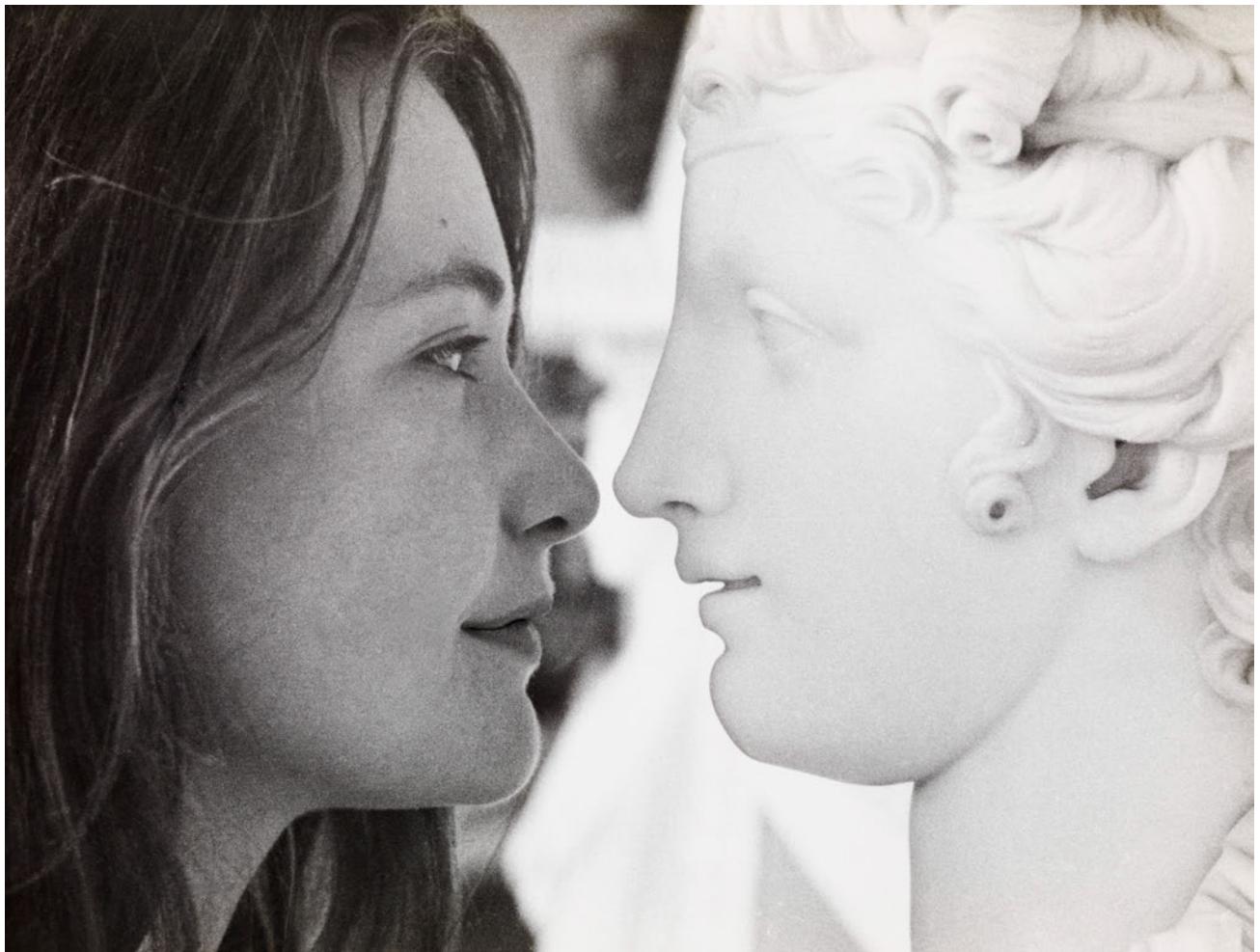


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DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NEWSLETTER NO 184 WINTER 2018



Faith Shannon MBE HonFDB ARCA ATC

24th February 1938 - 24th August 2018

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DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NEWSLETTER NO 184 WINTER 2018

Introduction, with thanks to Jeff Clements:

Before celebrating Faith's achievements and character it may be helpful to write a short introduction for the members of Designer Bookbinders who might not know her. I have extracted some relevant details of her life to provide a background to the articles which follow.

Born in Dehra Dun, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1938 Faith returned at the age of eight to Belfast, Northern Ireland. From 1955 to 1959 she studied at the Belfast College of Art, with painting as the main and bookbinding as the subsidiary subject. With the winning of several scholarships came the possibility of studying at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London from 1958 to 1959. At Goldsmiths College Faith was awarded the Art Teachers Certificate (ATC) in 1960. Then followed her studies at the Royal College of Art, majoring in Bookbinding in 1963. (then an apart study under the tutorship of Roger Powell and Peter Waters). This included a visit to the U.S.A. by means of the Dublin Scholarship award.

Faith's career began from 1963 as illustrator and designer bookbinder and in 1967 she was a member of the British Museum team at the Florence flood disaster. She was awarded the MBE in 1977 and was an enthusiastic member of the Crafts Council and the Council for National Academic awards. From 1980 to 1987 Faith was senior lecturer in charge of Bookbinding at Brighton Polytechnic. Her book 'Paper Pleasures' (later retitled 'The Art and Craft of Paper') was published in 1987. Faith was President of Designer Bookbinders from 1987 to 1990. In 1999 she was awarded the Centennial medal of the Society of Designer Craftsman. She was a judge in various national and international events including the First International bookbinding competition organised by Designer Bookbinders at Oxford in 2009.

Not only did Faith organise courses at her home in Scotland from 1990 and take part in Scottish Arts Council matters she also cared for two families and saw her own children follow personal careers with Shannon as photographer and Hannah as graphic designer respectively.

FAITH SHANNON MBE HonFDB ARCA ATC

"The name, the person, her work - creative, practical and theoretical, together with her pedagogical achievements and her personality are known to most of us in some measure or other, nevertheless each Faith remains a perplexing memory for many of us.

Was she painted by Leonardo Da Vinci, or was she 'Liberty' with the flag, immortalised by Delacroix?; did she model for one of the three marble graces of Canova or could she have been the last of those elegant Pre-Raphaelite ladies?

Her regal appearance at the Mediaeval Banquet at the Society of Bookbinders conference in Nottingham, 1989,



seen here talking with the world renowned book conservator Christopher Clarkson (d. 2017) a former fellow student at the Royal College of Art and colleague at the Florence Flood disaster of 1966 help to weave a tapestry showing the many threads of her voyage through life which might end up rather like one of her delightful kitchens, full of exciting and wonderful things, clay pots, dried and fresh herbs, wicker baskets, jars of 'something', usually home made and if one looked carefully there was a reflected image of Faith in each and every detail, with the whole scene a little wild and furry round the edges!

Faith and I had a parallel history, our birthdays one day and four years apart, we both studied separately at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London 'the' centre for the hand bound book continuing the arts and crafts tradition during the fifties. In a note from Faith she mentions that our paths crossed before 1968, we certainly came together through Designer Bookbinders, art education, exhibitions, conferences, as competition judges and as examiners, then finally we were joint editors of the journal 'The New Bookbinder' published in 2013.

Faith taught craft bookbinding and design at Brighton, I had already been an advisor and examiner with the course for a few years and was part of the interviewing board at her appointment, she was very surprised indeed to see me there! Her methods and ideas proved to be very successful, a number of DB Fellows emerging from that background.

The course was unique, and included part time and full time students eventually studying to honours degree level, it was invariably a delight to see and adjudicate the work carried out each year under Faith's direction and leadership.

A high point was the first DB 'Horizons' International conference which I had conceptualised as DB President in

1982 whilst lecturing with Faith at a similar event in Belgium and was then organised with Faith and enthusiastic assistants in 1984 at Brighton Polytechnic, where speakers and demonstrators from various European centres came together. For many this was their first experience of creative bookbinding in Great Britain, and which proved to be quite a shock for some! (and graphic design student Hannah designed the delightful poster!).

During these conferences, exhibition openings, competition judging and student awards Faith and I could enjoy the opportunity of being together away from the crowd, visiting museums and galleries in London, Oxford, Brussels and Mainz, wandering through woods near Gregynog in Wales, or enjoying the wonderful Scottish landscape. At these times she would let her personal thoughts and experiences and family history ramble and so I came to appreciate her background, often filled with uncertainties and an early naivety. Eventually this led to that strength of purpose and stoicism which carried her forward. From apparently being a very shy young girl requiring elocution and deportment lessons she could suddenly give an 'off the cuff' speech on behalf of the Judges and Designer Bookbinders at the Dinner following the First International Bookbinding competition held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford in 2009. I was the other DB judge and was both astounded and very much impressed by her performance!

For Faith time and motion and all those sorts of earthly things were not of so much importance; often to the frustration of clients and collectors, time was measured not just in hours or weeks but sometimes in years, what was really of the utmost for her was the creative thinking, practical analysis and exact craftsmanship. This resulted in very distinctive objects reflecting both the world around us and depicting her personal vision of the book, its content and structure.

There was continuous development over time, Faith was always a brilliant illustrator even illustrating seed packets! (there are drawers still full of her early illustrations at Corranbeg).



Drawing directly from nature formed an essential part of her work. Fine binding designs linked directly to the content of the book rather than being only decorative, the Lewis Carroll titles being good examples, and quite unusual for that time.

Later came more formal and simplified bindings using vellum and unusual materials and techniques and in recent years the use of textures and direct interpretations of nature itself began more and more to affect her vision resulting in unique bookbindings of a sharply defined expressionist character. The series of ten bindings for 'Stone' led to its logical conclusion, reaching a high point of textural expressionism, it also left her completely exhausted.

Here we can recognise the life source and its influences which carried Faith through the years. Forget the city life, career making and professional requirements, sometimes difficult family responsibilities and complicated relationships.

What have you with Faith herself?

Nature, preferably raw and direct!

Whether it was the sea or distant landscape, visually experiencing the elements, handling that most elegant sailboat or on foot, through wind and rain, experiencing the character and feel of natural materials, plants, pebbles, rocks or whatever, preferably with a cheerful dog, this really was the real and magical world for Faith Shannon, she formed an integral part, so simple was it."

**Jeff Clements MBE HonFDB Amsterdam,
September 2018**

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DESIGNER BOOKBINDERS NEWSLETTER NO 184 WINTER 2018

Fellow, Jenni Grey:

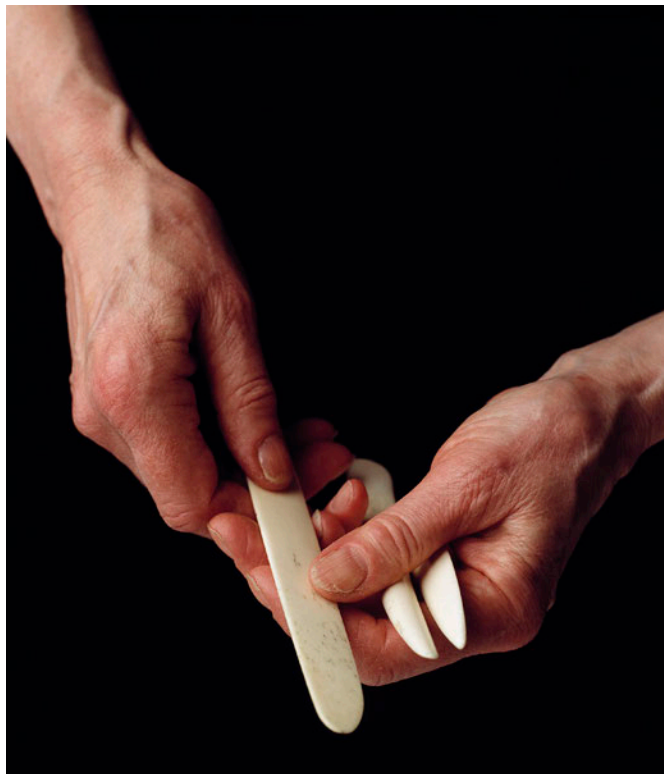
"You don't always get the opportunity to thank people for all they have done for you. Not because you are ungrateful, but because you are usually so busy getting on with the business of living that you don't have the time to reflect on how you've got to where you are in life. So it was lovely to have the chance to reflect on and share all the reasons I had to be grateful to Faith when she received her Hon Fellowship in 2013.

I owe a great deal to Faith who helped me enormously in my bookbinding career, not least by encouraging me to drop out of the bookbinding certificate scheme to take a degree course, which she knew would be the best thing for me creatively. In writing me a good reference and helping me assemble my portfolio she was obviously instrumental in my getting a place at Brighton - a University that in those days wouldn't have looked at, let alone interview, anyone in my position who hadn't done a foundation course first.

Her binding philosophy has influenced me more than any other bookbinder. Faith stated she wouldn't like all her work to be recognised as being by the same person, by that she meant that she wouldn't bind Edgar Allen Poe's 'Tales of Mystery and Imagination' in the same way she would bind 'The Snowman'. For those of you who haven't heard the story of 'The Snowman' before, Faith did a wonderful binding of that book in white velvet, which created a quite a stir in some quarters because she was criticised for using an inappropriate material which could get dirty and was perceived as less durable than leather. Faith's calm response was that snow gets dirty and a child's best loved toy is the one that will become the most battered and threadbare. This was a memorable lesson in considering why you are binding a book, who it's going to be for, and how it's going to be used and stored; but the thing I remember most about this binding is Faith saying rather wistfully 'Do we always have to be binding a 'great work', can't we just have some fun sometimes?



As a tutor she encouraged everyone into the binding workshop, so you would find students as diverse as those from graphic design to performing arts rubbing shoulders



with the adult education crowd.

That range of ages and abilities benefitted all of us, not only in our bookbinding practice but socially as well, and I have lovely memories of the end of year parties at her home in Ringmer. Alongside her teaching, other projects happened because Faith was at Brighton, in particular the first international bookbinding conference run by Designer Bookbinders 'Horizons' in 1984, and the book 'Paper Pleasures', both of which provided great opportunities for students to learn and participate in.

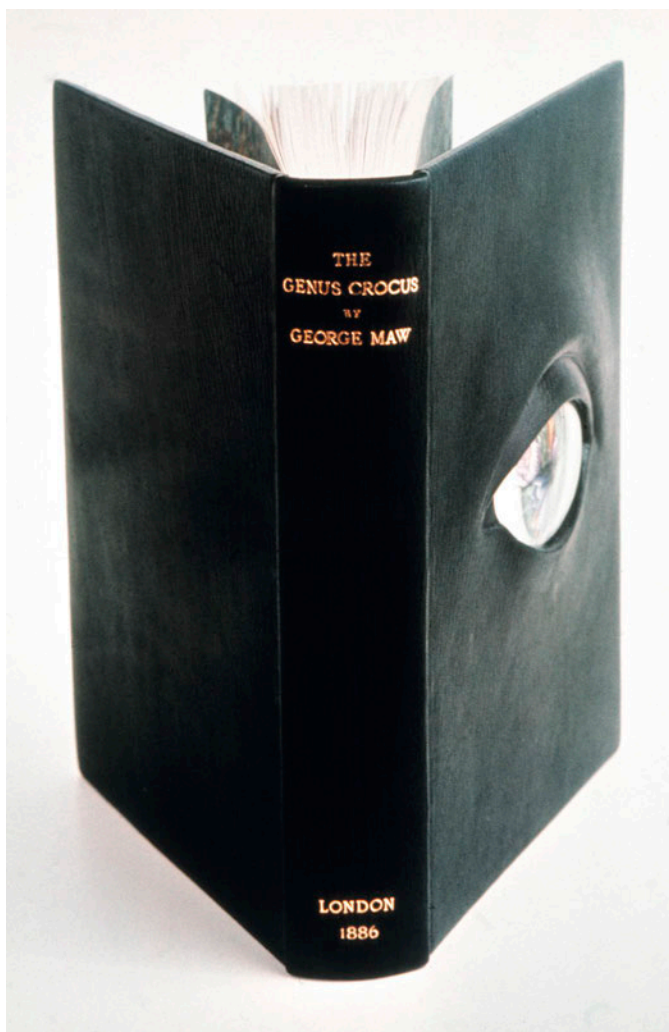
Faith was attractive and charismatic. Many of the men at Brighton University fell a little bit, if not totally, in love with her. Even the 'job's worth's' technicians in the place were not immune to her charm. If you went to ask them for help or materials you could get nothing out of them at all, but just say the three magic words 'Faith sent me' and someone who wouldn't give you a sheet of unprinted newsprint one minute would be unlocking the plan chest and saying here, help yourself - I've only just used the last of the Barcham Green paper I was given an unbelievable thirty-five years ago now!

It was a great loss to Brighton, but also to Designer Bookbinders when Faith moved up to Scotland, and we didn't see so much of her. She will be sorely missed by her students and colleagues, and I hope her legacy and influence will live on through her past students and her creative and talented descendants Hannah and Shannon. For those of us who aren't fortunate enough to own one of her bindings I'm so glad that we at least have articles in The New Bookbinder and photographs of her work in catalogues to jolt our memories if ever we should feel the need to remind ourselves of what an outstanding and inspirational binder she was."

Fellow, Rachel Ward-Sale:

Faith Shannon at the Liverpool Library.

"Four years ago Designer Bookbinders held an exhibition at the newly refurbished Central Library in Liverpool. As part of the redesign the entrance had been moved and a new stone path laid, engraved with the titles of famous books with some letters picked out in red. During the opening weekend I learned that the red letters spelt 'Cyclops in the wood' and refer to the binding of 'The Genus Crocus' by Faith Shannon."



Librarian Steven Deardon filled me in on the history;

"One of our senior managers, now retired, Kenny Kay came up with the idea of linking a competition to the pavement for when we re-opened. The clue was to be spelt out in special red letters and it took the successful solvers to a particular book in the Oak Room. Two winners were drawn from the correct answers and were presented with book tokens. The aim was to draw people to the rare books displayed in the Homby Library and specifically the Oak Room where the Audubon Birds of America was on display.

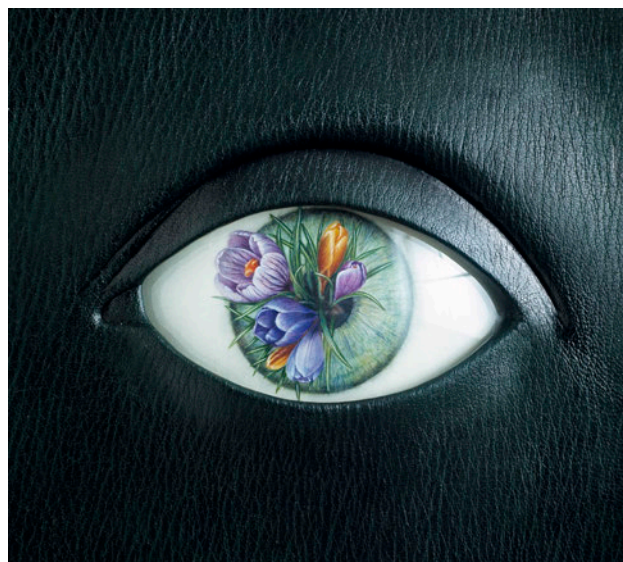


These areas had never been permanently open for people to look around since the war.

I don't know how Kenny's mind worked on this, but as it was the Oak Room he came up with the clue 'The Cyclops in the wood' – wood = Oak and Cyclops = the painted vellum and glass lid of Faith's binding. Once the competition was over and the library well opened I thought we could put the binding safely away so that it didn't fade, but no – we were constantly asked where the binding had gone, what the letters meant on the pavement – people were bringing their relatives in to show them the binding – visiting school classes wanted to see it. Aghhh!

So now, it is on permanent display, near the Audubon, behind a filtered glass screen and likely to remain so for many years to come - the second most viewed item in our entire collections!"

A lovely story and a fitting tribute to a wonderful binder."



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Fellow, Annette Friedrich:

"How very sad that Faith has died. She was so kind and welcoming, so funny and witty, so observant and interested in both people and nature. And of course, she was an amazing artist!

I knew Faith since I was thirteen years old. One might wonder 'How come?' with me being German? Well, my father had taken his annual leave to do classes with her in Ardfern (loved it, of course!). And when Faith heard, that the little daughter (me) was about to embark on a year in school in York, she invited me to come up for the various breaks. I don't remember much how I made my way up there for the first time on my own, except for that the bus stopped in the middle of nowhere, that dusk was falling, and that obviously the lady, who waited for me at the kerb, had to be Faith!

The initial shyness was quickly overcome and I had a brilliant, brilliant time with her. I tagged along for her walks with the dog, was dragged up hills and through heather, pointed out the beauties within the landscape and the shifting nature of the tides. Faith cleared a little space for me in her workshop where I would fiddle around with paper, or just let loose to explore things for myself. It was so wonderful to be there and so fascinating to see Faith and her ways, that I decided then and there to become a bookbinder. I never trained with her as such, but have been back and forth many times over the years, enjoying her friendship and support, her gentle guidance along the way.

I shall miss her immensely, but am grateful for the many years of friendship."



"Good-bye, Faith, good-bye."

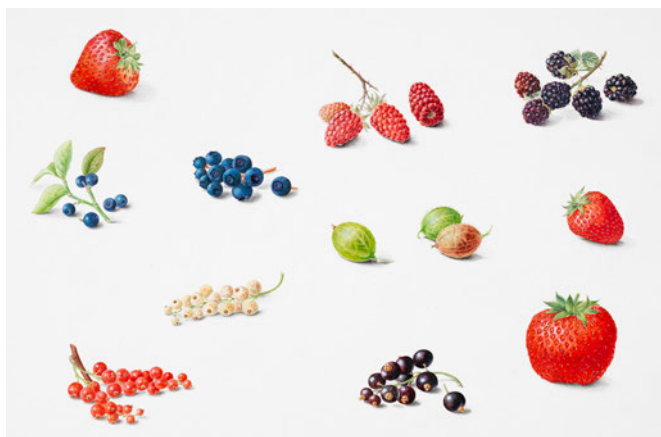
George Kirkpatrick:

"I have thought a great deal about all those years. We were both teenagers and had a fantastic time together with our group in the bookbinding studio at the Art College in Belfast, with our teacher Kenneth Webb.

Kenneth was really a painter who taught us other subjects, and so art was more about Art than bookbinding. We were taught only the basics of bookbinding, but were encouraged to create as many ideas as we could, which was fun. Kenneth would take us out drawing and painting and ask us about our ideas, and eventually say "Why not?".

Faith was full of ideas, and we considered ourselves to be artists first.

Of course, Faith was better than the rest of us, we didn't mind, because she was not only beautiful, but because she really was very good at everything. We were always very close friends, we had a great group.



I remember one friend John, who suddenly out of nowhere picked Faith up on to his back and carried her over to the paper bin and gently put her in, and then put the lid back on. It was all in jest, maybe a little reminder we were a group, Faith took it very well, she knew it was in the greatest of fun and humour.



