

**THE ZIBBY GARNETT TRAVELLING  
FELLOWSHIP**



**Report by Maria Katarzyna Grabowska**

**Textile Conservation  
At Wawel Royal Castle, Cracow, Poland**

**12 August – 21 September, 2013**

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**Introduction.**

My name is Maria Grabowska and I am a twenty-eight year old student enrolled in the MPhil Textile Conservation course at the University of Glasgow. This is a two-year programme with a well-balanced structure between theoretical knowledge and extensive practical work. From the first day of the course the students have an opportunity to work on a wide range of objects provided by local museums and private clients, as well to use the Centre for Textile Conservation's extensive Reference Collections. Moreover after completion of the first year, students are required to undertake an at least six week long work placement in the institution of their choice to provide a 'real-life' context to skills their have acquired so far.

Originally, I come from Poland, but I moved to Scotland a few years ago and I feel as though here is my second home. I intend to stay in the United Kingdom and gain an employment in the textile conservation sector following my graduation next year. In order to gain better understanding of general practice used in the United Kingdom as well as prepare myself for future employment, I chose to spend my official course placement in Oxford working along side the conservation team at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. My placement lasted for only seven weeks and since my break from university was longer than this I wanted to take the opportunity to explore the textile conservation world more. I arranged a five weeks internship at Wawel Royal Castle in Poland. I regarded this as a great opportunity to expand my learning experience and knowledge as well as examine any differences and similarities within the professions of both countries, which are both close to my heart.

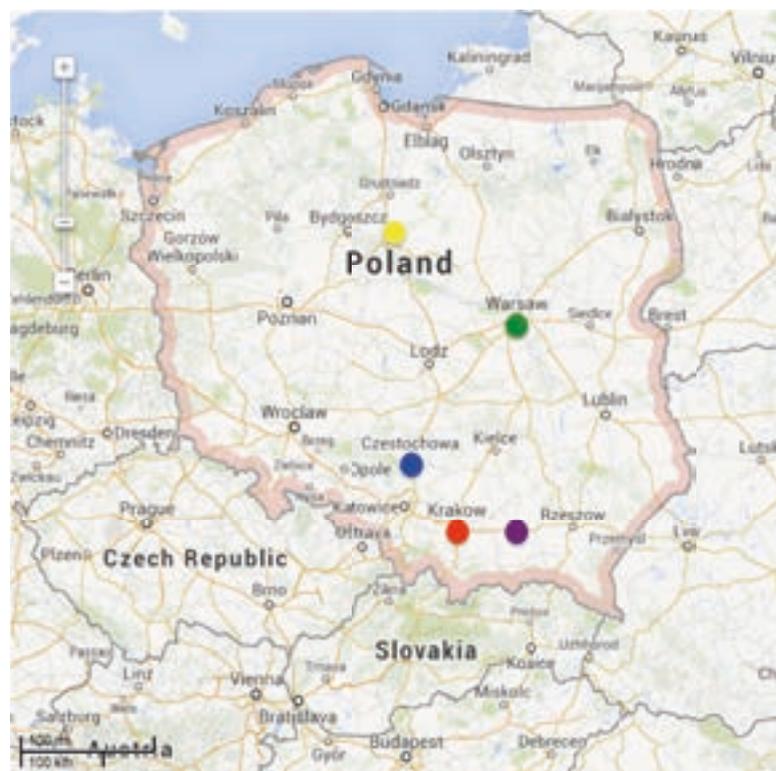
My placement in Poland was possible due to help of the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship, which was introduced to me by my tutors and fellow students, who were granted the award in the previous year. I felt absolutely honoured when I was rewarded with the grant myself. Without this financial help, I would not be able to make the most of my time as I did and pursue so many goals.



**Map. 1. Poland in relation to Europe.**

**Key:**

- Cracow
- Warsaw
- Tarnow
- Czestochowa
- Torun



**Map. 2. Map of cities I visited this summer and my home town, Torun.**

All maps downloaded from: <https://www.google.co.uk> on 25/10/2013.

