awards

Supporting emerging talent and recognising contributions to craft and conservation





2026 BURSARY AWARDS CEREMONY

This year's Bursary Evening took place on the 21st July in the Merchant Adventurers' Hall in the very centre of York. Through interesting conversations, beautiful craft displays, the ceremonial award of Bursary certificates, and inspiring talks from previous Bursary winners, the evening celebrated the people, skills, and stories that keep craft and conservation alive.





Alumni

Following the journeys, achievements, and ongoing impact of bursary recipients

BURSARY ALUMNI – A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE

At the 2026 Bursary Evening, we celebrated this year's cohort of talented and hugely deserving Bursary winners and acknowledged the generous sponsorship of organisations that support the York Foundation's programme. Each year we warmly invite awardees to come along to our annual ceremony. It's a chance for us to meet them properly, to congratulate and celebrate their exceptional achievements together with Consortium members and alumni of the scheme. This year, we also had the chance to hear from three alumni talking about their own career pathways and achievements, and how the support of a bursary at the right moment made all the difference.

Since 2000, the York Foundation has been offering a sustained programme of modest grants to foster new and developing skills in crafts and conservation. The Bursary scheme's reach is impressive, across a very wide range of backgrounds and disciplines—in the heritage community in York and Yorkshire but also more widely nationally and across the UK. Now in its third decade, the Foundation has made over 400 awards. Each one brings another person into a steadily growing network of talented and creative heritage practitioners achieving exceptional things. We are immensely proud of having nurtured this vibrant community of heritage craftspeople and conservationists but—as in all large families—we don't always manage to stay in touch with what our alumni are doing. We would love to stay connected, to hear more about your achievements and the exciting



heritage projects to which you have brought your skills and experience.

In the future we'll be doing more to keep in touch with our Bursary alumni. We'd like to hear from you about how we can keep our Bursary programme relevant and alive to current issues in the heritage sector. Could we create new opportunities for mentoring and work experience, or address deficits in particular areas of training and skills development? Can we do more to support outreach and engagement with heritage skills, as we have been doing already through the Consortium's public events? Please stay in touch, and we will welcome hearing from you with suggestions and ideas.

Dr Gill Chitty, Foundation Trustee
Dr Gill Chitty is an archaeologist, heritage specialist and academic with a distinguished career spanning heritage conservation, public archaeology and community engagement. Formerly Reader in Conservation Studies at the University of York and Head of Conservation at the Council for British Archaeology, she continues to play a leading role in shaping conservation policy, research and practice across the heritage sector.

Consortium News

Updates from across the Consortium, its members, partners, and projects

RESTORATION WORKS AT 14TH CENTURY BRAMALL HALL IN CHESHIRE

Bramall Hall, Cheshire is a C14 Tudor Manor House with C16 and C19 extensions. Now owned by Stockport Council, its roof has this last year undergone a complete restoration. My part in the project was replacing the badly weathered oak finials that sat on the apex of the many gabled roof lines.

Each finial differed from each other in design and varied between 1.5 - 2.5 metres in height. And most were 300mm at the widest point. I laminated each finial into 3 sections of European Air dried oak. This ensured stability and allowed for closer inspection to guarantee no imperfections within the oak.

Due to the size of each finial, working from a profile, I removed as much material from each section of the oak boards before laminating them together. Then once laminated, using the same profile and a crosscut handsaw and heavy chisels I continued profiling the finial. Once profiled, all the rest was handcarved with a malet and gauges. I always had an original with enough detail to work from in my workshop.

Over the 10 month period, I carved 8 finials. I handed them over on site to be treated and fitted by the contractors.
The project was carried out in collaboration with Derbyshire based Restoration Projects Ltd and Donald Insall Architects.

Iain Broadbent, Consortium Member

"I always had an original with enough detail to work from in my workshop."







Events

Highlights from recent events and opportunities to connect through future programmes and activities

PAST EVENTS

Sound & Conservation – Small Orchestra of Destruction

As part of this year's York Festival of Ideas, Tom Binns brought the Glasgow Piano Project CIC to York, where he began the gradual disassembly of a strung back piano. What initially appeared to be an act of destruction quickly revealed itself as something altogether different. As the instrument was taken apart, it became a source of experimentation and discovery. Working alongside Professor Catherine Laws, staff and students from the University of York's School of Arts and Creative Technologies, including experimental music ensemble The Assembled, the group explored sounds, rhythms and resonances that a piano would never normally produce. The instrument was no longer simply being played; it was being investigated, questioned and reimagined.



