

February 2024

Restoring old buildings can be complicated!

We mentioned in the last edition that we are now turning our attention to the interior. The contractors have nearly finished the repointing and have recently got down to ground level, so we can expect the scaffolding to be removed shortly. A number of variables mean it isn't possible to say when we might reopen at this stage, but we are not too far off and hope to open this summer.

Despite protecting the interior, a large amount of dust and dirt had settled inside the library room and a deep clean of the ceiling and the tops of the presses has been undertaken. The need for a scaffolding tower confirms our concerns that this would have been a bit much for our redoubtable volunteers! Once we have replaced the storage heaters and the dehumidifier, we will be asking our volunteers to come and clean the press interiors, which are pretty dusty.



Woodworm

A survey has identified that we have an active infestation of woodworm in our presses, which has been characterised as mild to moderate. We were aware that there was woodworm damage in some of the roof, at the damp edges where there had been water ingress.

Woodworm (the larvae of a variety of different beetles) can remain within wood for up to three years. The adults lay eggs in tiny cracks or crevices and the larvae feed on wood until they pupate, hatch and breed and the cycle starts all over again. They prefer damp higher moisture conditions and do not like varnished wood. There is no evidence of infestation in any of the (varnished) frames in front of the presses, only on the shelves and supports, which are mostly bare wood. We are now arranging for treatment, which will include the loft space. The new roof timbers have already been treated.



THE LEIGHTON LIBRARY RESTORATION NEWS

Internal environment

We have been monitoring the temperature and humidity in the Library Room every four hours since 2020! The guidelines for keeping the collection in good condition advise 16-18 Degrees C and a Relative Humidity (RH) of no more than 40-60%. Dampness is the books' worst enemy, rather than cold. It's probably a bit hard to see, but the graph below shows temperature in blue, relative humidity in green and the dew point in black (the temperature at which condensation forms). After fairly regular patterns from 2020 until the start of restoration work, we can see relative humidity rising sharply from November 2022 when the contractors began work. RH, having peaked at 92% recently, has now dropped to the high 70%s, so we still have a way to go, but it's going in the right direction. This monitoring will guide us on when we can return the collection.

