



Bummock

*Tennyson Research Centre*

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Edited by Andrew Bracey & Danica Maier

With additional contributions by Sarah Bennett, Sue Breakell,  
Jim Cheshire, Jenny Gleadell, Lucy Lumb and Sian Vaughan.

FTB Press

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# Foreword

Alfred Tennyson was a Lincolnshire-born poet, whose famous works include *Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Ulysses* and *In Memoriam*. The latter, comprising 131 elegies about love and loss, is considered “the characteristic poem of its period”<sup>1</sup> in its quest for meaning in death and grief. Queen Victoria is said to have kept a copy by her bed as comfort during her long widowhood. Tennyson gained huge popularity within his lifetime, particularly within his role as Poet Laureate during much of Queen Victoria’s reign, and his works remain ever popular today.

The Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln is considered one of the most significant collections in the world relating to the poet and is one of the highlights of Lincolnshire County Council’s Heritage Service. However, as with many historical archives focused around a central figure, the complexities of family relationships and the nuances of individual personalities can become hidden over time, or are even omitted or overlooked from the very beginning. Societal conventions of the period, the subjectivities of previous archivists and family members, or even the practical elements of display and preservation can all affect the direction and interpretation of an archive. The Tennyson archive holds far more than just information about Alfred Tennyson and projects such as *Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre*, led by artists with new and innovative approaches can enable alternative narratives to be brought properly to light.

An artist working in an archive may, for some museums, be an intimidating proposition. However, The Collection and Usher Gallery has a long history of working with contemporary artists and collections, and my experience of working on such projects has always been one of collaboration, enjoyment and discovery. As Exhibitions and Interpretation Officer, it is one of the highlights of my role to work closely with artists who bring new perspectives to our historic collections. I believe it is vital as a museum professional today to strive to learn ever more about the objects in our care, to encourage new ways of engagement and to not just accept a singular narrative.

It has been a pleasure to work with artists Danica Maier, Andrew Bracey and Sarah Bennett on *Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre*. The relationship between the contemporary artist, the archive and the institution is a subject that continues to fascinate me; I have truly enjoyed facilitating this exploration of the nuances of this relationship and witnessing the development of new and unique works of art. By putting their innovative research methodology front and centre of the exhibition or as they see it, the ‘laboratory’ the artists bring acute attention to ideas of subjectivity and interpretation in museum displays. This publication, along with the excellent public programme that accompanied the exhibition, allow for further opportunities to explore these themes. Congratulations and thanks must go to the three artists, Danica, Andrew and Sarah, who have led and developed this fascinating exhibition and public programme, curating new research and work and adapting brilliantly to the requirements and extra considerations of this strange and unpredictable time (much planning for the *Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre* exhibition took place during Covid-19).

Finally, thanks must go to the people without whom the exhibition would not have been possible; my colleagues in Lincolnshire Archives Michelle Johns and Jess Hogg, as well as Dawn Heywood and Andrea Martin at The Collection and Usher Gallery. Exhibitions are made by teams not individuals and we are delighted, as always, to be supported by a group of fantastic freelancers and designers, including but not limited to Iain Edwards, Reece Straw and Joff + Ollie Studios.

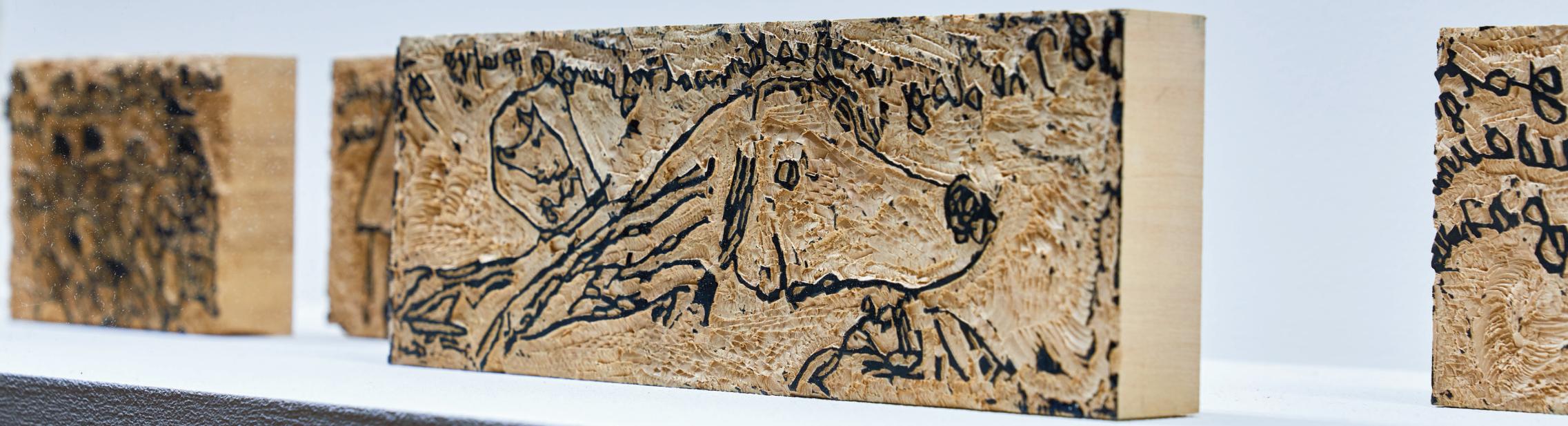
Jenny Gleadell

EXHIBITIONS & INTERPRETATION OFFICER

1. Lincolnshire County Council, ‘Tennyson Resources | Lincs to the Past’, Text (Web Team, Room 5 City Hall, Orchard Street, Lincoln LN1 1XX | [lccconnect@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:lccconnect@lincolnshire.gov.uk)), accessed 22 October 2020, <https://www.lincstothepast.com/home/tennyson-resources/309.article>.



**Bennett** Installation view of *Plant Seizure* drawings at The Collection, 2022, ink drawing and laser print on paper



**Bracey** Hallam's Woodblocks, 2018-20, lemonwood, ink



**Maier**

*Ghost Heirloom: Blackburn Rug/Maier Wallpaper*, 2022, (one of multiple installation versions),  
pencil on mylar, drawings mounted on each side of an aluminium sheet

*Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre*

**INTRODUCTION BY ANDREW BRACEY & DANICA MAIER**

# Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre

BY ANDREW BRACEY & DANICA MAIER

A bummock is the largest part of the iceberg that remains hidden under water, usually it is only the tip that is visible. Likewise, archives often contain far more than is ever regularly seen or accessed. Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre is part of a larger project, Bummock: New Artistic Approaches to Unseen Parts of the Archive, an ongoing collaborative research project led by ourselves as artistic researchers, with art historian Dr. Sian Vaughan. We are interested in the quantity of stored items and documents are held, but remain unseen or even uncatalogued. It is often the key elements of archives and collections that are made public, through a process that can be steeped in subjectivity. Carolyn Steedman has spoken of how "in actual Archives, though the bundles may be mountainous, there isn't in fact, very much there...[as]...nothing much happens to this stuff, in the archive."<sup>1</sup> Items are commonly indexed and catalogued (though sometimes there are not the resources to compile them) and then wait to be called up by a user. We want to give a platform for these stored and yet to be appreciated parts of the archive, akin to historian Carlo Ginsburg's 'euphoria of ignorance', where there is "the sensation of not knowing anything but being on the verge of beginning to learn something."<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1.</sup> Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001, p68.