### **Study trip.**

My study trip took a place in Cracow, Poland (Map. 1 – 2), between 12 August and 21 September 2013. For most of my internship I was working at the National Art Collection at Wawel Royal Castle under supervision of Jerzy Holc, the director of Textile Renovation Workshop. Within this time I was fortunate to accompany my supervisor to Pieskowa Skala Castle, where we stayed for a couple of days overlooking and surveying the permanent open exhibition. This Renaissance castle is located 30 km north of Cracow and holds an exposition presenting changes in the European art through centuries.

My supervisor was kind enough to help me organize numerous visits to other textile conservators in order to better meet my expectations. He was incredibly supportive and encouraging to not waste a minute of my time in Poland by pointing to places, events and, most importantly, people worth visiting as well as arranging meeting with them. Although I had planned my itinerary for many days prior my arrival, I modified it to a large extent due to Jerzy's hints and advice.



**Figure 1. The Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow. ©Wikimedia Commons - [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Krakau\\_Wawel\\_Wisla.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Krakau_Wawel_Wisla.jpg)**

In the week prior to the start of my internship I had the amazing privilege to live at the Dominican monastery as a guest and provide some voluntary help around their textile collection. Although it was not an official part of my internship proposal, I am extremely delighted this opportunity appeared.

My internship was filled with lucky opportunities which I did not originally plan, but enriched my experience enormously. It was such an extraordinary time I could not possibly prepare myself for it, although I had set a few objectives I wanted to achieve while I was there. This idea was inspired by our course placement. We were required to propose objectives for our time of placement and afterwards reflect on our development through their prism. I found this concept very helpful and decided to go to Poland with similarly formulated aims relating to my professional growth.

- My main goal was to explore differences and similarities in treatment methods, documentation style, conservation standards and preventive conservation practice between both countries.
- I was eager to expand the number of treatments in order to develop my manual dexterity and standard of finish in my work as well as consolidate the skills I have acquired so far.
- Since the beginning of my course I am trying to learn as much as possible regarding techniques and types of objects a textile conservator might encounter in their practice. Poland has a great and varied collection of national treasures and I was hoping to expand my knowledge regarding those artefacts.
- In the course of my internship I was also wishing to build up my Polish lexicon since my education is in English and also build my network of professional contacts.

My aims were general and broad since I was not entirely sure what to expect. I mainly treated this time as a reconnaissance of Poland and a challenge for myself in this familiar, but somehow new paradigm.

### **Budget**

The total cost of my trip was £1267.31 (rate exchange: 1 GBP = 4.98 Polish Zloty) and the Zibby Garnett Fellowship Fund awarded me with £1000.00. Although I am a full-time student I carry on part-time job and working

through academic year of 2012 - 2013 allowed me to save the remaining funds in small steps.

### **Setting the background.**

Cracow is one of the oldest cities of Poland and it was the capital of the country from 1038 to 1569. Although the status of capital has been moved to Warsaw, Cracow is recognised as a ‘cultural capital’ with its history, architecture, wealth and the magical atmosphere surrounding the place. I grew up in a town (Torun – Map. 2) which is located over 400 km north of Cracow and while I had had a chance to visit this city several times before, I had never got to know it properly. I was always amazed by the wonderful aura and the vibe encircling Cracow as you start strolling through medieval streets admiring facades of residential buildings, churches and various architectural features.

The most recognized building of Cracow is Wawel (Fig. 1), a complex consisting of many buildings and fortifications built over the centuries on a hill on the southern bank of Vistula River. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century Wawel became the seat of the Polish kings and even after moving the political and administrative centre to Warsaw in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it still kept its prestigious status.

Currently, Wawel plays the role of the national museum with a large and extensive collection of art treasures of historical Polish significance. The collection of textiles at Wawel includes a great assembly of tapestries (207



**Figure 2. The view from the window of the Textile Renovation Workshop.**

items), banners, upholstery, military accessories, saddles and a breath-taking group of large tents.

