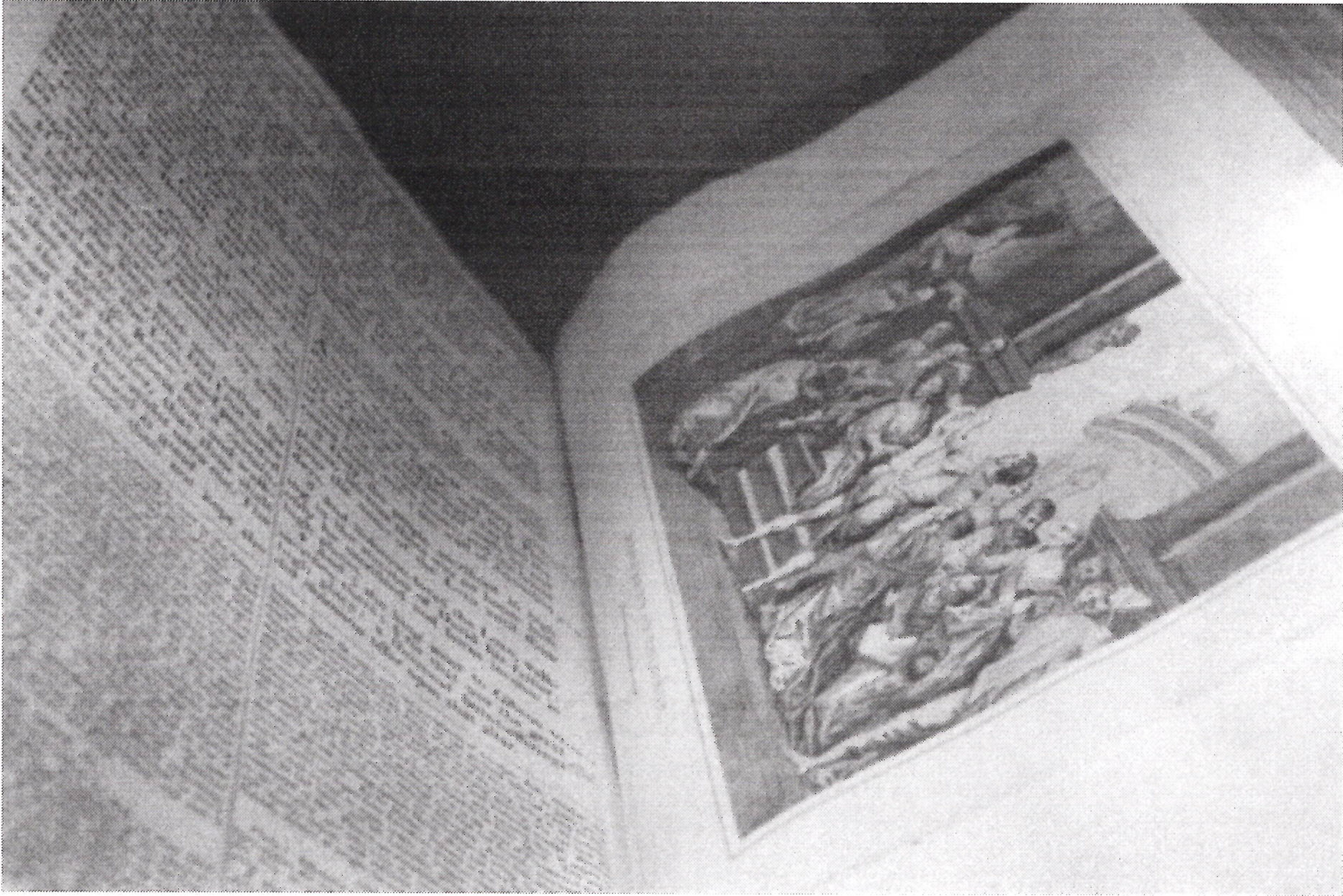


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Alnwick, History Society



Bailiffgate Museum, Alnwick.

Published: 06:00 Saturday 25 March 2017

Alnwick and District Local History Society invited David Dickinson to its meeting to talk about his work of book-binding and restoration.

Mr Dickinson grew up in a household full of books, and first became acquainted with the craft of book-binding when he was at school, where a restorer working there taught him the rudiments to a handful of interested boys. Later, when his children were small, he took to book restoration to supplement the family income.

The earliest books were papyrus scrolls, but following a trade war with Egypt, parchment made from animal skins, was introduced. Paper made its way from China slowly, but did not catch on here till the 15th century.

Mr Dickinson had brought a lot of his equipment, and described how a book of parchment were folded in half and sewn together along a chord of linen thread, with animal glue for strength. The books were then covered back and front with leather, the whole pressed together. Finally, the book was covered to provide an attractive binding.

The earliest coverings were leather, mainly goat's skin, which was strong, pliable and having an attractive grain. Calf skin became popular in the late 18th and 19th centuries, thin, ideal for gold tooling. The cheapest skin was sheep, but this is not very durable, the preferred choice of the church, and many family bibles have been poorly covered.

In the 17th century, bindings such as velvet, engraved and embossed leather, and various papers were introduced. Later, marbled paper covers appeared. These had spines and corners of leather, and were much cheaper to produce. Canvas and other cloth was introduced in the 19th century. The first attempts at wire binding came in the 1820s. All of these will have fallen apart by now as they require the properties of PVA glue to hold together.

Finally, David showed us how gold-tooling is done. Altogether, it was a fascinating evening.

The next meeting is on March 28, at 7pm (note earlier time), at Bailiffgate Museum. Doors open at 6.30pm. Dr Ian Roberts will talk about Agriculture In Wooler And Its Environs, 1800 To The Present Day.

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