<sup>2.</sup> Ginsburg, Carlo. *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, p216.

**fig. 1** Danica Maier, *Live/Work: 1888-1958 & 1973-present* (detail), 2019-2020

**...need to see and touch objects and documents; [whilst] now we often merely view the same material on a computer screen.**

*Susan Howe*



**fig. 2 & 3** Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre, installation view at The Hub, 2021

The Bummock project examines how artists can approach access to archives differently to the methodologies of standard practice. Commonly the researcher navigates the archive's catalogue to narrow down and discover the specific material they want to call up for study. Increasingly the digitised archive allows research of the archive to happen remotely. This is clearly a time- and cost-effective method, and enables access to a wider public of users. Nevertheless, there are issues if these approaches are adopted as the only way to gain access to an archive's material. Poet, Susan Howe, has spoken of the radical transformation towards digitising archives and how archival research is in flux with a seeming paradox of the "need to see and touch objects and documents; [whilst] now we often merely view the same material on a computer screen."<sup>3</sup>

As artists who embrace materiality and the unknown as springboards for our practice, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. A challenge, because although many artists have worked in archives before, there is understandable resistance on the part of institutions to allow unfettered access to their collections. An opportunity, because within the process of seeking unseen material there are also openings to create new working relationships between artists and archivists; to demonstrate how alternative ways to access an archive can uncover things that normal approaches would not allow; to create new artworks using archival objects and items as catalysts; and to bring new treasures (knowledge) to light.

Our practice-led structure of artists' residencies allows us, as artists, to be a 'control' factor, and an additional third artist is invited to each discrete archive as a 'variable' element. Together we investigate items and documents not regularly brought up for research and public exposure - the bummock of the archive. As Sven Spieker has pointed out, "in the archive, we encounter things we never expected to find; yet the archive is also the condition under which

<sup>3</sup>. Howe, Susan. *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives*, New York: New Directions, 2020, p9.

the unexpected, the sudden, the contingent can be sudden, unexpected, and contingent.”<sup>4</sup> For Spieker, this sense of contingency is not the same as randomness; chance can be found within the organised, and detected by accident. This underlying position of potential that an archive encapsulates is charged with possibilities for new artworks and future research.

## **...contingency is not the same as randomness; chance can be found within the organised, and detected by accident.**

Our premise is that with a specific focus on the bummock ethos, combined with the use of our ‘controlled rummage’ methodology, that there are mutually beneficial ways of accessing unseen material that can help users pursue original research and support archivists to re-engage with their collections. Architect and academic Marcus Miessen previously researched alternative ways to enable archives to become productive. This was partly based on realising that “One of the notorious mistakes that one makes is to think that one already knows what one is looking for when approaching archives, or in fact to set up an archival structure this way.”<sup>5</sup> This observation by Miessen is something echoed in Bummock’s ethos from its inception and has cultivated our use of unconventional access routes to research within an archive, through the controlled rummage methodology.

Each project residency leads to an ‘Exhibition-Laboratory’, which includes the archival objects that were used as research starting points, exhibited alongside the artworks created by the individual artists. The addition of the laboratory status to the exhibition is useful in designating the space of the gallery as part of an ongoing investigation, rather than the more usual end point of an artistic project. An accompanying symposium and publication help to disseminate findings from each project, through critical texts, interviews and images of the new artworks and archival objects.

This ‘rummage’ is not a frantic fumble along the hallowed shelves, but a focused enquiry within the archive to identify and find the yet-to-be-appreciated parts of an archive. This is achieved through dialogues with the archivist and direct engagement with the archive collections. Ideally, the controlled rummage takes place through bypassing the catalogue, working directly within the physical space and materiality of the items held within the archive. For example, this could include: choosing an archival box at random, finding uncatalogued items, looking at what is held next to each other in the store by size rather than subject or looking for dusty items.

The archivist takes an active part in this method, using their specialist knowledge to help identify what is already the tip, or key known aspects, and what might be considered the bummock of their archive. While there may be a perceived risk by archivists and collection management professionals in allowing direct access to archives and collections, through a combination of discussion and trust in the artist researchers, these can be overcome. Good practice in dealing sensitively and productively with the archivist built on mutual trust between artists and archivists has been established in *Bummock: The Lace Archive*.<sup>6</sup> This is achieved through time spent building up good relationships with the archivist(s) before beginning a project. Sian Vaughan observed that it is this “...sense of trust, responsibility and care that underpins the method of the controlled rummage that Bracey and Maier have developed as a way of working in the Bummock project.”<sup>7</sup> Our key goal through the ‘controlled rummage’ is to find unseen and/or less known parts of archives that connect with the researcher. This enables new readings, knowledge and artworks to be generated, thereby allowing the bummock to become the tip.

4. Spieker, Sven. *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008, p173-174.

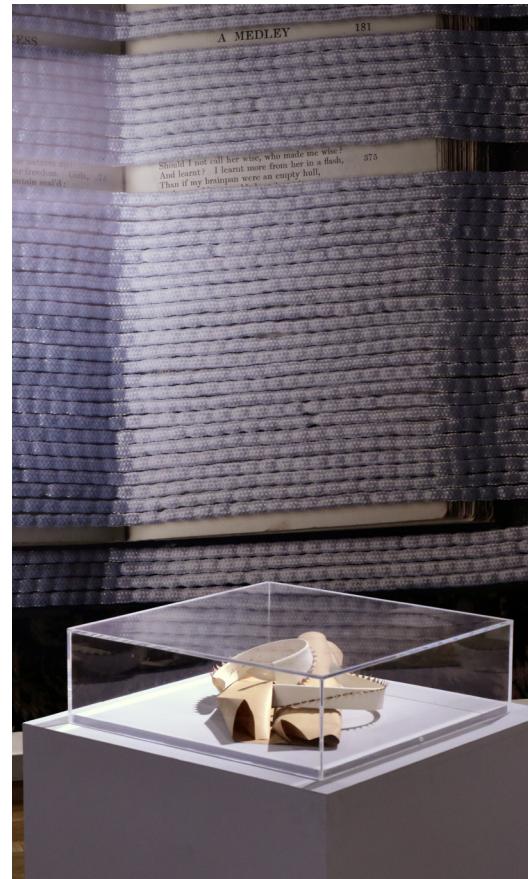
5. Bailey, Stuart and Miessen, Markus. *The Archive as a Productive Space of Conflict*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016, p23.

6. Barnett, Pennina et al., *Bummock: The Lace Archive*, ed. Andrew Bracey and Danica Maier, Flipping the Bummock Press, 2019.

7. Vaughan, Sian. ‘Artists’ Methods in the Lace Archive’, in *Bummock: The Lace Archive*, ed. Andrew Bracey and Danica Maier, Flipping the Bummock Press, 2019, p78.

Along with invited artist, Sarah Bennett, we have spent four years rummaging, exploring and making work from the research started within the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC). Lord Alfred Tennyson was born in the village of Somersby within the Lincolnshire Wolds in 1809. The TRC is located in Lincoln, 20 miles west of this small village. Housed within the TRC is, as expected, a wealth of information and materials owned by and about Alfred Tennyson, however alongside this is intriguing content concerning his wider family; it is the 'Tennyson' Research Centre after all. Our research, and the new artworks produced by the three of us, have been largely motivated by these 'other' Tennysons.

