



TRANSACTIONS OF THE BURGON SOCIETY

Volume 15

2015



Suffrage march, New York, 1910

THE BURGON SOCIETY

Founded to promote the study of Academical Dress

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**Information about the Burgon Society can be found
on its website at www.burgon.org.uk**

Transactions of the Burgon Society

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Front cover: Women in a suffrage march in New York provide an example of how socio-material associations generate the perception of material objects being outside their 'proper place', such as academic gowns in a political demonstration. The idea is explained beginning on p. 14.

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Officers	2
Events	3
Fellows and Members	4
Editor's Note	7
Authors	94
Shop	95
<i>Primary Source: Jonathan C. Cooper</i>	
French Influence on the Dress of Scottish Doctors of Medicine	9
SANDRA WEARDEN	
How Academic Dress Is Mobilized in Degree Ceremonies and to What Effect	14
BRUCE CHRISTIANSON AND JOAN KENDALL	
A Portrait of an Oxford Nobleman, <i>circa 1705</i>	30
KENNETH L. SUIT, JR	
The Iridescent Web: American Degree Colours (1895–1935)	41
JOHN N. GRANT	
The Tradition of Academic Costume at Acadia University	75

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Burgon Society Events in 2015

28 March **Visit to Durham**

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM AND CATHEDRAL

arranged by Kenneth Crawford

Programme included:

Tour of University College

Display in the University Library of Durham and Newcastle robes

Paul Coxon — Talk on the consequences of the separation of the Durham and Newcastle divisions of the University

Lunch in the Birley Room of Hatfield College

Tour of the Cathedral and refreshments in the Prior's Hall

9 May **Spring Conference**

OFFICES OF DELOITTE Athene Place, 66 Shoe Lane, London

Programme included:

Talks

Andrew North — *Paradise Lost: The Fall of Oxford Academic Dress*

Sandra Wearden — *A Socio-Material Perspective of a Degree Ceremony Network*

Paul Coxon — *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Palatinate Purple*

Nicholas Groves — *Cambridge 1934: A Missed Opportunity*

Colin Fleming — *Let Us Now Dress Famous Men*

18 July **Garden Party**

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY Harcourt Hill Campus, Oxford

hosted by William Gibson

The day included brief presentations: Latest developments in Oxford University academic dress (Andrew North); Recently donated Columbia and Harvard robes (Alex Kerr); Gems from the newly handlisted paper archive (Colin Fleming)

10 October **AGM and Congregation**

THE QUEEN'S CHAPEL OF THE SAVOY London

Annual General Meeting

Display of academic robes from the Burgon Society Archive

Admission to the Fellowship of the Burgon Society

Professor Kenneth Suit, Jr (by submission — *The Iridescent Web: American Degree Colours 1895–1935*)

Sandra Wearden (by submission — *Academicals as Active Participants in Shaping the Social World*)

Talk: Nicholas Groves — *Several Shades of Grey — and Red, and Gold: Observations on Some Recent Schemes of Academic Dress*

Organ recital by Stephen Disley

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(as at 1 August 2016)

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Mr Leonard Brown, *died 2007*
Professor Bruno Neveu, *died 2004*
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Editor's note

Not so long ago e-books were expected to replace books printed with ink on paper. Publishers, whose livelihoods depend on the profits associated with hardbacks and paperbacks, would go out of business when a reader's single Nook or Kindle could replace an entire home library. In the contest between old and new, victory would go to the greater convenience and lower cost of digital.

It didn't happen that way, or it hasn't happened yet. Analog books actually saw a rise in sales in 2015, when about 17 million more printed books were sold worldwide than in the year before. True, that amounted to an increase of only a slim 3 percent. More significant are the flat sales of e-books. At one time they were expected to account for as much as 60 percent of book sales, but they have settled closer to only one-quarter of all books sold.

I like to think that is good news for the kind of work we are interested in. For one thing, text in print is the primary way we share our ideas and discoveries. It's a storage tool that does not require a technological intermediary to operate, so it doesn't require updates to software or hardware—unless you count eyeglasses and the stronger prescriptions that come with age.

For another, the preference for the physical object that is a book, where it's easy to thumb through pages looking for your scribbled notes, suggests that the tactile experience of putting on a college gown and hood for the first time may come with a certain pleasure. Not only does the touch of the fabric send messages through our fingers, the look of a new graduate in academic dress sends a message to everyone who looks her way.

Technology won't stop improving, of course. One day everything, even education, may be digital. Yet even those graduates who today complete their course work from a distance, taking classes online and rarely setting foot in a lecture hall, may choose to attend a graduation ceremony remotely too. And some who do go so far as to wear a gown or don a cap while watching from home.

The *Transactions* is taking another digital step. In the next few months the journal will find a new home online, hosted by New Prairie Press. It's a web service whose aim is to share scholarly research for free, and to make finding research easier for scholars. In addition to posting our articles, as we will continue to do on burgon.org.uk, the librarians who operate New Prairie Press will assist us by making sure that meta-data of all sorts are attached to each document so that search engines will have an easier time of finding the work our contributors publish.

This all means we will be available to read on paper, to download via pdf, and to discover through digital object signifiers. Wearing a gown to your virtual library is optional.

—Stephen Wolgast