There are seven specialised conservation departments caring for all artefacts with the Textile Renovation Workshop among them. The work of the workshop is focused on monitoring the conditions of storage and exhibitions, and interventive treatments to ensure a regular rotation of objects. Due to Poland's harrowing modern history, textile conservators are constantly busy while restoring tapestries from the Wawel collection, which survived the horrors of war and occupation. The conservation studios are located in the previous fortified building providing spacious workrooms and a beautiful view from the window over the main courtyard and the Royal Cathedral (Fig. 2). Before I was enjoying this view during my lunch time, I spent an incredible week in the unusual settings of the men's convent.

### **The first week**

Due to my interest in liturgical vestments I contacted a conservator at the Dominican monastery, Marcin Ciba, to inquire about the possibility of visiting them and discussing their collection while I was in Poland (Fig. 3). At first, I received an open invitation to look through their storage as much as I wished on the weekends. As our communication continued this plan evolved.



**Figure 3. A survey of storage conditions at the Dominican monastery. © Klasztor OO. Dominikanow.**

Marcin is a freelance painting conservator, who is responsible for several big projects occurring around the monastery at the time of my visit and naturally he has become the conservation authority in the institution. As he described himself to me, he has no knowledge regarding textile conservation and although he is aware of changes that need to be made, he does not have an understanding or the resources to carry them out himself. As an eager and aware conservator he is trying to garner the attention of institutions and people who could make a change, but it is proving difficult due to the present economic situation. Although he was aware of my student status and short experience, he

was happy for me to be around and use my knowledge and recognition of existing problems. Eventually, I was invited for as long as I wished therefore I booked my flights a week earlier than planned to take advantage of this offer.

The Dominican monastery is located around the centre of the old town and dates to 13<sup>th</sup> century when Saint Hyacinth arrived to establish the Dominican Order in Poland and Kiev. The convent holds various artefacts including a vast collection of paintings, sculptures, reliquary, liturgical accessories and liturgical vestments. Naturally, all of these are used as religious objects rather than artworks.



**Figure 4. *Cracovia Sacra* exhibition in the Dominican Monastery. © Klasztor OO. Dominikanow.**



**Figure 5. The orphey mounted on a padded board prepared by me for *Cracovia Sacra* exhibition. ©Klasztor OO. Dominikanow.**

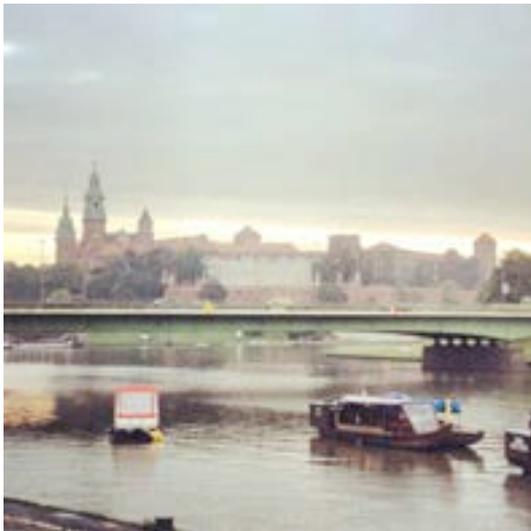
My arrival coincided with the preparation for a temporary, two-night exhibition. *Cracovia Sacra* (Fig. 4) is a concept based on the long night of museums with churches and religious institutions opening their door to the public. The visitors have an opportunity to be involved in many cultural events, see the exhibitions, listen to interesting lectures or see the interior of places, which are usually closed. Marcin decided to arrange a small exhibition of rare artefacts and a few among these were textiles. He simply passed me the task of preparing them for viewing, which I gladly took up. This included surface cleaning, preparing a padded board (Fig. 5) and planning the layout of exhibition. I was absolutely overjoyed with his trust and encouragement, but it was a

real challenge since time, money and resources restricted me in the extreme. Nevertheless, it was a brilliant test for my problem solving skills, which I am always ready to develop. The final effect was a personal success for me, knowing how much invention I had to put into it and receiving high praise from Marcin.

