1-1-2015

Officers; Events in 2015; Fellows & Members; Editor's Note

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Recommended Citation
https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1129
Suffrage march, New York, 1910
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Front cover: Women in a suffrage march in New York provide an example of how socio-material associations generate the perception of material objects being outside their ‘proper place’, such as academic gowns in a political demonstration. The idea is explained beginning on p. 14.
Primary Source: Jonathan C. Cooper
French Influence on the Dress of Scottish Doctors of Medicine

Sandra Wearden
How Academic Dress Is Mobilized in Degree Ceremonies and to What Effect

Bruce Christianson and Joan Kendall
A Portrait of an Oxford Nobleman, circa 1705

Kenneth L. Suit, Jr
The Iridescent Web: American Degree Colours (1895–1935)

John N. Grant
The Tradition of Academic Costume at Acadia University

Published by New Prairie Press, 2018
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Burgon Society Events in 2015

28 March  Visit to Durham
UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM AND CATHEDRAL
arranged by Kenneth Crawford
Programme included:
Tour of University College
Display in the University Library of Durham and Newcastle robes
Paul Coxon — Talk on the consequences of the separation of the Durham and
Newcastle divisions of the University
Lunch in the Birley Room of Hatfield College
Tour of the Cathedral and refreshments in the Prior's Hall

9 May  Spring Conference
OFFICES OF DELOITE  Athene Place, 66 Shoe Lane, London
Programme included:
Talks
Andrew North — Paradise Lost: The Fall of Oxford Academical Dress
Sandra Wearden — A Socio-Material Perspective of a Degree Ceremony Net-
work
Paul Coxon — Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Some-
thing Palatinate Purple
Nicholas Groves — Cambridge 1934: A Missed Opportunity
Colin Fleming — Let Us Now Dress Famous Men

18 July  Garden Party
OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY  Harcourt Hill Campus, Oxford
hosted by William Gibson
The day included brief presentations: Latest developments in Oxford Univer-
sity academic dress (Andrew North); Recently donated Columbia and
Harvard robes (Alex Kerr); Gems from the newly handlisted paper ar-
chive (Colin Fleming)

10 October  AGM and Congregation
THE QUEEN'S CHAPEL OF THE SAVOY  London
Annual General Meeting
Display of academic robes from the Burgon Society Archive
Admission to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society
Professor Kenneth Suit, Jr (by submission — The Iridescent Web: American
Degree Colours 1895–1935)
Sandra Wearden (by submission — Academicals as Active Participants in
Shaping the Social World)
Talk: Nicholas Groves — Several Shades of Grey — and Red, and Gold: Obser-
vations on Some Recent Schemes of Academic Dress
Organ recital by Stephen Disley

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Not so long ago e-books were expected to replace books printed with ink on paper. Publishers, whose livelihoods depend on the profits associated with hardbacks and paperbacks, would go out of business when a reader’s single Nook or Kindle could replace an entire home library. In the contest between old and new, victory would go to the greater convenience and lower cost of digital.

It didn’t happen that way, or it hasn’t happened yet. Analog books actually saw a rise in sales in 2015, when about 17 million more printed books were sold worldwide than in the year before. True, that amounted to an increase of only a slim 3 percent. More significant are the flat sales of e-books. At one time they were expected to account for as much as 60 percent of book sales, but they have settled closer to only one-quarter of all books sold.

I like to think that is good news for the kind of work we are interested in. For one thing, text in print is the primary way we share our ideas and discoveries. It’s a storage tool that does not require a technological intermediary to operate, so it doesn’t require updates to software or hardware—unless you count eyeglasses and the stronger prescriptions that come with age.

For another, the preference for the physical object that is a book, where it’s easy to thumb through pages looking for your scribbled notes, suggests that the tactile experience of putting on a college gown and hood for the first time may come with a certain pleasure. Not only does the touch of the fabric send messages through our fingers, the look of a new graduate in academic dress sends a message to everyone who looks her way.

Technology won’t stop improving, of course. One day everything, even education, may be digital. Yet even those graduates who today complete their course work from a distance, taking classes online and rarely setting foot in a lecture hall, may choose to attend a graduation ceremony remotely too. And some who do go so far as to wear a gown or don a cap while watching from home.

The Transactions is taking another digital step. In the next few months the journal will find a new home online, hosted by New Prairie Press. It’s a web service whose aim is to share scholarly research for free, and to make finding research easier for scholars. In addition to posting our articles, as we will continue to do on burgon.org.uk, the librarians who operate New Prairie Press will assist us by making sure that meta-data of all sorts are attached to each document so that search engines will have an easier time of finding the work our contributors publish.

This all means we will be available to read on paper, to download via pdf, and to discover through digital object signifiers. Wearing a gown to your virtual library is optional.

—Stephen Wolgast