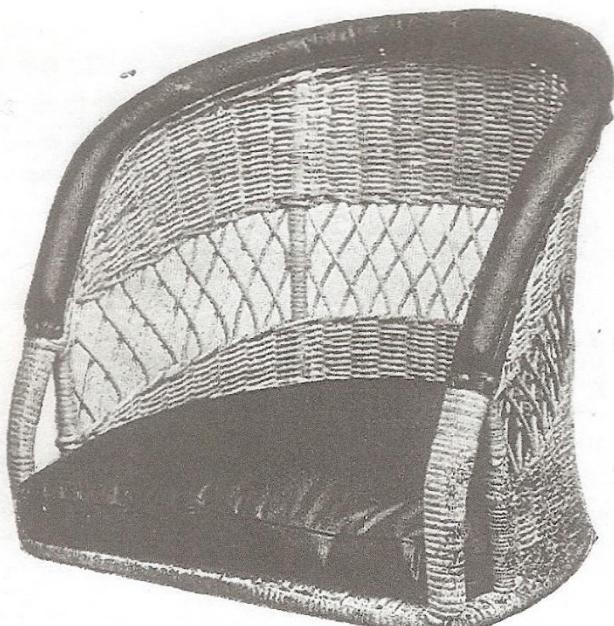


SEATS (Wicker).

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BASKETRY

Then and Now

THE FIRST WORLD WAR YEARS AND THEIR LEGACY

FEBRUARY 2017

Greta Bertram has taken over the day-to-day management of the Basketry Then and Now project

I'm delighted to have finally started work on the project, and will be in post until the end of July 2017. Following on from the wonderful work done by Hilary Burns during Phase 1 in getting the project up and running, encouraging people to get involved in researching First World War basketry history, and generating interest amongst basketmakers and other communities, I will be overseeing Phase 2 of the project. Hilary will continue to work on the project too.

During Phase 2 we'll bring together the research that has been done so far, while continuing to promote further research. We'll produce four or five more fifteen minute films based on the project themes, to accompany Mary Crabb's *War and Remembrance* film. We'll create a set of display banners, and will start planning a series of pop-up events and exhibitions around the country.

In the next few weeks we're hoping to revamp the Everyday Lives in War website, which will have a distinct section for the basketry project and will include the films, copies of the newsletters, blog posts and research write-ups.

We'll also be encouraging other groups to apply for grants of £3,000–£10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund under their 'First World War: Then and Now' programme to explore their basketry-related First World War heritage.

My first few weeks have been spent getting up to speed with everything that's been going on so far, and my priority in the coming weeks is to develop some guidelines for researchers and a template for writing up the research.

If you want to find out more about any aspect of the project then do get in touch at gretabertram@gmail.com.

Image above: From an advert by the Aircraft Supplies Co. Ltd. for wicker seats, AGS 264.

Bunty Ball has been looking at the manufacture of woven aeroplane seats, particularly for the Sopwith Camel

The first aeroplane flight took place on 17 December 1903. Sir Thomas Octave Murdoch Sopwith took up flying seven years later in 1910, and in 1912 set up the Sopwith Aviation Company in 1912 at Kingston, south west London. Their first major success was the Tabloid, from which they went on to develop a number of military aircraft during the First World War.

The Sopwith Camel was launched in 1916 and was the most successful British fighter plane used during World War One. It was a single seat bi-plane with a single rotary engine and twin synchronised machine guns, and took its name from the hump



Image: A Sopwith Camel F1. © IWM (Q 63822)

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205227608>

over the breeches of the guns. It was a difficult aircraft to fly, and many pilots were killed during training, but could be very effective in the right hands. It was ideal for daylight combat, but was also used for night fighting and ground attack.

5490 Camels were built in the last two years of the war, so Sopwith had to contract their production to other companies such as Ruston Procter, Portholme, Boulton Paul, Hooper, and Clayton and Shuttleworth.

The earliest aircraft seats were made of wood, but by 1912 more lightweight seats of wicker or cane woven around a rattan or metal frame were introduced. With the exception of a replica Sopwith Camel seat in the RAF Museum in Hendon which is made of willow, and a French Farman F20 Aircraft in the RAF Museum in Stafford with a metal frame, nearly all extant examples of WW1 seats are made of cane woven around a steam-bent rattan frame. Some are completely woven using round cane, while others have a more open weave with fitting.

By 1916 the Royal Flying Corps were using a standard design of aeroplane seat by the Aircraft Supplies Co. Ltd. (AGS 264). It seems that Aircraft Supplies was sourcing seats from a number of small firms and individuals rather than manufacturing the seats themselves or through large contracts. This may explain why the

seats are not mentioned in the sections of the *History of Ministry Munitions* (1922) which deal with aircraft manufacture and aircraft general supplies.

However, the seats are mentioned in the *Basket, Skip and Hamper Makers' Federation List of Sizes and Prices for Government work throughout the London District* of 1915. This list gives details about the sizes of the seats, the number of stakes, a description of the different styles, and the costs of making. Known makers include Edward Bowser of Park Lane, and Dryad of Leicester.



Image: A replica Sopwith Camel seat woven by Tim Palmer.

Bunty has also been looking into the use of observation balloons during World War One, which were tethered to the ground by steel cables at an altitude of 1,000–1,500 metres. Positioning artillery observers on balloons a few miles behind the front lines allowed them to see targets at a greater range than they could on the ground. Towards the end of the war they were also used at sea for anti-submarine purposes, enabling the pilot to notify the ship of the U-boat's evasive actions during a depth charge attack. The balloon baskets would have been made by basketmakers using either willow or cane.