I remember it was just after Christmas, the 4th of January and we were still on holiday. Faith, John and I all went to the zoo for a day of drawing. It was a terribly cold day so we decided to spend most of it inside and ended up in the Monkey house. I don't think the monkeys appreciated us eating our sandwiches, the sound was unbelievable. I often wonder what happened to her drawings from the monkey enclosure and of the monkeys, they were some of the best I'd seen.

We went on in to a smaller house with smaller animals, encased in a glass screen, creating a long gallery.

There were no other visitors that day due to the cold weather. The keeper came in to see if there was anyone else except us, and to ask if we minded being locked in while he let the animals out to run around. It was amazing to see them all running around, we never knew that porcupines could run so fast. One porcupine took a fancy to Faith, and kept running into her legs.

After some time of drawing we realised it was getting quite late, it was getting quite dark and the snow was becoming deeper, it was time for us to leave.

Unfortunately there was nobody to let us out, at all. We were locked in with the animals and we couldn't think of any way of getting out?

In those days we had no phones and certainly no mobile phones. The only thing we could think of was to get up over the turn-ins and out on to the roof. It was so high up and the conditions akin to the Alpine Mountains, so in order to get out, we would need mountain climbing equipment, but we had nothing.

By now John had managed his way up on to the steels (thanks to my shoulders), it was worse, the steel was freezing and we had nothing else to hold on to and as the snow got heavier we could barely see each others faces. John was pulling Faith from above with me underneath to push Faith from the bottom end. At least that day, Faith had trousers on.

(I must point out that in those days in Northern Ireland, ladies rarely wore trousers. Believe it or not, at that time in Belfast Art College, ladies would be thrown out if they wore trousers.)

We experienced a complete white out, and to this day I still can't remember how we managed to get down again. All I can say is that the story was told to all at the Art College, and with some mirth, "The day that Faith Shannon escaped from the zoo!"

So our adventures carried on until Faith went to the Royal College of Art in London and I joined up with Roger Powell and Peter Waters. At that time they were starting to restore the St. Chad Gospels, the 7th Century book, it was a great honour for me to be there. Roger and Peter were very much still involved with modern bindings, and Peter taught Faith at the Royal College of Art on his days in London. Peter would often take me to the Royal College of Art too, so I could see

what others were doing and we could take Faith out for lunch and continue our various conversations.

After a period of time I left Belfast to teach bookbinding, textiles and foundation in Canterbury, so I didn't see Faith often, until 5 years later, when we were both invited to come to Florence just after the great flood. The whole city had been deeply flooded, buildings filled with mud from the lower ground right up to the ceiling. Nearly all the buildings were empty, there was one that hadn't been excavated and we could look in to the mud-caked rooms, muddied glass and branches stuck to it. There were streets that hadn't been cleared, and we had to climb up the mud with cars semi buried in the now hard baked mud. It was an outstanding experience. Our walk to the Library was luckily cleared, the water/mud lines at 13 feet high were still very much visible.

It seems as though we were on holiday, far from it, we all worked very hard while there, it was painful to see such tragedy.

One adventure of ours was a road trip on a Sunday, colleagues had suggested venturing along the motorway to Assisi. We were driving on the motorway when all of a sudden our driver veered on to wrong side of the road, which was nearly the end of all of us, fortunately he managed to turn around and get on the right side of the road. Assisi was awesome though.

Faith and I travelled back to London after an experience neither of us would forget.

We kept in touch over the years and would occasionally meet, if I was in Scotland.

It is with fondest memories I remember Faith, she will be missed."



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Honorary Fellow, Jeannette Koch:

Faith's Farewell at Ardfern
Friday 7 September 2018

"After a 10 hour drive from London the day before, in wind and rain, I reached The Argyll Inn in Lochgilphead, and after a modest supper, went to bed wondering what the morrow would bring. Driving over to Ardfern the magic started. The sadness in my heart was suddenly transformed by the beauty of the landscape where Faith had lived all these years, and the sunshine bathed everything in a warm kindly light. I wondered how many bookbinders would be there, and was not disappointed as there stood Tom McEwan, Annette Friedrich, who had braved the journey from London by rail and two local buses to be on time, Jack London, and Gavin Rookledge, once a student of Faith's at Brighton and faithful friend since the 80s.