© Katie Harrison

The result was playful, surprising and deeply thought-provoking. Familiar materials and mechanisms revealed unexpected possibilities, encouraging those present to think differently about an object many of us assume we already understand. Rather than diminishing the piano, the process seemed to reveal new dimensions of its character.
Following the performance, Tom joined Dr Katharine Harrison of the York Consortium for Craft and Conservation and the University of York, for a conversation that ranged far beyond music itself. Together they explored the piano's place within community life and reflected on its remarkable ability to bring people together. Tom described occasions when the Piano Project had appeared in unexpected settings, including a medical conference where scientists and academics found themselves drawn towards the piano. What began as curiosity quickly became conversation, creating an informal space for interaction and exchange beyond the formal programme of the day. It was a powerful reminder that objects can still act as social catalysts, bringing people together in unexpected and meaningful ways.



The discussion also turned towards Glasgow, a city with a long-standing affection for the piano. Together they explored some possible reasons why piano culture had flourished there. Was it connected to the city's architecture, its industrial history, the materials available to makers, its weather, its social traditions, or simply a unique combination of circumstances? No single explanation emerged, nor was one expected. Instead, the conversation became an exploration of the many ways in which place shapes culture and how certain objects become deeply embedded within the life of a community.

Perhaps the most moving part of the discussion centred on the pianos themselves. Through the Piano Project, Tom is frequently entrusted with instruments that families can no longer accommodate. These are rarely just pieces of furniture. They arrive carrying stories, memories and emotional significance accumulated across generations. They are inherited from parents and grandparents, associated with lessons, celebrations, family gatherings and quieter moments of everyday life. Many have become treasured companions within a household.

Yet despite this, many pianos now find themselves without an obvious place in contemporary society. They are large, demanding objects that require space, attention and commitment. Families often feel unable to part with them but equally unable to keep them. This raises an intriguing question. If these instruments continue to hold such deep personal meaning, why do they appear to hold a less certain place within modern life?
The conversation prompted wider reflections on changing patterns of living, entertainment and community. What has altered in our relationship with music? How have our homes, our habits and our priorities changed? Why do some objects remain central to everyday life while others, despite their beauty, craftsmanship and emotional significance, gradually move towards the margins?

These questions lingered long after the event had ended. The event was ultimately about far more than pianos. It was about the ways people attach meaning to objects, the stories that accumulate around them, and the often surprising role they play in connecting us to one another. Through sound, conversation and shared curiosity, the afternoon encouraged us to think not only about what we value, but why we value it, and what may be lost when those connections begin to fade.

Kibby Schaefer, Chair

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM THE YORK CONSORTIUM

17th October:

MATERIALS: Adhesion

- **York Consortium for Craft and Conservation in collaboration with practitioners, University of York, and National Railway Museum**
- **St Olave's Church (Hall), York**
- **9:00am–6:00pm**
- **Join us for a day devoted to the sticky**, as we bring together specialists working with earth, timber, lime, glass and paper to explore how adhesion shapes practice, decision-making and material relationships. From questions of strength and compatibility to reversibility, repair and the careful separation of bonded materials, adhesion sits at the heart of how materials are joined, conserved, taken apart and understood.
  By considering not only how bonds are formed, but also how and whether they can be safely released, the conference explores how separation can create new opportunities for repair, reuse, adaptation and renewal. In this way, adhesion becomes not only a technical question, but a cultural and ethical one—forming bonds between disciplines as well as materials, and prompting a fundamental question: what is good adhesion?
- **Register of interest:** reserve a space on **Eventbrite** or email **comms@conservationyork.org.uk** if you would like to take part. We will then inform you as soon as tickets are available for purchase.

3rd December:

John Shannon Memorial Lecture

- **York Consortium for Craft and Conservation in collaboration with York Civic Trust**
- **Berrick Saul Building (University of York, West Campus)**
- **6:30am–8:30pm**
- Introduction by **James Grierson**, President of the York Consortium, and **Andrew Morrison**, CEO of York Civic Trust, including a short discussion on John Shannon — his importance and impact on York, and his contribution to the York Civic Trust.
- Keynote lecture from **Professor Kate Giles**, University of York, who is a buildings archaeologist with a specialism in the recording, archival research and theoretical interpretation of historic buildings. She is particularly interested in communal buildings of the medieval and modern periods, from guildhalls to parish churches, and how we tell their stories in ways that inspire interest and encourage people to visit and care for them today.
- **More information on ticket sales to follow in the Autumn Newsletter**

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM OUR SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, AND ALUMNI

24th July–14th August:
Live Heritage Craft Demonstrations

- **York Conservation Trust and Pinnacle Conservation Ltd.**
- **St Anthony's Gardens, York**
- **Each Friday from 12pm–3pm**
- A series of free live heritage craft demonstrations showcasing the skills that have shaped our historic buildings and communities for generations:
  - *24th July – Joinery & Woodcarving*
  - *31st July – Masonry & Lime Mortar*
  - *7th August – Stained Glass*
  - *14th August – Faience & Terracotta*
- **Free admission – no booking required**

30th July:
York Civic Trust's 80th Anniversary Summer Garden Party

- **York Civic Trust**
- **St Anthony's Gardens, York**
- **6:30pm–8pm**
- A relaxed and sociable evening with live music, drinks and nibbles to mark the Trust's 80th year.
- **Tickets available here**

6th–8th August:
York Wayzgoose

- **Thin Ice Press**
- **York**
- Thin Ice Press will host the inaugural York Wayzgoose: a three-day gathering celebrating the heritage, practice and future of print.
  Bringing together craftspeople, researchers, students and enthusiasts, the festival explores traditional print and the skills that keep endangered crafts alive. Expect inspiring speakers, hands-on workshops, a Suppliers' Fair, exhibitions, excursions, a drinks reception and the Wayzgoose Dinner.
  York Wayzgoose is an opportunity to learn, exchange ideas and connect with others shaping the future of heritage crafts.
- **More information and tickets available here**

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM OUR SPONSORS, VOLUNTEERS, AND ALUMNI

Until 10th August:

York Conservation Trust's Art Competition "People Not Walls: A Living City"

- **York Conservation Trust**
- **Open to all ages and abilities**
- Entrants are encouraged to capture scenes that reflect how York's historic environment remains an active part of contemporary life. Rather than focusing solely on architecture, submissions should highlight the relationship between people and place—from bustling street scenes and everyday routines to quieter moments of reflection, leisure and celebration.
  All artworks must feature at least one property cared for by York Conservation Trust, as identified on the specially commissioned YCT50 map.
- Selected and winning artworks will be showcased in an exhibition at York Theatre Royal in September 2026, forming a key part of the Trust's anniversary celebrations.
- Prizes include vouchers from Topping & Company Booksellers
- **More information can be found here**

17th September:

Creating Connections Regional Event

- **The Heritage Alliance, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **York**
- A chance to connect with heritage organisations, academic institutions and sector partners from across England, sharing ideas, tackling common challenges around capacity, skills, funding and advocacy, and building relationships that will shape our sector's future.
- **Full programme and registration details coming soon**

22nd September:

York Conservation Trust's 50th Anniversary Celebration "People Not Walls"

- **York Conservation Trust**
- **York Theatre Royal**
- **Start at 6:30pm**
- An evening celebrating 50 years of caring for York's historic buildings and the people behind them.
- Featuring an inspiring talk by acclaimed stonemason Andrew Ziminski, live heritage craft demonstrations and award presentations, "People Not Walls" highlights the essential role traditional craft skills play in shaping the future of our city.
- All proceeds from this event will support repairs and the ongoing care of York Theatre Royal.
- **Tickets available here**

UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE WIDER HERITAGE SECTOR

18th July–2nd August:
Festival of Archaeology
- **Council of British Archaeology**
- **UK-wide, with many events taking place in North Yorkshire**
- **Get more information here**

6th–10th August:
York Georgian Festival
- **York Mansion House, in collaboration with multiple York businesses**
- **Get more information here**

Until 14th August:
Survey – York's creative workspaces
- **From City of York Council**
- **Online Survey**
- **Help shape the future of York's creative workspaces!** City of York Council wants to hear from York creatives, students, and residents. They are exploring what workspace provision (like rehearsal spaces, recording studios, artist studios, maker spaces, or desk space) is needed in the city to help the creative and cultural sector thrive.
- **Whether you currently use creative workspace or hope to in the future, please take a few minutes to share your thoughts. Click here to take the survey**
- As a thank you for your time, this survey offers a chance to be selected for one of 2 complimentary project surgery sessions. These sessions are designed to provide expert guidance and support to cultural infrastructure operators who are seeking to initiate or advance capital projects.

11th–20th September:
Heritage Open Days
- **Heritage Open Days**
- **UK-wide, with many events taking place in and around York**
- **2026 Theme 'Every Day Lives'**
- Including lots of heritage and craft related events, e.g. "*Exhibition: Everyday Histories— Exploring the lives of Quiltmakers from the Past"* or *"York Minster — Heritage Quad"* amongst many more...
- **Get more information here**



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Thank you for supporting our work through your membership.