The artist residency took place during a period of great change for the TRC. The research began while the TRC was still held at the Lincoln Central Library. The core part of the TRC was located within the library's central dome, showcasing a vast array of circa 3,000 books and personal objects, with a study area for researchers. Extended resources and many of the items relating to other family members were housed in less impressive storage rooms a few hallways away. Our first experiences within the archive were with the then Collections Access Officer for the archive, Grace Timmins. She was an invaluable and knowledgeable guide for our exploration. Not long after we started our controlled rummage, the TRC was rehomed to the nearby Lincolnshire Archives. This shift of place and its impact on the project is explored by Sian Vaughan in her essay *Musings on the Place of a Space for an Archive Encounter*.



**fig. 4** Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre, installation view at The Hub, 2021



Throughout our research there have been areas of overlapping interests between us, however each artist ended up focusing on different aspects of the TRC. We selected Sarah Bennett as the third artist involved in this project, because of her extensive experience of working in archives and her familiarity with artistic research methods and methodologies. Bennett's initial forays into the Tennyson archive have generated a series of new artworks that explore both 'viewing' and 'access' in the context of the archive's systems and processes. Her research and work focused on accounts of mental illness suffered by Tennyson's immediate family, and the medications and therapies used as treatments during the nineteenth century.

The drawings and sketchbooks of the Tennyson children captured Andrew Bracey's interest within the archive. These visual records give a fascinating and alternative insight into the upbringing of Tennyson's children specifically, and Victorian life in general. Danica Maier was most taken by Alfred Tennyson's great-niece Fryniwyd (Winifred) Tennyson Jesse. A noted and pioneering writer in her own right, Jesse is little known now beyond her great-uncle's legacy. The resulting artworks and insights into the approach taken by the artists can be seen on the subsequent pages of this publication.

**fig. 5** Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre, installation view at The Collection, 2022

Research undertaken through *Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre* has revealed useful insights that could have wider implications beyond the reach of the individual projects. The character of the bummock metaphor and the controlled rummage encouraged us, as researchers, to step outside of pre-existing research interests and prejudices of content, and to focus on the potential of what could be unearthed in the archive. Katherine Townsend has summed up the controlled rummage's focus to ignore and bypass the catalogue and to "head for the hidden and yet to be discovered through re-engagement and re-animation of the archive through deeper excavation and exploration."<sup>8</sup>

A significant part of the *Bummock* ethos is approaching archives without a predefined idea of what to research, in order to uncover original and underexplored areas. Within the TRC we sought out and investigated more unusual areas and items in our initial 'sweep' of the archive. This is evident in a shift of attention away from poetry or indeed Alfred himself to a focus on the wider Tennyson family; towards objects as well as documents; and to subjects that are often 'hushed over', such as mental illness. By initially taking the approach of having no predefined area for research, and utilising the knowledge of Grace Timmins, we were able to find material that was surprising and, almost through serendipity, make connections to long running interests in each artists' individual research and art practices. This is less likely to have been the case had we sought material through the use of key words in the catalogue. For example, through conversations with Timmins, Bracey was led to the childhood notebooks of Emily and Alfred's eldest son, Hallam.

<sup>8.</sup> Townsend, Katherine. 'Reflections on Bummock: The Lace Archive Symposium', *TEXTILE: Cloth and Culture*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2020, p98.



fig. 6 & 7 *Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre*, installation view at The Collection, 2022



**fig. 8** Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre, installation view at The Collection, 2022

For Maier, the initial question of 'what is the bummock of the TRC', prompted Timmins to mention Fryn Tennyson Jesse as one of a number of TRC's bummocks. For Bennett, one work's genesis came after a chance encounter away from the archive, when a book of poems by Alfred Tennyson found in a charity shop had the French fold pages from one poem uncut and unread. This begs the question: what might we have missed had we gone in with predetermined areas of interest. And more generally for other users: what is missed in the usual methods of accessing an archive and searching through the catalogue?

We have benefited from alternating between individual and shared archival research and studio time. Our artistic research practice during the residency period has highlighted a 'to and froing' between time spent together researching, rummaging, and talking, combined with individual development time, researching, reflecting and making. To facilitate this, we set up semi-regular meet-ups in person, online (due to Covid-19) and through various short 'making residencies' (The Summer Lodge, Nottingham Trent University; Project Space Plus, University of Lincoln; Ringmore Parish Room, Devon).

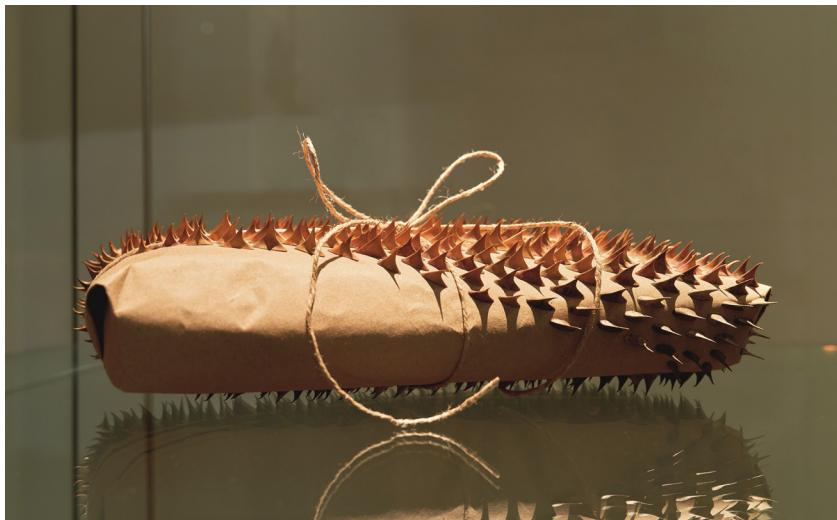
The process of working together enabled intensive dialogue and productive individual development. It did not always, however, involve working in a traditional collaborative manner; sometimes it simply involved working alongside each other on individually focused activity. We found this a particularly productive way of working, enabling the richness of individual work that complement each other within the exhibition.

We look forward to 'flipping the bummock' in further archives.

*Andrew Bracey & Danica Maier*

*Artworks by Sarah Bennett, Andrew Bracey & Danica Maier*

**BUMMOCK: TENNYSON RESEARCH CENTRE**



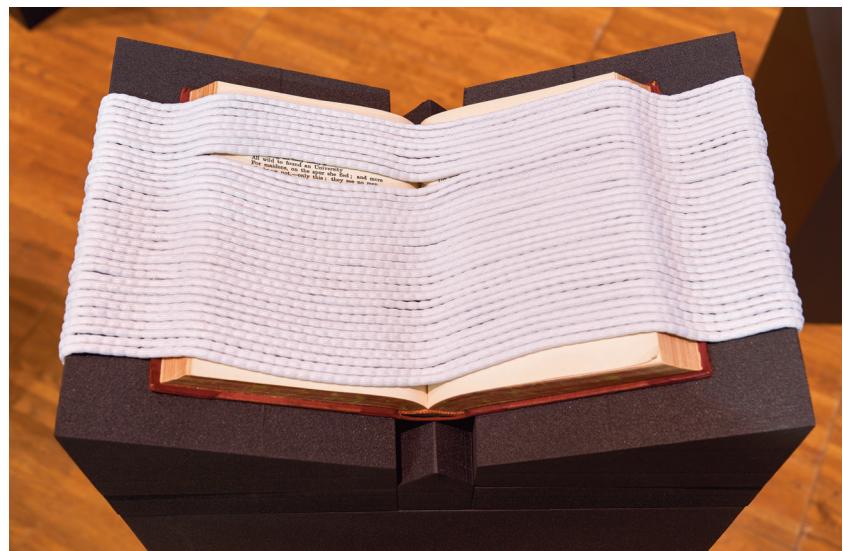
**Bennett** "Touch Me", 2020, clothing, paper, string and thorns