We all made our way to Craignish Church, a plain, pleasing Georgian building. Its simple, clear symmetry and the intimate atmosphere inside was an ideal choice for Faith's Farewell. On the invitation of Hannah, Faith's daughter, she asked people to make a little paper boat for the "Paper Queen", and these little vessels were displayed throughout the church.



The Service was led by Tim Barlow, an independent minister, and close friends and family members made moving contributions that outlined the multi-faceted sides of Faith's life. Designer Bookbinders' own Annette Friedrich read out a tribute from Jeff Clements whose words expressed his deep love and respect for Faith as a contemporary binder, old friend and teacher.

Both Hannah and Shannon, Faith's children, gave brave and unfaltering tributes, expressing their honour, pride and deep love for their mother, and these strong emotions were gently soothed by an acapella group of local girls and women who sang a family 'fave', 'Blackbird by The Beatles'.

All the speakers stood beside Faith's coffin, an elegant sheer clinker-built boat-box in ash wood, made by two craftsmen from the Corranbeg Workshops and stamped with Faith's tiny shamrock and 'S' tools. Faith was a great sailor and had her own boat 'Ratty'. After the service, we all went outside to see Faith's coffin loaded onto 'Ratty', decked with bunting, which was then towed by trailer to Kilvaree Cemetery. This was a feat of ingenuity as oars instead of a mast enabled the boat to pass under the trees, and a rope pulley lowered them to get round the last bend of the loch. All guests followed on by car and on foot, and in streaming sunshine, we stood in this beautiful graveyard at the tip of the peninsula to pay our last respects as Faith was lowered into the grave where Sandy, her husband was also buried. A brown butterfly flew past and in the distance a magnificent eagle was seen soaring in circles above. The a capella choir sang.

Afterwards, all were invited for wine and refreshments in the Village Hall which was hung with drawings and paintings by Faith and photographs of her taken by her son, Shannon. A precious moment to share loving memories of an extraordinary woman, and wonder at the talent, richness, and variety of her creative output.

It brought vividly to mind my last visit to Corranbeg in 2016 accompanied by Alain Taral, the bookbinder from France who won DB's first International Competition in 2009. Faith was one of the judges. He and his wife were totally thrilled at meeting her and being able to see one of her last 'Stone' bindings in progress, and marvelled at the myriad of found objects and ephemera that covered every surface in her overfilled bindery.



The Tarals and myself then went to the Village Hall where Faith and her daughter Hannah were in the process of hanging an exhibition of her drawings, paintings, ceramics and paper objects. The Tarals were mesmerised by her creations! Her skill, inventiveness and sheer joy in the 'making' process was mind-blowing and I was so happy that they were given this unexpected treat. We had already visited Colin Hamilton in French the week before and seen the preceding 'Stone' bindings that he and Kulgin Duval had commissioned.



If only a catalogue raisonné of her entire works could somehow be produced, this would be a fitting recognition and lasting record of her remarkable creative and artistic achievements.

By the way, the little paper boats, now an impressive flotilla will be launched some day soon on a calm sea."



"Shannon and Jeanette gave me access to numerous photographs, this was in a folder entitled 'Funeral', it was the last image in the folder, I thought this a very fitting send off.

I wasn't fortunate enough to have met Faith, however, along this journey, I was fortunate to have had the chance to have spoken with so many great and wonderful people who were her friends. I hope those of you who knew Faith, had been touched and captivated by her, taught by her, or simply enjoyed her work, that you find inspiration in the words shared by Faith's friends, during this period of reflection. Thank you Faith, 'Rest In Peace'."

Ed.