



Sculpted shoe by Georgina Goodman, 2002.

CREDIT: MUSEUM OF LEATHERCRAFT, NORTHAMPTON.



Northampton celebrates leather heritage

A series of recent events in and around Northampton paid tribute to the city's status as the UK's principal centre for leather teaching and training.

Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists (SLTC) Annual Conference

The 2011 SLTC Annual conference was held on May 7, at Northampton, UK. By choosing this location, it made it easier for students studying leather technology at the University of Northampton to attend the meeting. Around 60 delegates were at the conference, and more than 90 people attended the Annual Dinner Dance.

The Proctor Memorial Lecture was entitled "Prediction in leather processing: a dark art or a clear possibility" and was given by Professor Emeritus Tony Covington DSc. Other presentations covered subjects as diverse as investigations into acid-deterioration of leather, the potential of solvents in driving chemicals from solution within leather processing, and current techniques employed in leather testing. In addition, considerations within the cradle to cradle concept were expanded upon in terms of building controlled biodegradability into leathers, but also historic reviews such as changes that had occurred in leather

finishing since the 1970s.

Due to the growing success of this event, it has been decided to hold the next SLTC Conference in Northampton in May 2012.

Leathersellers award ceremony moves to Northampton

The Leathersellers' Company held its awards and prizes ceremony for 2011 in the Great Hall at the Guildhall in Northampton on June 9.

One of the prizes for students on the leather courses at the University of Northampton's Institute for Creative Leather Technologies was a one-year subscription to *World Leather's* website, leatherbiz.com. The student who won this inaugural award was Rehmatulla Sanjrani, who recently completed the university's MSc course in leather technology. Originally from Pakistan, Mr Sanjrani will now return there after his year in Northampton to continue his career.

The prize will give him instant online access to an archive of detailed technical papers originally published in *World*

Leather and stored in the leatherbiz technical library, as well as up-to-date news from all parts of the global leather industry.

In his introduction to the event, the clerk of the Leathersellers' Company, David Santa-Olalla, explained that the presentations took place in Northampton this year because a four-year development programme is taking place at the Leathersellers' Hall in the City of London. He mentioned that the first reference to the Leathersellers' Company in the history of the City of London dated back to 1372 and that the company had begun to acquire property, and therefore wealth, after receiving its first royal charter in 1444.

"Because the company wanted to make sure the leather being traded in London was of the best quality, it set up its own college in Bermondsey," he said. "The Leathersellers' College ran there for 75 years, but when the college had to close the company wanted to retain the opportunities that it brought and felt that transferring its relationship to the college at



Rehmattulla Sanjrani receives his prize, a year's subscription to leatherbiz.com, from Dr Mark Wilkinson, acting director of the Institute for Creative Leather Technologies at the University of Northampton. CREDIT: UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON

Northampton, now part of the University of Northampton, was right. Leathersellers is still proud to do all we can to help the leather industry in the UK."

During the academic year just ended, a total of 38 students took part in the various leather technology courses on offer at the University of Northampton's Institute for Creative Leather Technologies (ICLT), with representation from Italy, India, Pakistan, Taiwan, Kenya, Botswana, Poland, Germany, South Korea and the UK. Furthermore, ICLT is reporting strong interest from students keen to start in September giving a predicted total number of undergraduates for next academic year of around 45. In addition, there are five postgraduate students working towards PhDs in leather-related areas of study.

As part of a wider commitment to adapting its teaching to the needs of the global leather industry, ICLT has made its delivery methods more flexible. Students now register for courses one year at a time allowing a return to industry between stages if required. Overseas students can have increasing access to course material on home soil using supported distance- or internet-learning (planned for 2012). On-campus developments have included substantial investment in upgrading facilities such as teaching rooms and research laboratories

as well as modernisation of the university's tannery.

Links between the institute and fashion and design departments at Northampton and at other universities are growing. The benefit of this is that it embeds in students of leather technology an appreciation of the requirements of the supply chain partners who will use the leather they make.

New life for museum collection

A collection of carefully crafted leathersgoods, ranging from goatskin gloves made in the sixteenth century to a Georgina Goodwin shoe made in the twenty-first, is set to receive a new lease of life.

A hard-working team of leather experts is attempting to raise £6.5 million to buy the former Pearce tannery in Northampton and use it to display the Museum of Leathercraft's collection. The museum was established in London in 1946, but since 1977 its collection of more than 5,000 items (books, bags, boots, briefcases, saddles, seats and decorative objects) has been in the care of Northampton Borough Council. The trustees of the museum have applied to take control of the collection and to find a new home for it, which is where the iconic, art-deco Pearce building comes in. The tannery has lain empty for ten years.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, which channels funds from the UK National Lottery into cultural projects, could contribute around £2 million towards the total, and the group behind the project to turn the former tannery into the Leather in Life Centre is now trying to raise the rest of the money from private trusts, leather industry institutions and individuals.

In the meantime, the city of Northampton has given three rooms at its Abington Park Museum over to the collection so that the trustees can display some of the items and enhance the appeal for donations. 🌐



Dr Jeffery Guthrie-Strachan (right) receiving a certificate of appreciation for his presentation from David Sherwood, President SLTC.

CREDIT: UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON