

# Understanding Paper

*assessment and permanence for  
artists and fine printers,  
with a chapter on ink*

by Graham Williams

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analysed by two independent laboratories for this book, some extensively. Laboratory testing is too expensive for us to commission on a regular basis. The way forward is with reliable tests that we can carry out in a studio or workshop.

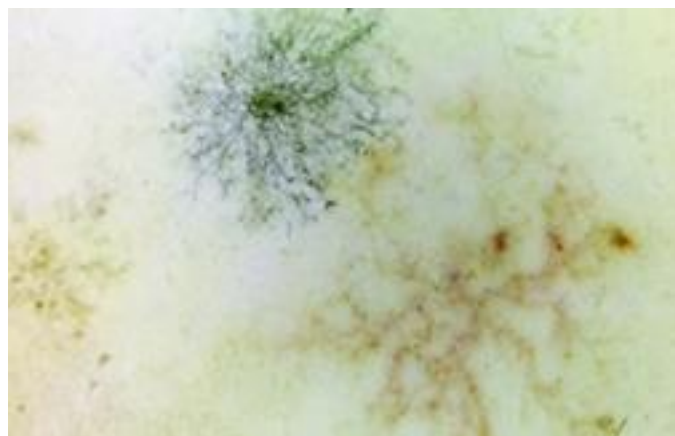
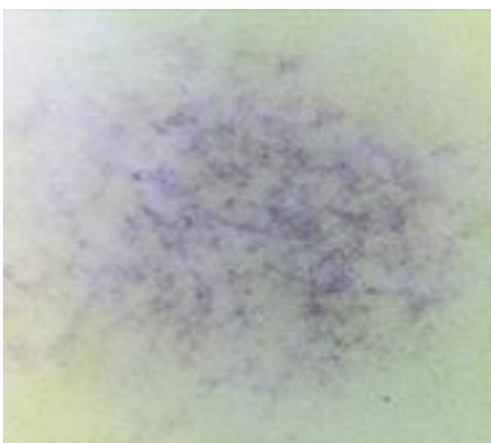
Much of the book is concerned with what we can assess ourselves. Some tests use very little equipment and are accomplished in a matter of minutes. Others need equipment that is both readily available, affordable and take a little longer. In all there are nine assessments and tests.

Both the laboratory and my own assessments were sent to all the papermakers. Some responded responsibly with candour and in one case significant changes were made by a papermaker. Other producers reacted in different ways, a minority believing silence was in their best interests. A couple of papers even confounded the scientific analyses. Surprisingly a handmade and a machine made paper both tested differently from their published descriptions. Potential scandals were revealed by scientific detection, and averted.



One test that is not a part of any of the international standards is the presence of mould. Paper is dampened for fine printing and is frequently kept damp in plastic bags. Mould spores are all around us and in the plastic bags. Life can get in the way of printing schedules,

delays can mean that papers mould, and must be discarded. Some papers grow more mould than others and this is something that we must be aware of. The text describes ways of protecting dampened paper against mould.



Most of those who use fine papers have a loyalty to individual papermakers or brands. Subsequent makings of the same paper are not necessarily identical to the first making. When stocking paper or buying for an important project these tests can avoid potentially expensive and even embarrassing problems. Every artist and artisan should be aware of the qualities of the paper they use.

Whatever paper a printer chooses it calls for an ink that will print with excellence. A last chapter explores how commercial printing ink can be altered to make it more suitable for hand letterpress printing on dampened paper.

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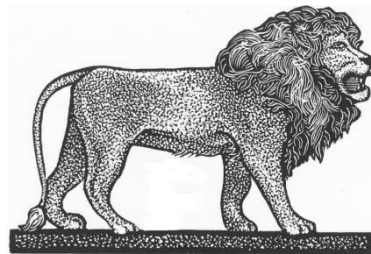
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*Illustrations in this prospectus.*

*The Vatman, from a book of trades 1821. Left, The source of water for Hayle Mill, wood engraving by Graham Williams. The other illustrations were produced for the book.*



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