

Malvern Civic Society Report

At the recent monthly meeting, held at the Eden Centre, Grovewood Road on Friday, 13th July at 7.30, the guest speaker was Anna Yevtukh-Squire who talked about "Making Beautiful Books". Anna was born in the Ukraine and spent many years training as an artist and bookbinder. She came to the UK twelve years ago when she married her English husband and now teaches book making and binding at Malvern Hills College.

Her Eastern European background gave her an unusual insight into various styles of book binding. She commented on five different styles, all of which she had studied and of which she showed her own examples.

Firstly, and most ancient, was the Byzantine pattern, in use for 1000 years from about 300 AD to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, in Eastern Europe, Asia and North Africa. These books were bound in thick wooden boards with decorative metal clasps.

Secondly, she illustrated the style in use in Russia and the Ukraine from the 15th century. Thick wooden boards and clasps were still used but the binding was more refined.

Thirdly, in the later Middle Ages, came the girdle book in the Netherlands and Rhine Valley, particularly for the convenience of monks. A leather strap with a heavy knot (or Turk's Head Knot) enabled the book to hang down from a belt or girdle, leaving hands free.

Fourthly came Dos à Dos bindings in France in the 16th century: joint binding enabled two or even as many as five books to be attached together sharing the same covers. This was a popular way of presenting small books for personal use, like a Prayer Book and Psalter or two-way dictionaries.

Finally, Anna described Italian Ledger binding. Special books were devised for businessmen as accounting techniques developed in the later Middle Ages.

Ann then talked about other examples she herself had made. There were several with beautiful cover decorations inspired by artists like Kandinsky and Mondrian. A series of book covers made in the shape of different house styles formed an imaginative project which she called "No Place like Home". Her talk was much appreciated.

The Civic Society takes a break in August. The next Friday talk will be on 14th September at 7.30 in the Eden Centre, Grovewood Road, when the topic will be "Shepherds' Huts", given by Rollin Nicholls of Guarlford Garden Centre.

John Dixon