The rest of my time at the Dominican monastery I spend briefly examining the collection, its condition and storage. My survey showed a requirement for an immediate change and adjustment of the storage condition of the collection to stop deterioration. I prepared recommendations taking into account possible resources of the Dominican Order and urged them to respond to it. Based on my knowledge from the course, I was able to indicate the major problems and propose changes. Marcin's manner of treating me as professional helped me to behave as one and I gained in confidence. I hope to keep in touch and continue this relationship that may lead to interesting future projects, which have already been shaping in my head.

### **Textile conservation at Wawel**

The Textile Renovation Workshop employs 10 full-time textile conservators who are working under the supervision of Jerzy Holc. The regular working day lasts from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm with an hour for lunch. Thanks to my



**Figure 6. The view during my commute.**

network of family and friends I managed to rent a room in a nearby flat and my regular day started with a short walk to the studio along the river. Through the later part of my stay I experienced the joy of watching picturesque sunrises (Fig. 6), which made the early rising time absolutely worth it.

The entire team of conservators welcomed me warmly and in a friendly manner, and with curiosity. They were interested in my training and experiences as much as I was interested in them. Through my stay we had conducted numerous conversations and got to know each other very well. The staff at Wawel was happy to share

with me their experiences, knowledge and passion every day. This was especially invaluable since the majority of textile conservators have been working there for many years and the level of quality of their manual work and the wealth of their experience was incredibly high. In those conversations alone I quickly became familiar with the problems, issues, challenges and successes of work not only at Wawel, but also in Poland generally.

I received my first project after the formalities and introductions on the first day. I was given fragments of the ridge of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Turkish tent to provide a stitched support (Fig. 7), required due to their fragile nature. The aim of the treatment was to stabilize them and position them in alignment to help reinstate their original appearance. After completion, a padded board would be prepared for appropriate storage and possible display.



**Figure 7. Stitching fragments of Turkish tent onto support fabric.**  
©Wawel Royal Castle.

This small project urged me to develop my manual skills. Due to awkward positioning with one hand under the table I was encouraged by my experienced colleagues to practise stitching with both hands. Since I am right-handed it was difficult at first to engage my left hand into precise movements, but it became easier with practice. It is easy to forget about your posture and involvement of your body while focusing on manual work. I am glad I was prompted to do it and I hope to remember about it through my career.

## Pieskowa Skala Castle

In the first week I was also invited to visit a museum located in Pieskowa Skala Castle (Fig. 8). This Renaissance castle became a part of Wawel National Art Collection in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was restored and adapted as a museum with a beautiful exhibition consisting of various artefacts from a variety of crafts. There is a relatively large collection of flat textiles and furniture representing various styles throughout the centuries.

Every year the team of conservators undertake a survey of the collection,



**Figure 9. The Italian Gardens of Pieskowa Skala Castle. The view from the loggia.**

perform surface cleaning and any necessary repairs *in situ*. This year the annual review was impossible to undertake in its regular form due to a busy schedule at Wawel castle. Instead my supervisor decided to go with me alone and do as



**Figure 8. Pieskowa Skala Castle. © Zwiedzaj Polske, Ojcowski Park Narodowy - <http://galeria.zwiedzaj-polske.pl/Ojcowski-Park-Narodowy-Galeria-zdjec>**

much as was possible in two days. We carried out a limited survey of the collection, producing documentation for the survey next year to highlight the existing and possible issues, which should be considered.

Jerzy took advantage of this time to educate me in regards to the general museum management practice within the context of a historic building without an on site studio or storage. I was introduced to a regular day and duties of the custodian, preventive conservation measures and emergency procedures. I witnessed the closing and opening of the site and explored relationships within the small team of this local museum as well as aspects of collaboration between

them and Wawel staff. Jerzy has an extensive knowledge and remarkable memory I, therefore, learnt a lot about the collection from him as we surveyed it. Almost every object in the collection to date underwent conservation treatment during his tenure, therefore as the manager there was no question he could not answer. In reality it was an exceptional time, which allowed me to experience an approach to conservation outside of the lab and enjoy the perks of being a museum employee: I had lived in a castle! Moreover, on the last day of my stay Jerzy showed me the various nooks of the castle, unopened to the public including the cellar, chapel, the library and the loggia in the tower. These places are still in need of renovation or are impossible or impractical to be adapted with safety measures in place for visitors.

It was a great addition to explore, even if for a short time only, the aspects of conservation in the context of historical building.

### Following weeks

After my return I carried on with my stitching project and got settled into the everyday routine. I was never given a



chance to finish this project,

**Figure 10. Working on tapestry as a part of the team. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

because in the third week of my internship I was asked to join the team working on a tapestry from *The Story of the Tower of Babel* series (Fig. 10). A team of four conservators has been working for a few years on the entire series consisting of four pieces as a rotation display for the next year. This is a big project the aim of which was to clean and give a support to the each piece in an identical manner.

One of the conservators, Anna, who has been working at this project, had a holiday booked and I was asked to fill in her position since the deadline is rapidly approaching. I have never worked on such a large textile in collaboration with other people, but it felt satisfying to be accepted as a part of the team and it helped me to feel as one of the staff rather than an intern. I continued to work in this configuration until my last day there.

Stitching is one of the most crucial skills in textile conservation since it is applied so often in treatments. Before starting the course my experiences were limited to my hobbies undertaken in leisure and I regarded myself as an amateur. I am an obsessive person with a penchant for perfectionism therefore during my first year of the study I was unhappy with almost every single stitch I have done wishing to be better at it. I was really glad I could have spent so much time



**Figure 11. Progress of my stitching. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

practising my dexterity. The bar was set high because the textile conservators I was working with this summer, were absolutely amazing and the quality of their stitches was faultless. I was driven to match

my work with theirs and I am positive I have improved (Fig. 11). I can only hope the standard of my work will be similarly superb after so many years of my career.

I was also involved in preventive conservation practice and I found many aspects of it fascinating due to the existing differences to the UK standards.

While in the UK there is a huge focus on training museum staff in identifying and preventing pest activity, I noticed less attention to this aspect in Poland. The pest traps are the most effective and most often inspected controlling measure within preventive conservation in the UK. The same traps are allocated in corners of Polish stores and museum rooms, but more consideration is given to distribution of mothproof gels products, which repel those pests since they are the only real danger to the collection.

I think the immense contrast lies in the awareness of staff of the museum regarding pest management. On a weekly basis, we had been receiving phone calls about moths and insects found within the castle by a member of staff. After a quick survey it always turned out somebody had opened a window or neglected controlling measures already in place. The administrative staff seemed not to understand the weight of the problem despite conservators' hard work. Most of the time, the moths' species was not dangerous to the collection, but I witnessed how frustrating a lack of combined effort can be.



**Figure 12. A weekly survey of exhibition. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

In addition to the stitching project, I was involved in smaller tasks and activities. These included dyeing, preparation of loan documentation, monitoring the exhibitions and storage (Fig. 12).

Wawel Royal Castle due to its historical character has an open exhibition and it is the most popular destination for school trips. Although the institution hires numerous staff there is not always enough personnel to monitor every room. Every week, on a closed day, the couple of designated conservators undertake a survey in order to check for possible damage, investigate the condition of exhibited objects and review existing control measures. This is also a great opportunity to examine possible pest activity. This allows conservators to be in constant control over the artefacts, evaluate their own work as well as solutions and be aware of necessary changes or repairs.