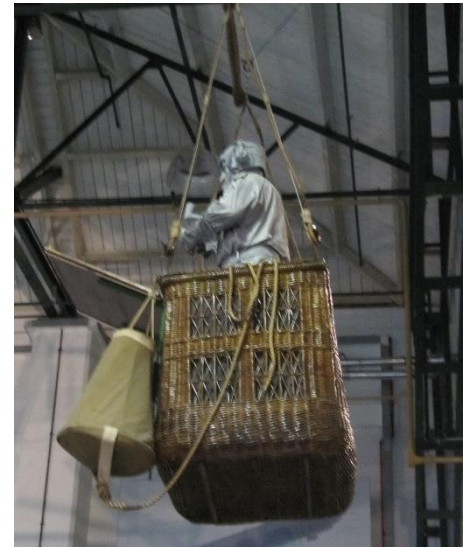


Image: A kite balloon basket with parachute, from the RAF Museum in Hendon.

The most comprehensive collection of original aeroplane seats is held at the RAF Museum in Stafford, which are available to view by appointment only.

Woven Communities Symposium at the University of St Andrews, January 2017

Following on from the incredibly successful symposium in August 2012, this January saw the return of 'Woven Communities', an international basketry symposium organised as part of a collaborative project between the Scottish Basketmakers' Circle and the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of St Andrews. Several people from the Basketry Then and Now project were in attendance, and Hilary Burns and Mary Crabb gave presentations about their research. The following is a summary of an article written by Tim Palmer about the event.

"The symposium was about basketmaking in its widest sense, and its place in societies past, present and future. The attendees included not only basketmakers, but also



Image: Photography by Tim Johnson.

many anthropologists as well as archaeologists, museum curators, specialists in robotics, engineering, and in rehabilitation and treatment. All contributed to a lively discussion about how making baskets has shaped our world, our lives, and could affect the future in an era where people are becoming increasingly remote from the environment and from each other. Individual presentations explored how the positive features of basketmaking could be introduced or maintained in teaching, social interactions, healing and remembrance.

It became apparent from the presentations that basketmaking was an extraordinarily rich activity in many respects. It promotes social interaction, and is therefore useful in helping people who, for a variety of reasons, have difficulty relating to others.

It is an activity that is full of mathematical opportunity. From the simple in-and-out weave by one strand in front of and behind a stationary component, to the complex sequential movements required to create complex weaving patterns, braids and plaits, there is everywhere numeracy and also a form of observational literacy.

Patterns dominate in basketmaking. Recognition of and analysis of patterns is fundamental to recreating lost baskets, seeing the influence of baskets and other woven objects in pre-history and more recent times,

and in enriching our appreciation of the natural and man-made. Different patterns of weave can identify different cultures, and links between cultures.

Changes in styles of basket and materials used speak of changes in society, from subsistence through commerce and increasing specialisation, to industrialisation. As a culture moves from mobility to a more static lifestyle, so the need for baskets and the forms of baskets change. The appearance and disappearance of types of basket document changes in ways of life and the rise and fall of occupations.

In a world that places great emphasis on design as an activity, basketmaking has a lot to teach about, inter alia, the interaction between form and function, about the properties of materials and structures, and about construction techniques and engineering.

In the twentieth century, the potential of basketmaking as a therapeutic tool became apparent. Born out of conflict (the First World War), it can be used in very many situations. It first found use as treatment for the profound psychological trauma of trench warfare. The physical movements of making 'unlock' pathways in the brain, allowing rehabilitation. The concentration required alleviates anxieties. The sequential use of right and left encourages interaction between both sides of the brain, sometimes problematic for people with developmental delay. The tactile nature of the work compensates for poor or absent vision. The smell (of willow in particular) may have a therapeutic effect. More recently, the ability of baskets, or other woven or knotted objects, has been used to bring back meaning to the lives of people with dementia, and to make connections between them and younger

generations – not only remembering but also remembrance."

Other news

Research skills development

session: We will be holding a study day on Monday 24 April, 2–4pm, at the Devon Heritage Centre in Exeter for people interested in researching the basketmaking industry in Cornwall, Devon or Somerset. Brian Carpenter, Community Learning Officer, will take us through the use of archives for research by occupation, where this might lead, and how to reference archives in presentations/ publications. Places are free but limited to seven people. If you are interested in attending please email Linda Durman (durmanlinda@btinternet.com) by the end of February.

Save the date: We will be holding a basketmaking workshop at Coates English Willow in Stoke St. Gregory, Somerset 22-23 September 2017, to make a replica of a First World War pigeon basket seen at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford (below). We will also be putting on a small display about the work of the project. To register your interest please email hilary@basketryandbeyond.org.uk. Please note there will be a cost for the workshop.



Image © IWM (FEQ 813)

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30028471>

Welcome to new researchers: We're delighted to welcome Clare Revera, Tim Palmer and Rae Gillott to the project. Clare is looking at agricultural baskets and basketry as therapy from the Welsh perspective (if you're in Wales and would like to get involved, email c.revera@btinternet.com). Tim is

looking at basketry as therapy from the Scottish perspective and bringing it into the modern context. Rae is looking at baskets used in transportation both on the home front and to the front lines (if you know anything about this, email r2gillott@btconnect.com).

Watch the film: Mary Crabb's film, *War and Remembrance*, is available to watch online at <https://everydaylivesinwar.herts.ac.uk/?p=2265> (please note that the web link may change when the website is redeveloped).