

REVIEWS

BOOKBINDING AT THE HARCOURT BINDERY 2006 & NINETEENTH-CENTURY BOOKBINDING TECHNIQUES AT THE HARCOURT BINDERY 2007 BOTH DVDS PRESENTED BY SAM ELLENPORT

The Harcourt Bindery was located in South Boston, USA and Sam Ellenport was its owner until the recent alliance with the Acme Bookbindery. Established in 1900 the Harcourt bindery practice has remained close to its original design in terms of its method of operation, division of labour and commercial approach. It relies heavily upon hand craft, using very little machinery, and seeks to produce bindings of high quality, cost effectively.

The DVD's set out to show how work was carried out in the bindery by explaining processes and giving sufficient information, that they can be understood and appreciated, but without necessarily showing a continuous and entire sequence. The **Bookbinding** disc gives a very clear outline of how books are put together, from sewing through to the 'finished' book. Cloth and leatherwork are shown in turn. The emphasis throughout is on working efficiently, at a comfortable speed, but as productively as possible. There is much incidental information offered suggesting maybe the morning's work of a forwarder or how many books might be worked in succession by perhaps thinning the glue-working on one book while the glue is going off on another while a third dries, and so on. This is all imparted in a wonderfully lucid and fluent manner. I frankly was amazed that I had watched continuously for over 90minutes without being conscious of having done so.

Much can similarly be said of the **Techniques** disc, except that here there are practices demonstrated which are unlikely to have been shown in a similar way before – silk end-papers and doublures, different methods of achieving leather jointed end-papers, for example – all done with the neatness and crispness to be expected of high quality binding of the period. There is, however, a huge amount of basic, good efficient practice that can be drawn from these discs and utilised.

The production values on both discs are high-they are well filmed and edited, making it easy to see clearly the steps shown and provide not only high quality, practical instruction but a permanent record of the working hub of the last 'for profit hand bindery in Boston' and are super value to boot!

Editor's note: I hold just six of each of these two discs. Should anybody like a copy cost is £8 plus £1 p&p. Cheques payable to Gaynor Williams and sent to my home address (monies will be forwarded to Sam Ellenport).