**Figure 13. Preparing stock solution for dyeing. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

I also became very familiar with documentation standards since every day I read one treatment report and had a chance to discuss it with the person who undertook it. Through documentation I learnt a great deal about conservation practice within the lab: the methods applied in surface cleaning, types of detergents and procedure used in wet cleaning and dyeing (Fig. 13). I also had an insight into the changing views on textile conservation by examining trends in treatment briefs over the years. I found it very interesting that the current demands from the department head of the museum seems to have shifted from securing the object to restoring it to its former glory. The main focus lies on aesthetics and presenting a viewer with the appearance of how it looked like before. I was really impressed by

the number of solutions the conservators applied in their work to facilitate the wish of the client while not interfering with the nature of the object. For example the missing border of a tapestry was rewoven and stitched onto a supporting fabric. If required this can be removed with any damage to the object.

Since the lab was equipped with dyes that were unknown to me (Fig. 14) I asked for a chance to undertake dyeing. I was given a gold-coloured silk to replicate. It was an interesting experience, although very challenging too. In my course in Glasgow we use recipes to support our dyeing experiments. The method used



**Figure 14. The selection of experimental colours used in the dyeing bath. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

in Cracow does not involve any recipes, but a good sense of colour and proportions. The process is a method of trials and errors until the desired colour is obtained.

I was always convinced dyeing was a mixture of chemistry, maths and luck, while in Cracow I discovered it can be a process of art and constant surprises, but possible to recreate every single time. Although I am not convinced this method is the best, it might prove useful one day when I will give



**Figure 15. The Ottoman tent shortly before demounting. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

up my hope in replicating the particular colour. I think it is important to be open-minded for experiments and unconventional ideas, which can become useful in achieving the goal or finding new solutions.

Most certainly, the biggest highlight of my internship was to

work at de-installation of an exhibition of large 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman tent with a circumference

of 36 metres (Fig. 15 – 16). This task was enormous due to the size of the artefact and involvement of over 20 people from various departments. This gave me an opportunity not only to handle an unusual object, but also to participate in planning every step of the way and explore the relationship within the expanded team.



**Figure 16. Demounting of the Ottoman tent. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

### **External visits**

When I arrived in Poland I came with a strong resolution to make the most of my time. I visited about 20

museums altogether in Cracow, Warsaw, Tarnow and Czestochowa to familiarize myself with the art collection in my home country (Tab. 1). Most of the museums I visited for the first time, but there were a few in which I had had a chance to be before. After the first year of my course my perception has changed therefore re-visiting some of the collections was an interesting experience allowing me to observe my own development and enjoy the exhibitions from the different perspective. In every museum I am a textile-focused visitor with ‘geeky’ attention to detail. Very often I find myself obsessively staring at an object searching for signs of previous treatment and creative solutions employed in displaying it. Moreover, I find it enjoyable when I can identify original preventive conservation measures.

<b>List of various activities undertaken outside internship</b>		
<b>Museum vistis</b>	<b>Vistis to other conservators</b>	<b>Talks</b>
<b>Cracow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Jozef Mehoffer House,</li> <li>▪ The Royal Cathedral Museum,</li> <li>▪ The Hipolit House,</li> <li>▪ The Archdiocesan Museum,</li> <li>▪ The National Museum,</li> <li>▪ The Krzysztofory Palace,</li> <li>▪ The Szolayskich House,</li> <li>▪ The Modern Art Museum,</li> <li>▪ The Ethnographic Museum</li> <li>▪ The Matejko House,</li> <li>▪ The Bishop Erazm Ciolek Palace,</li> <li>▪ The Old Synagogue,</li> <li>▪ Rynek Underground,</li> <li>▪ The Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology,</li> <li>▪ The Gallery of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish Art in Sukiennice.</li> </ul>	Textile Renovation Studio at the Royal Cathedral at Wawel in Cracow.  Textile Conservation Studio in the National Museum in Cracow.  Metal Conservation Studio in the National Museum in Cracow. Visit to the arm and armour storage included.  Textile Conservation Studio at the Wilanow Palace in Warsaw.  Archaeological Conservation Lab in the Regional Museum in Tarnow.	Dr Natalia Krupa lecture: <i>The Italian silk from 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Treasury of the Royal Cathedral at Wawel.</i>  Dr Beata Biedronska-Slotowa lecture: <i>The Turkish tent in the Czartoryskich Collection.</i>  Helena Postawka-Lech talk: <i>The traces of fascist architecture in Cracow.</i>
<b>Warsaw</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Wilanow Palace,</li> <li>▪ The Royal Castle.</li> </ul>		
<b>Tarnow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Regional Museum,</li> <li>▪ The Ethnographic Museum</li> </ul>		
<b>Czestochowa</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Treasury at Jasna Gora Monastery</li> </ul>		

