

Linnaean Correspondence Project

Conservation of the letters at the Book & Paper Conservation Studio, University of Dundee



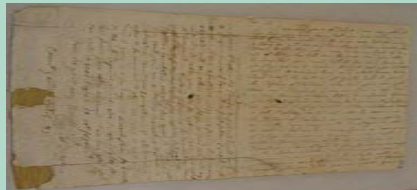
Copy by Laurent Pasch of Roslin's portrait of Linnaeus

The conservation project

In 2004, a major conservation programme was commissioned to ensure the preservation of the 4,000 Linnaean letters in optimum conditions and to facilitate their digitization.



The acidic paper and the unwieldy nature of the albums was a threat to the long-term conservation of the letters and the distortion of the pages was allowing ingress of dirt and dust.



Many items needed repair and some old repairs needed to be removed, as they were disfiguring or damaging the letters.



The weight of the text block was compressing the wax seals and the many delicate three-dimensional specimens. Many specimens were being flexed unnecessarily as the pages were turned.

What the conservation team did

- ✓ Documented the conservation needs of each volume
- ✓ Released the letters from the album pages
- ✓ Surface-cleaned the letters
- ✓ Removed adhesive
- ✓ Unfolded oversize items and pressed them flat ready for removal to separate fascicules
- ✓ Repaired tears with Japanese paper applied with wheat starch paste
- ✓ Attached Japanese paper guards and pasted the letters onto the fascicule pages
- ✓ Consolidated delicate seals with laboratory-grade beeswax
- ✓ Sewed hand-made paper covers on to the 16-leaf fascicules



It has been a pleasure to work with the talented team at Dundee (*l to r*) Vanessa Charles (Senior Conservator), Philippa Sterlini (Senior Conservator and Project Manager), Erica Kotze (Paper Conservator) and Emma Fraser (Book Conservator).

