

The Scottish Conservation Studio

Museum Quality Collection Care



Winner of the 2007
Award for Conservation

Sixteen documents written by David Livingstone in c1870

Condition assessment, conservation treatment proposal and cost estimate

Client: Susie Lamb, West Region Conservator, National Trust for Scotland

Scottish Conservation Studio No: P

Museum Number:

Brief description:

- Type of work:** Hand-written documents, mostly field diaries
- Support:** Pieces of newspaper (e.g. The Standard, Wednesday 24th November 1869), four double book pages, booklet of book page margins, and one envelope
- Medium:** Home-made inks, graphite pencil, and printing inks
- Dimensions:** Larger newspaper pieces: approx 25 x 31 cm
Smaller newspaper pieces: approx 26 x 16cm
Double book pages: 21 x 14cm
Opened envelope: approx 13 x 16cm
One tiny booklet of sewn-together cuttings from top and margins of a book: approx 3 x 17cm

Condition:

Twelve of the 16 documents, the eight 'larger' pieces of newspaper, the two smaller pieces of newspaper, and two of the double book pages, **have been laminated with a heat-set document repair tissue**, probably in the 1980s, and probably by the Stirling University Library Conservation Unit, who are known to have treated and surveyed other paper items in the David Livingstone Centre. These items are now quite stiff, and very strong in a physical sense. In the long-term it can be expected that the adhesive on the tissue will degrade, and the sheets will darken. The handwriting – which at best is hard to read as the inks vary from dark to very light, and the script is written over the newspaper printing – is now very hard to read as both front and back is veiled by the light-weight tissue adhered to it.

Four of the 16 items examined have not been treated with the heat-set tissue. These are two double book pages, an opened envelope, and a small booklet made from the top and bottom margins of a printed book sewn together with tread at one side. The double book pages are from a book, or book with a chapter entitled 'God hath spoken through His Son'. The printed page numbers are 101, 102, 107, and 108 on one double page, and 103, 104, 105, and 106 on the other double page. Livingstone's ink numbering of the pages is LXVII and IXV, and XIX and XIII. These two sheets are in a similar condition. They have tears along the central fold line, and are slightly worn and tattered along parts of the edges of the sheets. The string from the book's binding is attached to one of the sheets. There are small puncture marks through the pages but these do not in most cases impose a risk on handling. The tears are large enough to pose a threat to the stability of the sheets when handled, and it is recommended that they are repaired before the proposed spectral imaging of the works is commenced.

Continued over....

The envelope, originally addressed 'Dr Livingstone, care of Dr Kirk' and with the stamp of the Royal Geographical Society, has been split open by Livingstone after being partly inscribed to give access to more blank paper. It is mostly in a good condition, but has a few small tears and turned-over flaps that should be stabilised before the work is handled.

The most fragile of all the documents is a **tiny booklet made from the blank top and bottom margins of book pages**, roughly sewn together with thread. The pages are of different lengths, so some protrude further from the stitching than others. Page numbers and chapter titles can be seen on some of the slips of paper, reading for example '474', 'The Early Irish Church' and 'Female Education'. The paper of these small pages is damaged in many places. There is discolouration on some parts, from wear and tear, and possibly exposure to light. Damp appears to have weakened some of the protruding parts of the paper. The top page has become detached: the paper has not been strong enough to withstand folding. The parts of other pages that protrude out from the block are worn and slightly tattered. I recommend that the booklet is repaired with Japanese tissue and wheat starch paste, and digitally photographed by a paper conservator that the manipulation of the pages to access them is done with the utmost care, and no further damage is sustained.

Proposed treatment:

1. It is proposed that the four non-laminated items are conserved to stabilise them before treatment.
2. Photograph before and after treatment to record the condition (Digital images). A general shot of the booklet would be taken before treatment, and then individual images taken of each page after conservation has been completed.
3. Repair all the edge tears, tears along the central fold lines, reattach the detached page, and support weaknesses, using very light-weight Japanese tissue, and wheat starch paste. The tissue supports will be kept to the most minimal size possible. Only the tears and weaknesses that jeopardize the strength of the pages on handling will be treated, thus intervening only where absolutely necessary.
4. Place each conserved sheet in a Melinex sleeve for storage and handling, and wrap the booklet in buffered tissue before placing it in a sleeve to give it better protection.
5. Pack for transit.
6. Document the treatment.

Recommended storage conditions	Recommended display conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the archival sleeves provided, flat, in an archival box. • Relative humidity: unfluctuating level between 45 and 65%. • Temperature: unfluctuating level between 16 and 20°C. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit display periods, for example to 12 months every 5 years. • Protect from light out of visitor hours. • Limit light levels to 50 lux (intensity) and 10 microwatts per lumen of ultraviolet radiation. • Relative humidity: unfluctuating level between 45 and 65%. • Temperature: unfluctuating level between 16 and 20°C.

Conservator: Helen Creasy, ACR

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