**Tab. 1. List of various outside activities undertaken during my summer internship.**



**Figure 17. Wilanow Palace, Warsaw.**



**Figure 18. At Wilanow Palace, while visiting the textile conservator and the exhibition.**

I was very fortunate to have Jerzy as my supervisor. As I have mentioned, he arranged various visits to other conservation studios for me (Fig. 17 – Fig. 19). I visited four textile conservation studios and various conservation departments at Wawel. In the instance of the manager of the Royal Cathedral Textile Workshop (Fig. 20) I had such a captivating conversation we decided to continue it at dinner till late hours. Jerzy also introduced me to several costume and textile researchers working in various museums, whose names I already knew through numerous publications. It was amazing to have an opportunity in building professional network in my own country.



**Figure 19. Tamara Przygonska, head of conservation department in Wilanow Palace. © Wilanow Palace.**

Despite the summer time, a few lecturers were organised by universities and museums, which I attended with huge curiosity. Through them I learnt about interesting research projects, perspectives and hopes for future study.



**Figure 20. The Wawel Cathedral Textile Workshop. © Wawel Royal Cathedral.**

I was going to Poland convinced textile conservation is not a successful and thriving field. To my astonishment, I discovered four textile conservation studios maintained by the

government in Cracow alone! It is true, textile conservation is still unfamiliar to the wider public, but the professionals of this sector are doing everything they can to change this.

### **Back home**

I was thrilled to be back in Poland for such a long time. It can be argued going to the new, unknown country would be more beneficial and thrilling, but I do not regret choosing to go home. It was absolutely marvellous to find myself in a well-known environment. For a start, it was refreshing to use my mother tongue on a daily basis although I had to fill in the blanks of conservation terminology. The most exciting aspect of my stay was the chance to remind myself of some familiar flavours of Poland.

Currently, in the United Kingdom in almost every big city it is possible to find a shop offering some Polish products, even major chains stock more commercial ones. I do not visit them often because I find them expensive and they sell only a selective scope of items from the biggest companies. This is the opposite of what can be found in Poland. The most satisfying element of the Polish food market is a range of local distributors, seasonally grown food from local farmers and the appreciation of locally available products. I also believe that Polish people, among all nations, perfected baking bread. This is what I miss the most since I moved to Scotland. It was a marvellous time for me to be able to indulge on the most beloved flavours, which I cannot reproduce in my own kitchen.

The people I have met were all incredible and inspiring. I consider myself truly lucky, because I had built up an amazing network of people from various careers. Due to my work and friends I was involved in the most random social arrangements, which turned out to be the most amazing adventures and memories. For example, I ended up in a spectacular dinner with one of the most inspirational businessmen in Cracow. The discussion at some point touched upon the possibilities of raising funds for textile conservation projects through public sector. It was a theoretical conversation, but his suggestions and advice encouraged me to think outside of the box.

My internship was truly stimulating because of passionate people I was working with. Everybody from the Workshop undertakes creative projects involving manual skills in their free time. They paint on silk, design batik,



**Figure 21. Gilding leather elements for reconstruction of the arcade of the Ottoman tent. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

weave, make jewellery and much more. They were so encouraging I have decided to try some of the techniques on my own. I was familiar with the methods through my course, but it was real fun to have a go. I painted batik, woven soumak (I have never finished, but I intend to continue after the load of my course lightens up) and gilded some leather (Fig. 21). The latter was especially pleasing since it was a part of a bigger project and I was glad to be even minimally involved in it.

The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity<sup>1</sup> is the biggest

charity organisation in Poland. They raise money to provide equipment for children's hospitals and to improve children's health care. On the first or second Sunday of the year the 'Grand Finale' takes place. It is a single-day money-

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<sup>1</sup> *Wielka Orkiestra Swiatecznej Pomocy*, [www.wosp.org.pl](http://www.wosp.org.pl)

raising event joined with special concerts and performances in almost every city of Poland. There is also a national auction with items widely donated by individuals, celebrities or organisations. The team of textile conservators decided to join it by donating their own work.

They have decided to make a reproduction of one of arcades of the Ottoman tents from this year's exhibition (Fig. 22). For the last few months everyone was working in their free time to complete the project. I was really moved after hearing about this idea and I find it very inspirational.

### **Conclusion**

I am very glad I had a chance to undertake the internship in Poland at the beginning of my conservator's career. I confronted my expectations and fears regarding the level of conservation in Poland and I am pleased with my learning.



**Figure 22. The progress of work on the reconstruction for the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

The outcomes of my objectives include:

o Differences and similarities:

I became aware of methods and standards applied to textile conservation in Poland. I discovered many differences in general practice, e.g. I had a chance to conduct dyeing in an absolutely new manner for me, which I considered to be enjoyable and simple, but I am not convinced it provides the best results. I think I will continue dyeing according to the method my tutors taught me.

I fear the biggest difference lies in social awareness and knowledge regarding conservation. The lack of funding in the museum sector prevents conservators from educating the wider public about the importance and benefits coming out of conservation. Only the biggest institutions are able to publish, guide, advertise and start communications in order to expand public awareness.

The role of the textile conservator is still mistaken as a restorer only. There is a demand from the management of the museums and curators from the conservator that the object will be restored to its original state, it will be ‘like new.’ Since the aesthetics are very often at the centre of the treatment, Polish standards and dexterity of treatment is absolutely astonishing with almost invisible repairs. In opposition to the UK the conservation science is still at early stage of development. There are only few places where the collaboration between textile conservators and scientists is regular, but the type of work they undertake is very interesting and groundbreaking for Polish practice.

o Number of treatments:

I had a chance to consolidate some of my skills, but I did not undertake a whole treatment from start to finish. As work experience is always important for personal and professional development I am glad I was able to focus on my stitching skills thoroughly and notice my proficiency grow. Since I did not discuss my internship in detail prior my arrival I did not know what to expect exactly and was happy to carry out what I was asked to do. I think it is very important to articulate both parties’ expectations and demands from the start, and I will be sure to do this if I am in similar position again.



**Figure 23. Discussion regarding conservation of horse saddle while preparing it for photography documentation. © Wawel Royal Castle.**

o Knowledge of artefacts:

I was very fortunate to have Jerzy as my supervisor, who has a degree in history of art in addition to textile conservation training. He accompanied me on

few visits to the various museums and happily shared his knowledge with me. He showed and directed me to the exhibitions, which he believed might be of interest to me. We spent one day in the stores, where he patiently and enthusiastically unrolled the amazing tapestries for my pleasure. This turned out to be a great experience in handling and packing the objects. Jerzy is the person, who suggested to me to read one treatment report every day and he personally chose those files. He selected them on the basis of interesting treatment methods and challenging objects.

o Polish lexicon:

After my internship in Poland my terminology related to conservation is fluent and coherent in both languages. Moreover, thanks to Jerzy's generosity I came back with the stack of books and articles published in recent years so I can expand my knowledge. Also, I know where to look for more if interested.

For a short period of time I became a part of the team and I proved to myself I am able to easily adapt to a new situation and bring what is best in me to share with others. I had a chance to critically evaluate what I am being taught during my course, and why, and compare it with a different approach. I was forced to think outside of the box and become creative in order to meet the expectations put on me.

To become a successful textile conservator one might not only gain theoretical and practical training, but also develop original thinking and incorporate past and present experiences into this knowledge. I believe my time in Poland helped me to come one step closer to this goal. This was an amazing opportunity and I am utterly grateful to the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship and Jerzy Holc for making it possible.

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