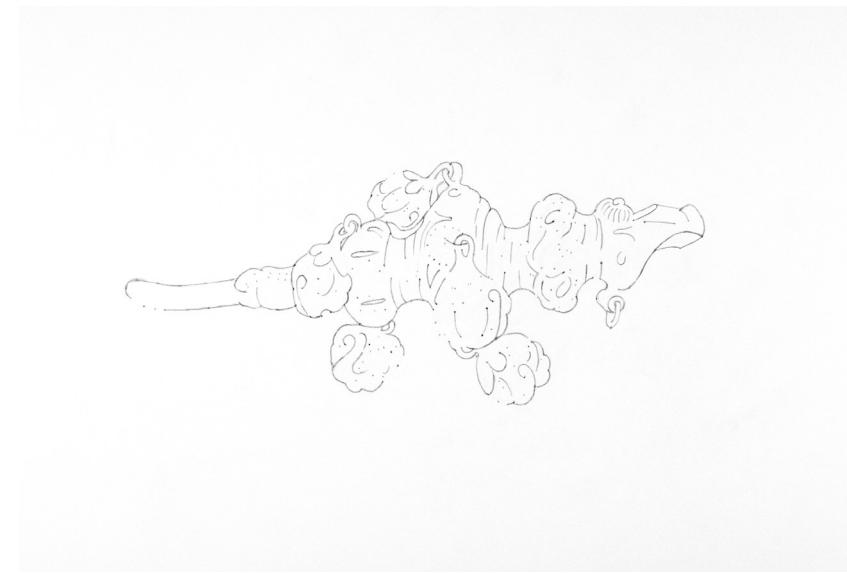
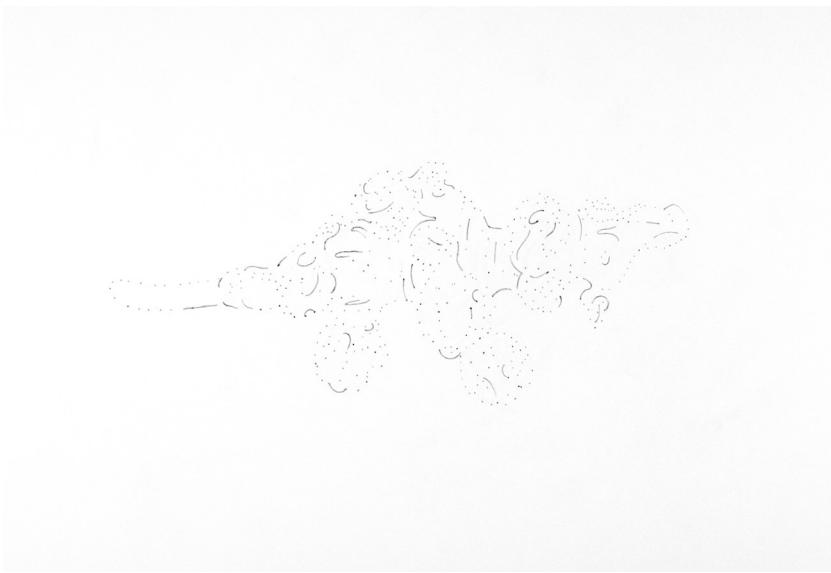


**Bennett** Installation view of "Touch Me" at The Collection, 2022



**Bennett** *Bound*, 2020, original copies of *The Princess*, excerpts from eighteenth century treatises for women's higher education, snake weights, foam and MDF





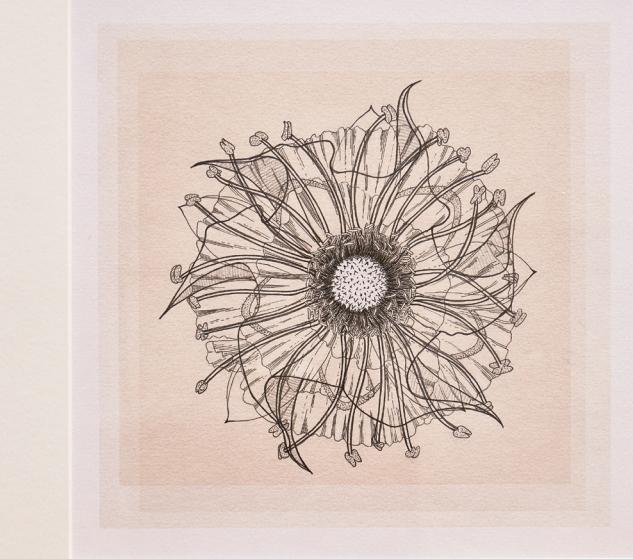
**Bennett** Stills from *Comforter*, 2021, stop frame silverpoint drawing with sound



**Bennett** Scorn, 2021, detachable collars, thorns and paper, photographed by Scott Murray



*Dactylis  
Hamamelis virginiana  
Myosotis arvensis  
Papaver somniferum  
Vitis vinifera*



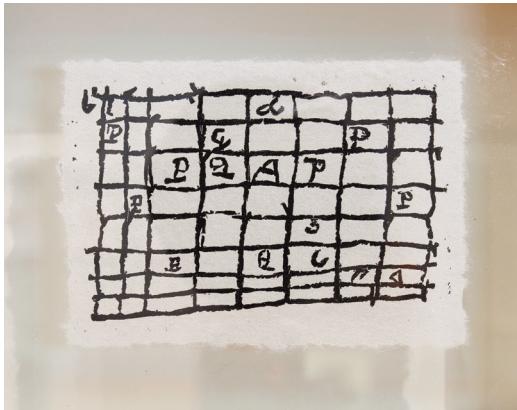
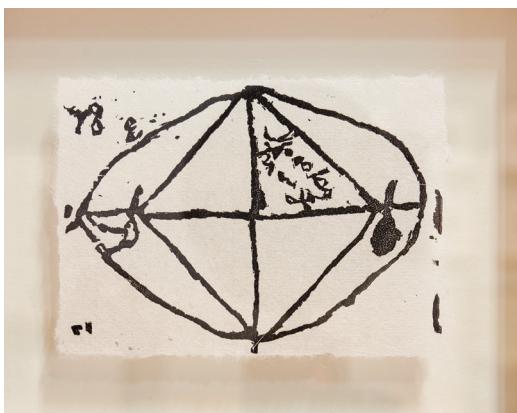
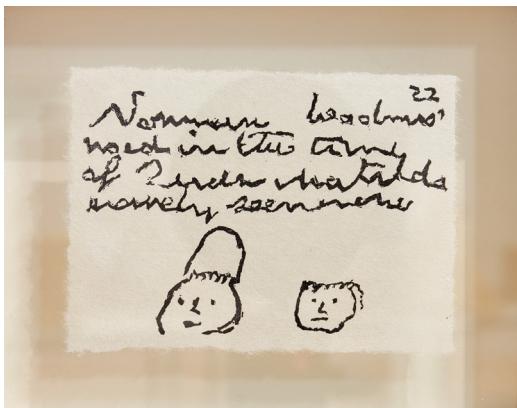
*Datura stramonium  
Papaver somniferum  
Tilia vulgaris*



