

Textiles in Libraries Project

A Patchwork of Collaborative Opportunities

Project poster for Bodleian Libraries staff conference, 21 – 22 June 2022
Alice Evans, Assistant Book Conservator



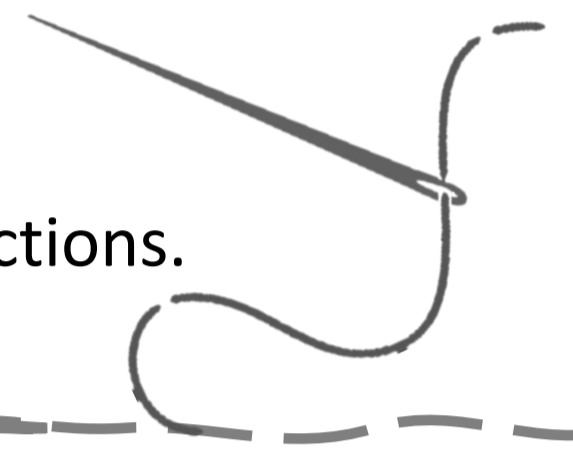
MS. Canon. Liturg. 264

A year of textile exploration at the Bodleian...

Since the autumn of 2021 the Bodleian's Conservation and Collection Care team have been working on a project to look at different textiles found across the library's collections, from the expected embroidered bindings and end bands, to more unexpected objects like tapestries and t-shirts! We are a team of book, paper and preventive conservators, and undertook this project to develop our team's knowledge of textiles in order to improve the way we care for these objects, which often arrive in the conservation workshops. One aspect of this project which has been particularly enriching for our team has been the many opportunities to work collaboratively, and to share this work far beyond our immediate team. As we have worked towards our overall project aims we have made connections with colleagues from across the Bodleian and beyond, including students, academics, and conservators from many different disciplines, which we will focus on in this poster.

The main aims of the project have been:

- To develop our team's knowledge of different types of textiles, their production and history, and the ways they age and deteriorate.
- Learn more about the practical conservation options and preservation needs of textile objects from specialists in this area of conservation.
- Assessing and addressing the handling and housing of the textile objects in our collections, and develop guidelines to help direct the ongoing care of these objects across the collections.
- Drawing attention to these objects across the Bodleian's collections, and sharing them more widely with other colleagues in the library and beyond!



Expected textiles... from left to right, a sewn end band and textile board lining (MS. Arm. f. 16), velvet cover and woven tape decorating a title panel (MS. Auct. D. 1. 15), an embroidered binding decorated with metal and silk thread (MS. Douce d. 8), and a Japanese handscroll lined with silk brocade (MS. Jap. c.4(R.)).



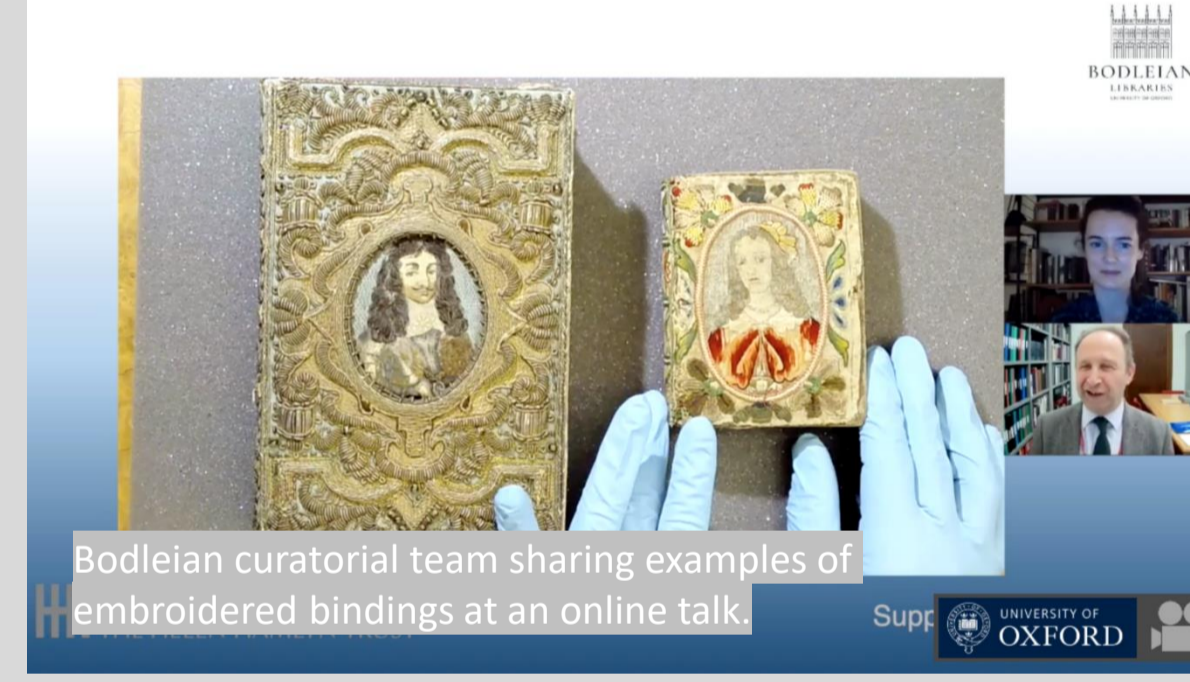
Developing our knowledge

Throughout this project we have called on colleagues from different disciplines to advise and train us in specific areas. This has included discussions focusing on housing, theory workshops studying the raw materials and historic methods of textile production, and hands on sessions in assessing the condition of historic textiles and practicing stitching techniques used in textile conservation.



Sharing our collections

We have had many opportunities to share the textile objects we have been discovering with those beyond our team, and with the support of many Bodleian colleagues we have hosted a series of free online talks with guest speakers, run handling sessions for textile conservation students, and assisted academics in their examination of textile objects.



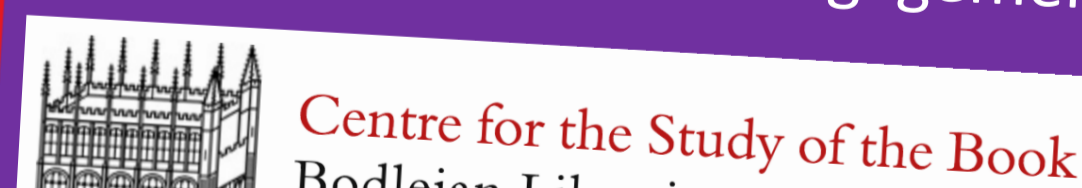
Caring for these objects

At the beginning of this project we looked at the current housing of the embroidered bindings in the collection, and we have continued to think about the best handling and housing practice for these types of objects. We are currently working towards producing guidelines to help guide us all in these areas, which we will share with colleagues from across the library.

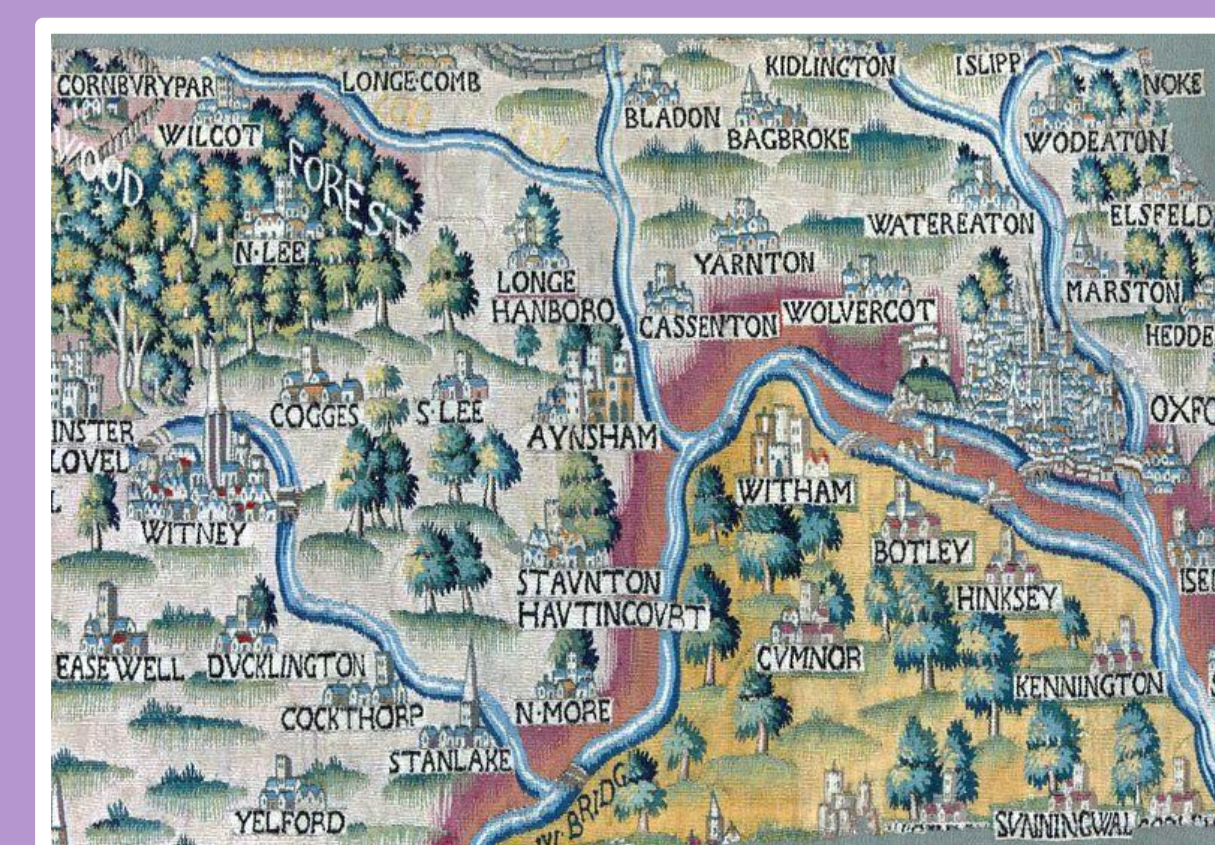


Creating connections

Throughout this project we have been incredibly lucky to have worked with experts from within the Bodleian Libraries, GLAM, and beyond, including national institutions, private conservators, academics and teaching courses, who we hope to keep in touch with and continue to discuss this subject with. We would like to thank all those who have been involved in the project and have shared their expertise with us, and in particular our Bodleian colleagues from the Special Collections, Centre for the Study of the Book, Public Engagement team, and Communication team.



Unexpected textiles... from left to right, textile banner collected from the 'Rhodes Must Fall' protests in Oxford in 2020 (MS. 18592), puppets in the Winifred Gill collection (uncatalogued), talismanic shirt inscribed with text from the Qur'an (MS. Bodl. Or. 162), Sheldon tapestry map of Oxfordshire ((R) Gough Maps 261), and a t-shirt loaned to the Victoria and Albert Museum for an exhibition in summer 2022 (MSS. AAM 2537/2, item 8).



Acknowledgements

With thanks to T. A. Barron for the generous donation which has funded this project, and to all of the Bodleian staff, and beyond, who have contributed towards this work.

Please get in touch! Our team are always interested in hearing about textiles in your libraries & collections... Drop me an email at alice.evans@bodleian.ox.ac.uk