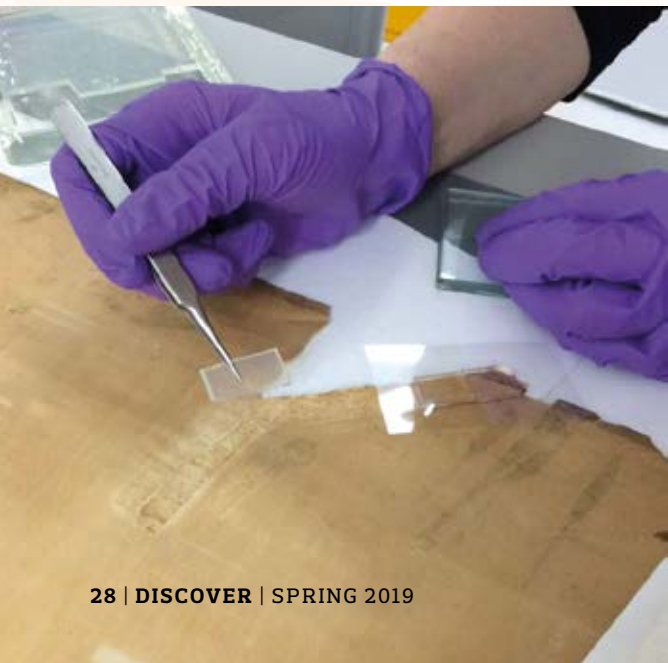




YOUR VOTE TO CHART THE PAST





WORDS:
Shona Hunter
Conservator

Project #RescueMe is working to improve accessibility through the important role of advocacy

We're passionate about the conservation of our collections and love to share our work with the public. Last year, we asked you to vote for one of three collections, all scheduled for repair in the conservation workshop. The treatment of the winning collection was documented and revealed through a series of photographs and short films, as well as a blog on our website.

The 'candidates' were put on display in the entrance hall of the Library's George IV Bridge building, allowing people to examine them pre-treatment. Votes were collected online and via a post-box polling station. The winner 'Geological charts', pipped the other collections to the post... or rather, the social media platform. In due course, the other items (a group of 20th-century booklets and a volume of historic pamphlets) will also be treated and conserved, albeit away from the limelight.

We discovered the geological charts nestled in a cardboard box during a condition survey. Surveys are carried out to evaluate the needs of collections, and to establish which items should be prioritised for treatment. Our map curator told us that this collection had been donated in 2010. Tightly rolled up, the charts were too distorted to be placed inside a plan chest, and they hadn't been shelf-marked because of their poor condition. The charts had arrived in an open-topped box – a less than ideal means of storage. Nonetheless, if the charts had been placed into a drawer (without treatment), it's likely they would have torn as a result of their planar distortion (the term

used by conservators to describe curling, cockling, waves, folds, and wrinkles). For preservation purposes, flat storage is preferable to rolled storage and rolled storage is preferable to folded storage. So, we took the charts to the workshop for humidification and flattening, enabling them to be stored safely in a plan chest.

Documentation is hugely important, so we used a database to capture the dimensions, format and composition of each item. Three of the most interesting and badly damaged charts were selected for inclusion in the voting project. The remedial treatment involved cleaning the surface with a smoke sponge, spot-testing the media and protecting the ink stamps with a temporary fixative. The charts were then humidified in a vapour chamber to swell the fibres and 'relax' the springy paper. Once flat, the charts were washed in a bath of filtered water (supported on a permeable silkscreen), before being dried under weighted boards. The tape stains were reduced using solvent gel. Gels are useful as they concentrate solvent activity whilst allowing the application of the solvent to be carefully controlled.


Tears and losses were repaired with Japanese tissue adhered with wheat starch paste. Flexible magnets, interleaved with blotting paper and non-stick polyester fabric, were used to keep the repairs in place while the paste dried. Finally, the charts were rehoused in polyester sleeves with a sheet of pollutant-absorbing MicroChamber™ paper.

The smallest plan – Map of Scotland Engraved for the Outline of the Mineralogy of the

THE JOURNEY OF RECOVERY

Clockwise opposite from top left: The geological charts before treatment; examination on the light table; screen washing; examining the tears; stain reduction with solvent gel; the treated chart on display.
Below: The charts after treatment.

Scottish Isles – was displayed at George IV Bridge after it was treated, along with a selection of tools and photographs of the conservation process. Dated 1813, this map was drawn by Scottish mineralogist Robert Jameson (1774–1854). Jameson established the Wernerian Natural History Association. It was there that Charles Darwin attended a lecture by American naturalist and painter John James Audubon. In his teenage years, Darwin attended Jameson's natural history course at Edinburgh University, where he learned about stratigraphic geology and assisted with the collections of the University's Museum, then one of the largest in Europe. You could say that this small map has some very large names attached to it!

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DISCOVER YOUR PAST

Finding out about your ancestors is often complex, time consuming and frustrating. However, staff at the National Library of Scotland can be a huge help in discovering the hidden secrets of your family's past.

Our research team have just been praised for unearthing historic connections allowing a tourist from Australia to find and make contact with two cousins living here today.

It's been an amazing and ultimately successful hunt for information from centuries ago. Turning up previously unknown links to living relatives shows that genealogy research can be as much about discovering the present as the past.

Kay Middlemiss first contacted the Library when she came on a visit to Scotland from her home on the other side of the world in a bid to trace her family's history. She was trying to find links here to the surnames of Sandeman and Dick.

She explains: "I had been using the National Library of Scotland online from Australia and in person when visiting Scotland. Two years ago, when on a bus tour going to Blair Atholl Castle, I noticed some furniture that really stood out with the name Sandeman and I thought that had to be an ancestor.

"I then emailed the Library to find out and that set me on my own journey. Using the online enquiry service by email was a way of being able to find the name and location, leading onto further research."

Kay continues: "Reference articles and

information from the National Library of Scotland services were astonishing. Ancestry names I was looking for matched and further connections were made as I deciphered dates and places relevant to Scotland."

Our staff were delighted to be able to help. Initial research by our Reference Services Team established that two of Kay's ancestors did indeed come from Scotland and then a search for more detailed information began.

The Library's extensive archives uncovered material on the Dick side of the family alongside relevant articles in various newspapers dating from the early 1800s. One particularly interesting piece was recorded in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. It told a fascinating story about one of Kay's ancestor's horses being brutally attacked after he bought some land.

Further research uncovered details about the Sandeman family including a furniture maker of repute from four generations ago. Some of his work can still be found in stately homes and

● **There is so much information that I would not have been able to find in Australia.** ●

castles in Scotland.

Our work led to Kay finally being able to connect to two cousins living in Scotland, creating a new and unexpected family bond across continents.

She recommends that others searching details of their ancestors also use the Library's services. "There is so much information that I would not have been able to find in Australia."

If you think we could help you in your own genealogy search, you could attend one of our regular workshops which are held in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. They cover useful information such as discovering family history, maps for family and local history and getting started at the Library.

While we're always delighted to provide support where we can, it's important to note that we are not the main location for original records in Scotland, so we can't carry out detailed personal research on your behalf.

Other bodies that may be able to help include the National Records of Scotland (www.nrscotland.gov.uk) and Scotland's People (www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk). Both contain invaluable records and research which may provide fascinating glimpses into your family's past.

📄 **More information on our own Library resources can be found at:**
www.nls.uk/family-history



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Scaling heights

Fanny Bullock Workman stands on the Silver Throne plateau on the Karakoram mountain range – some 21,000 feet in the air. In her hands she holds a newspaper emblazoned with the headline: “Votes for Women”. Bullock Workman was an inspirational woman, scaling literal as well as societal mountains.

To find out more, check out reveal.nls.uk/aiming-high/ – which looks at the achievements of seven pioneering women from the 19th and 20th centuries through some of their recollections and items from the Library's collections. It also includes downloadable learning activities mapped to the Curriculum for Excellence.

1. On 31 July 1912, at the height of the fight for women's suffrage in the UK and United States, Fanny Bullock Workman, one of the first female professional mountaineers, holds aloft a newspaper headlined: “Votes for Women”.

2. Scottish climber Monica Jackson is pictured surveying the scene in the Himalayas. In 1955, Jackson, along with Betty Stark and Evelyn McNicol, was part of the first all-woman expedition to scale the Jugal Himal in the Himalayas.

3. Arctic traveller and botanist, Isobel Wylie Hutchison pictured at Tasermiut Fjord, Greenland. Wylie Hutchison is believed to be the first Scotswoman to have set foot in Greenland and was an intrepid Arctic explorer.





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