**Bracey** Installation view at The Collection, 2022



**Bracey** (From left to right) *Last Must Part With*, *Hark! The Dogs Howl!*, *The Markets Overflow*, *Break, Break, Break*,  
2020, woodblock prints on kozo paper



**Bracey** Be Lost in Me (top), Ring Out Old Shapes (middle),  
Too Princely for a Pawn. Call Him a Knight (bottom),  
2020, woodblock prints on kozo paper



**Bracey** Frail, but a Work Divine (detail), 2020, woodblock print on kozo paper



**Bracey** Hallam's Woodblocks, 2018-20, lemonwood, ink



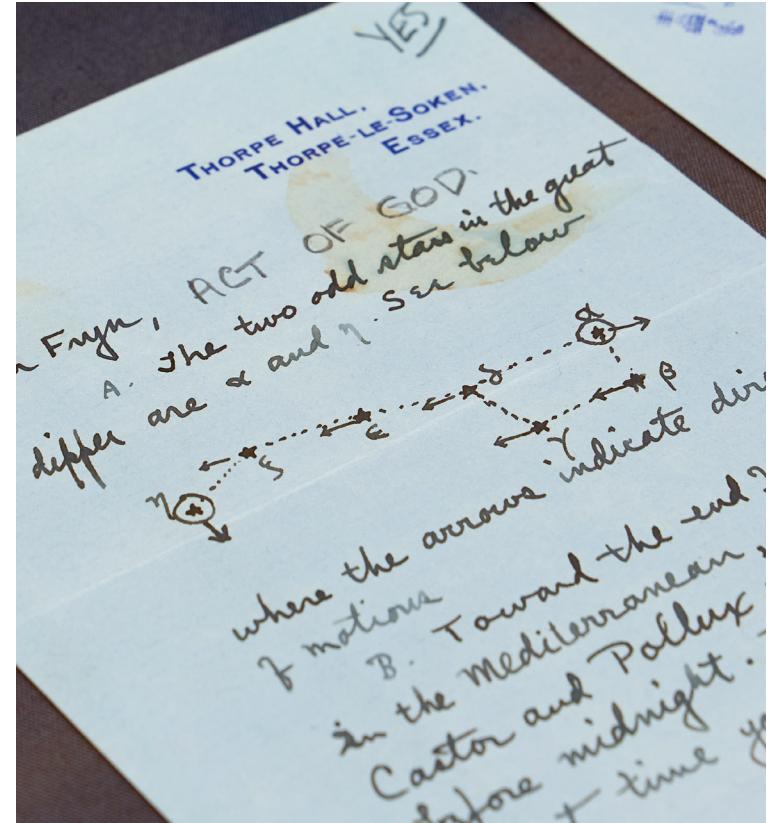
**Bracey** Still from *Shout Their Glory to the Sea*, 2021, filmed performance to camera



**Maier** Live/Work: 1888-1958 & 1973-present, 2019-2020, two petit point embroideries with  
acrylic box and steel nesting plinth



**Maier** Adopted Provenance: *The Milky Way, Act of God*, 2019–2022, silver ink, installed at The Collection



**Maier** Adopted Provenance: *The Milky Way, Act of God*, 2019–2022, personal letter to Fryn from Edwin on Wednesday 7 October 1936, discussing 'two odd stars in the great dipper' presumably for her upcoming publication ACT of God (1937) as noted on the letter at a later date. (TRC/FTJ Box 3)



**Maier** Ghost Heirloom: Blackburn Rug/Maier Wallpaper, 2022, (one of multiple installation versions),  
pencil on mylar, drawings mounted on each side of an aluminium sheet





**Maier** Rightness of a Stopped Clock: 6/8/58, 2022, various found clocks working during Fryn's life



**Maier** Ghost Heirloom: Silverware Ring, 2022, silverware set of the artist's father's paternal grandmother Emilie Yates Walsh (1879–1963), monogrammed EYW; 1 new EYW silver fork to match original set; mould of diamond ring; 2 cast rings using the silver from one of the original EYW forks.

The original diamond ring was purchased second hand by the artist's mother's maternal grandmother (Betty Burgess, 1888–1981) and subsequently belonged to the artist's maternal grandmother, followed by the artist's mother. The ring has recently been given to the artist's sister and one day will be passed on to one of the artist's nieces. As part of this artwork there have been two new rings created using the silver from the artists paternal family silverware – one for the artist which will be passed onto her son and the other will be bequeathed to the niece that does not inherit the original ring.





**Maier** *Petit Cut Mill*, 2021, petit point embroidery on large tapestry canvas, and steel nesting plinth



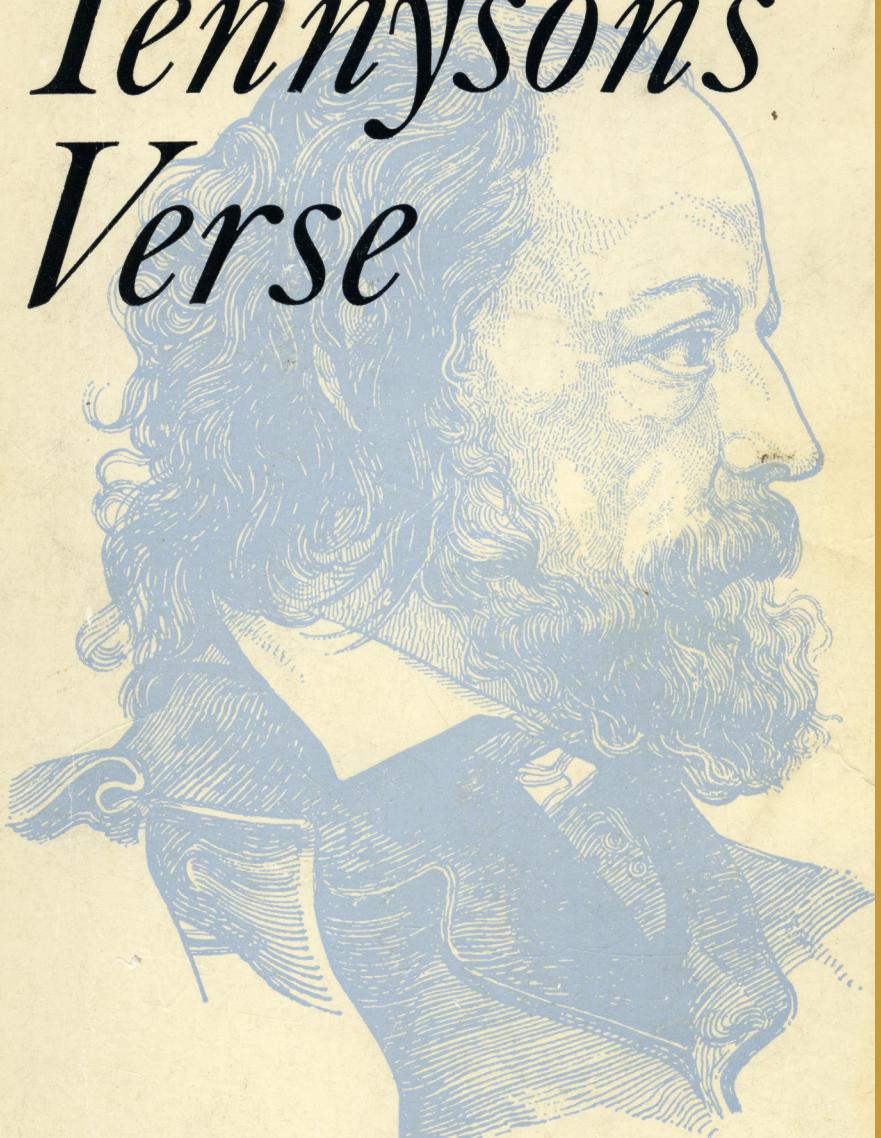
**Maier** *Sabi Pas or, I don't know*, 2020, petit point & gros point embroidery with F. Tennyson Jesse's publication 'Sabi Pas or, I don't know', ribbon, and steel nesting plinth

*'I Am a Part Of All That I Have Met':  
Dressing and Metamorphosis in the Archive*

BY SUE BREAKELL

A CHOICE OF

# Tennyson's Verse



*Selected with an introduction by  
LORD DAVID CECIL*

## 'I Am a Part Of All That I Have Met': Dressing and Metamorphosis in the Archive

BY SUE BREAKELL

with my teacher, Mrs Hastings, and my classmates. The book is an embodiment of research, just like the work produced in the Bummock project: though these two kinds of embodied research are at different points on an imaginative spectrum from the interpretive to the creative. The interpretive practice documented in my book might be called 'dressing' (as a window is dressed: a staging, an interpretive treatment) – part of a process of presenting curated selections, made one's own, for consumption by others – in this case, ultimately, my A-level examiners. In the creative work of the Bummock artists, the source is less visible, the transformation greater, the material remade, in a process that is perhaps closer to metamorphosis.

1 & fig. 1

*A Choice of Tennyson's Verse*, selected by Lord David Cecil, London: Faber & Faber, 1981.  
Photographed by Sue Breakell.

Master of technicalities of writing poetry  
tive or what? Aware of changes in life & society

About life! Experience things, be part of

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart - <sup>legend not person</sup>  
Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers, <sup>excitement</sup>  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy. <sup>sounds of war</sup>  
I am a part of all that I have met; <sup>remote and exciting</sup>  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro' <sup>draws different</sup>  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life - <sup>can never have enough.</sup>  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved <sup>- has got to bring us</sup>  
From that eternal silence, something more, <sup>new</sup>  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three <sup>years</sup> suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild <sup>alliteration to emphasize idea</sup>  
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:  
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,

clever  
word  
use.  
Negative quality  
of life.

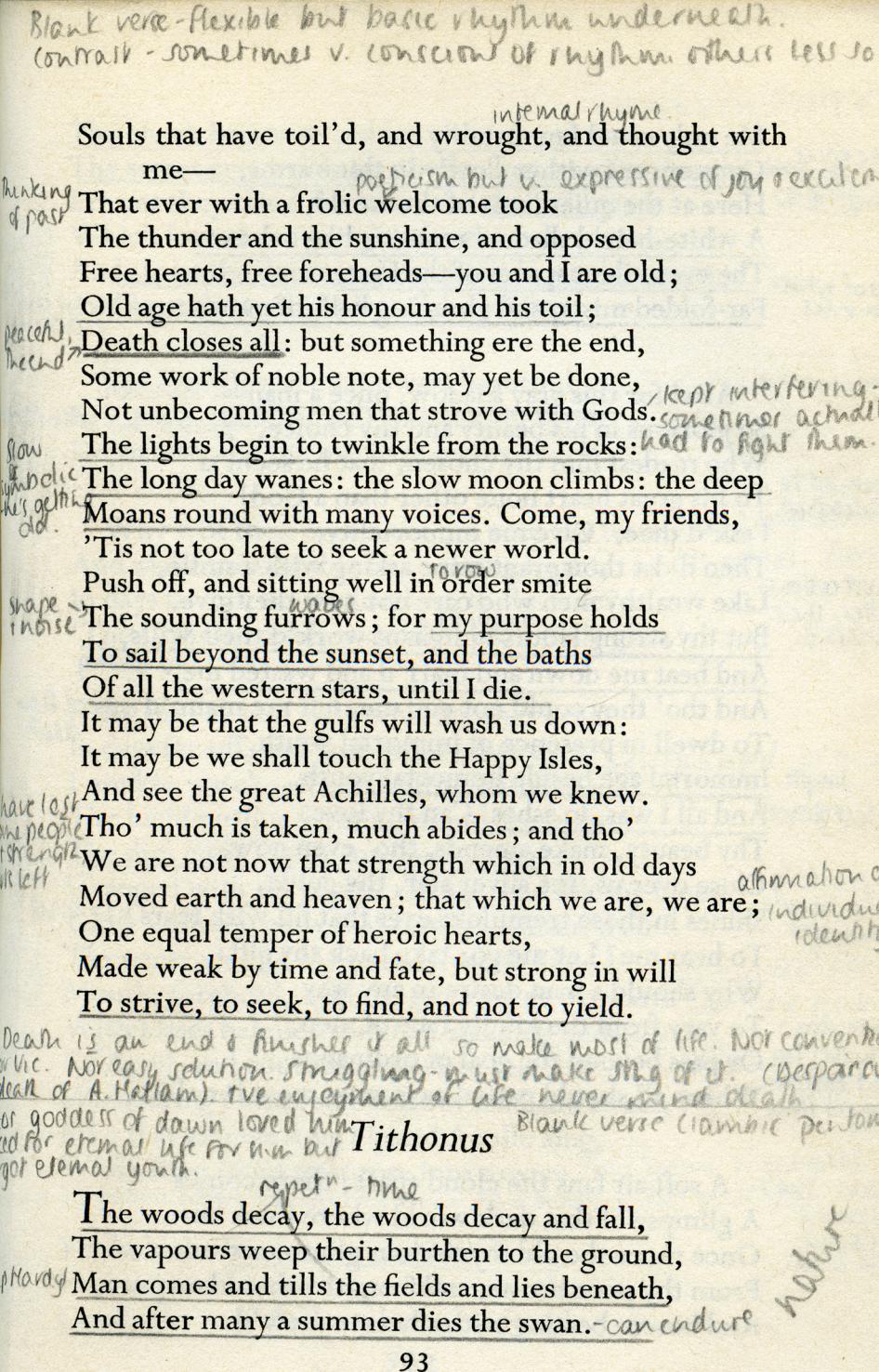
fig. 2 A Choice of Tennyson's Verse, p92, photographed by Sue Breakell

My book is a co-creation: it carries in it the labour not only of the writer in producing the poem, but also of the researcher in responding to it, and the examiner in turn.<sup>2</sup> I might use my annotations to understand not only my own response to the poems, but also the ways in which that curriculum was taught, in that school, at that particular time. On one page I've noted a sample A-level question, and some initial ideas for a response. In the front of the book is the address of my teacher (one of my favourites), recording her willingness to share that private information with me. My handwriting, I notice, varies: at that age, handwriting, I remember, was a means of finding and creating an identity; indeed, the practice of responding to texts was a means of making sense of oneself in the world. In short, the book is a document of my life and of the wider world to which I belonged at that time.

Looking again at this book of poems, across all my years of working with archives and manuscripts, I give attention to the poem as a created object, and to the sequence of stages the words went through, from their first fragments on the manuscript page, through editing into a finished poem, to mass publication, then narrowing again to the customisation of this published text into a unique co-created document within my own life. Revisiting it was quite a profound emotional experience, realising how familiar the poems still are to me, and what pleasure I took in them at the time: how deeply I responded to and connected with them. Though I remember little of what I learned of Tennyson's life, or the kind of contextual study of literature that was part of my subsequent English degree, some of those lines I rote-learned for A-Level stayed with me. They have become part of my mental reference library, of my neural pathways. Among those remembered lines are these from 'Ulysses', written in 1833 and published in Tennyson's second volume of poems in 1842:

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;  
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep  
Moans round with many voices.  
...my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.

2. Sarah Cain writes of the latent labour in the archive in 'The Material Archive Everyday: Technologies of the Filing System', in Breakell, Sue and Russell, Wendy (eds.), *Materiality and Archives of Creative Practice*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.



In my teenage mind, these lines formed a chain of association, which has also endured, a neural pathway that still leads to the mouse Reepicheep in C S Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, compelled to sail over the great wave at the edge of the world in his coracle, and to the mood evoked in Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' (1851)<sup>3</sup> which has something of the same feeling of restlessness and longing: something I associate with my teenage years, and with the promise of a balmy Mediterranean evening: a call to travel, to another place, another life.

These are personal, not academic responses. Looking at the words, and at the physical object of the book, links me to my younger self, both externally (through the embodied form of the book), and internally (in my neural pathways). I can also connect (differently, less multi-sensorially) to those words in other forms: on a computer screen, or as spoken word, or through a return to the place of origin, the creative gesture of Tennyson's manuscripts of 'Ulysses', held at Cambridge University Library. Returning to the text, it's clear how my response to the poem has changed with age and experience: the neural pathways have matured, with more and richer connections; just as the book shows its age in the stains on the cover, from having passed through time with me. The rich intertextuality (in its broadest sense) of archives and of research embraces both the material and the diachronic aspects of the encounter with an object whose origins lie in another time: it 'provides access to past subjectivities' – in this case, my own.<sup>4</sup> My memories and the connections I make, spark this next leg of my research journey, reignited all these years later: as in these remembered lines from 'Ulysses',

I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough  
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.

<sup>3.</sup> "The sea is calm tonight / The tide is full, the moon lies fair / Upon the straits; on the French coast the light / Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand, / Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. / Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!"

<sup>4.</sup> Summerfield, Penny, *Histories of the Self*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019, p79.

And so it is when we use archives. We bring to them all our cumulative experiences, and add to their embodiment in ourselves through each encounter, in a never-ending journey 'whose margin fades... when I move'. These words, remembered now, have new meanings related to my work, framed for archival engagement, almost as if back then I foresaw their future relevance. And just as we take those encounters with us, we leave something of ourselves with the archive, too: we shape it, make it anew, as we see in this project.

While some Tennyson manuscripts may be held in collections focusing on high status literary holdings, a glance at the descriptions of the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC) shows that this collection contextualizes the poet in a family: manuscripts of poems sit alongside letters, photographs, and books from his relatives. And here, Tennyson's poems and drafts exist in dynamic relation to visual and musical treatments created in response. The 'finished' poem (its words as fixed in a standard published form, notwithstanding the emergence of alternative versions) is merely a staging post in a journey that splinters off from that form into multiple trajectories.<sup>5</sup> One piece of archival material can have many lives, each new iteration a co-creation with the new 'producer' of meaning, whether or not that meaning produces a new creation or remains embodied in the reader without an external form. I suggest that artistic practice in response to another's creative practice is more than the sum of its parts: not simply added together, it is creative practice squared. Is Tennyson's own creative energy present in this new work? Not directly, perhaps: but it carries its archival source in its DNA, just as, research shows, the butterfly may remember being a caterpillar.<sup>6</sup> The iceberg – if we think of it as a whole, bummock and hummock; the whole archive - has its own energy and material character.<sup>7</sup> And in this way the wider context of Tennyson's family members makes available new ways for producers to approach the archive, and find themselves, regardless of their knowledge of, or interest in, the poet and his work. On that note, I offer some observations, from what I have seen of the ways Sarah Bennett, Danica Maier and Andrew Bracey have responded to the TRC, in their artworks and their words reflecting on their journey of making.

<sup>5.</sup> For more discussion on the nature and study of literary archives, see Smith, Carrie and Stead, Lisa (eds.), *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive: Reclamation and Representation*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016.

<sup>6.</sup> Suri, Sana, 'Despite Metamorphosis, Moths Hold on to Memories from Their Days as a Caterpillar', *The Conversation*, 01 August 2014 <https://theconversation.com/despite-metamorphosis-moths-hold-on-to-memories-from-their-days-as-a-caterpillar-29859> (accessed 25 November 2020).

**The bummock is in the eye of the beholder.** The archive shifts as we move: our self always at its centre, as an often unsuspected richness and variety of associations realigns in a never ending network. For it is ourselves we find in the archive,<sup>8</sup> or something about ourselves that we make a kind of sense of through the archive. Andrew sees himself as a child, and also his own son: something of the experience of being a boy of Hallam Tennyson's age, becomes a point of connection. Indeed, Andrew's own increased sense of 'belonging' in the archive, the legitimacy of his presence, is achieved through his identification with the other, non-famous Tennyson family members whose stories he rehabilitates. Similarly, Sarah comments on the circular, nature of archive work: 'notes make sense later'. It is an iterative process of accumulating and synthesising knowledges through all the senses. Danica meanwhile reflects on the experience of 'spending time' with the archive's creators and subjects, who become our 'friends'. This is a secret pleasure of the archivist, too. We only know the archival self of these people, but from it we gain an impression: we like or dislike them, we imagine we know their thoughts beyond the page. It is an illusion of proximity of course; for the knowing is only in one direction, our feelings always unrequited. Yet intimacy remains as a latent energy in the archives and objects left behind.

**All bummocks are born from the pack ice, which is endless and constantly generative.** In this way, everything is connected through the shared experience of being ice, of being human. The TRC archives remind us that any person notable enough to have their archives brought into a collecting institution doesn't exist in isolation: they bring with them their childhood and family context, a context to the archive as well as to the individual. Friends, family members and associates are caught up in the archives, where they become both evidence and raw material, as here for the artists involved in the Bummock project. At a time when the digital foregrounds tensions between anonymity and authorship, such questions have never been more relevant or complex.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7.</sup> See Breakell, Sue, 'The True Object of Study: The Material Body of the Archive', *Materiality and Archives of Creative Practice*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.

<sup>8.</sup> A concept discussed by many including Bradley, Harriet 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found', in *History of the Human Sciences*, 12:2, p107-122 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695992120270>.

<sup>9.</sup> As discussed by Carly Kind, Director of the Ada Lovelace Institute, in her National Archives' Annual Digital Lecture, 'The Death of Anonymity in the Age of Identity', 4 November 2020 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-research-and-academic-collaboration/events-and-training/annual-digital-lecture/> (page accessed 25 November 2020).

**Deep dives of the bummock are a community** on that interpretive/creative spectrum, whether we are historians, archivists or artists, or approach from a different perspective. That community shares an interest in questions like: what is it like to 'live' with an archive? How does that experience change in different contexts of use? How does the archive 'speak' to us? And how do we accommodate its idiosyncrasies? Rejecting tropes of gatekeepers, such a community. This project banishes the stereotype of the gatekeeper, and frames instead a collaboration, to which each brings different but complementary skills, while foregrounding pleasures which have often been privately the archivist's. This is clear from the way the artists value Grace Timmin's embodied knowledge of the archives, as a starting point to help them take deep dives in the archive whose scale is otherwise quite intimidating. The impersonal nature of the archive catalogue cannot replace that knowledge, any more than the digital can replace the analogue. The unique qualities of that embodied knowledge - the affective impressions gained through stewardship and cataloguing work - can't (yet at least) be replicated by the computer.

Andrew Bracey captures these shared pleasures of work in the archive: 'looking attentively, noticing incidental or peripheral aspects, and creating new or non-obvious connections between things'. The controlled rummage is a fine methodology for work in the archive, suggesting a freedom that may not always be enjoyed in historical research. Although still experiencing the joys of serendipity, a historian may attempt a more systematic approach (bounded by thoroughness) or focussed (bounded by specificity of search subject) to collections identified as relevant to their subject, at some point; the bounds of their research may well have different accountabilities.<sup>10</sup> What all kinds of archival engagement have in common is that they harness the power of the archive as a site of 'fertile contamination',<sup>11</sup> a power which can be usefully figured methodologically as an interpretive spectrum between dressing and metamorphosis, on which each of us takes a position.

**fig. 4** The Tennyson Research Centre, within Lincolnshire Archive, Lincoln

**10.** For a discussion on subjectivity in design history, see a special issue of *Design and Culture*, 7:1(2015), including its introduction by Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175470715X14153615623565>.

**11.** Ulrauff, Ulrich, 'Grand Hotel Abyss: Towards a Theory of the Modern Literary Archive' *Comparative Critical Studies* 8:2-3.



*Looking for Bummocks in the Tennyson Research Archive*

BY JIM CHESHIRE

# Looking for Bummocks in the Tennyson Research Centre

BY JIM CHESHIRE

Contradictions swirl around Alfred Tennyson and his poetic career. To some he is the archetypal Victorian, a bearded patriarch, a confidant of Queen Victoria and the poetic voice that justified Britain and its expanding Empire. But like most clichés about Victorian culture, those who bother to dig deeper will find this simplistic image complicated,

contradicted and displaced. And for the curious, there is no better place to look than the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC) in Lincoln.



Recent appropriations of Tennyson's poetry illustrate the range of our responses to the poet. The final four lines of his poem 'Ulysses' were carved into a wall in the Olympic Village before the 2012 London Olympic Games: a collective event encouraging global understanding and participation. The same poem was recited in full by the right-wing politician Mark Francois in 2019, apparently as justification for 'Brexit' in the lead up to the UK's departure from the European Union: an assertively isolationist statement.<sup>1</sup>

Personally, I consider this poem to be a profound reflection on growing old

and the danger of excluding young people from decision making, a reading clearly unavailable to Francois. But where does this range of interpretations leave our perception of the poet and his legacy? One response is provided by

Bummock: a methodology, grounded in creative practice that interrogates archival collections not from the position of a literary criticism or cultural history but through a form of enquiry that circumvents the formal taxonomies of catalogues and search engines.

**fig. 1** James Mudd, Albumen Print of Alfred Tennyson, c. 1857

1. For an account of this incident see <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/apr/10/mark-francois-tennyson-politicians-poetry-european-research-group> for commentary on the Olympic Village monument see <https://blogs.surrey.ac.uk/english/2012/08/02/to-strive-to-seek-to-find-and-not-to-yield-tennyson-ulisses-and-the-olympics/>

Dismissing the logic of catalogues is not as perverse as it might seem: the epistemological rationale of cataloguing cannot encompass every line of enquiry and archives are rarely neutral. One example here is particularly pertinent. The TRC contains roughly 9,000 letters written by or to Tennyson and his family and these letters formed the core of the *Memoir* of the poet written by his son Hallam, which is still the foundation of much biographical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> There were originally about 40,000 letters, some were selected for preservation, while most were consigned to the fire. In common with many hagiographic Victorian biographies, the destruction of the source material functioned to promote a specific version of the poet's life and to prevent future generations from contradicting this narrative. Another source distorted for Hallam's *Memoir* was Emily Tennyson's diary. The manuscript in the TRC is not the actual diary but a transcription of the diary made by Emily Tennyson for Hallam. Both Tennyson's letters and the diary transcription were then cut up by Hallam and pasted into scrapbooks: a collage that literally constructed a narrative of the poet's life. These scrapbooks were then typed up into eleven volumes, which in turn were then condensed down to four and finally squeezed into the two published volumes.<sup>3</sup> Careful examination of the unpublished typescripts reveals crossed out names as people were eliminated from the narrative. One example is James Bertrand Payne, a rogue publisher whose deceit resulted in an embarrassing trial reported in *The Times* that exposed (amongst other things) the scale of Tennyson's literary income.<sup>4</sup>

**2.** Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson A Memoir*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1898).

**3.** Philip L. Elliott, *The Making of the Memoir* (Lincoln: Tennyson Society, 1995).

**4.** Cheshire, Jim. *Tennyson and Mid Victorian Publishing*, London Palgrave, 2016.

The omissions, biases and physical mutilations make the TRC, like most archives, both ordered and random. While the biographical materials have been selected, censored and mutilated in a very deliberate way, a well-established archive like the TRC also stimulates donations beyond the control of any one person, like the amateur illustrations donated to the TRC by descendants of the poet's admirers.<sup>5</sup> If the TRC contains a narrative, it is story written by multiple authors who clash and contradict each other. The result is more dissonance than harmony. But this is why the methodology implicit in Bummock is so well attuned to excavating the TRC: acknowledging the collections' eclecticism is arguably more effective than seeking illusory coherence.

The artists working on Bummock have developed their own finding aids. Andrew Bracey deliberately disorientated himself by shutting his eyes, while Sarah Bennett engaged with the collection through a haptic experience qualified by archival gloves. Maier corroborates the comments of Bracey and Bennett in



**fig. 2** Hugh Reveley, Isolt from Idylls of the King, c1864

**5.** Hannah Field (2016)'Amateur hours: the visual interpretation of Tennyson's poetry in two manuscript albums.' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 21 (4). pp. 471-499.

Bennett's emphasis on items purchased for Edward Tennyson (one of Alfred's four younger brothers) signals a disturbing absence: why is there no evidence to show that family members visited him during his 58 year confinement? He is not listed in the index to Hallam's Memoir and seems not to have been part of the family narrative until mentioned in a biography of the poet published by his grandson in 1968.<sup>6</sup> We should perhaps acknowledge here that Tennyson is now perhaps most widely admired for his ability to articulate loss: bereavement, impending death and absence pervade his best work, famously in 'Break, Break, Break':

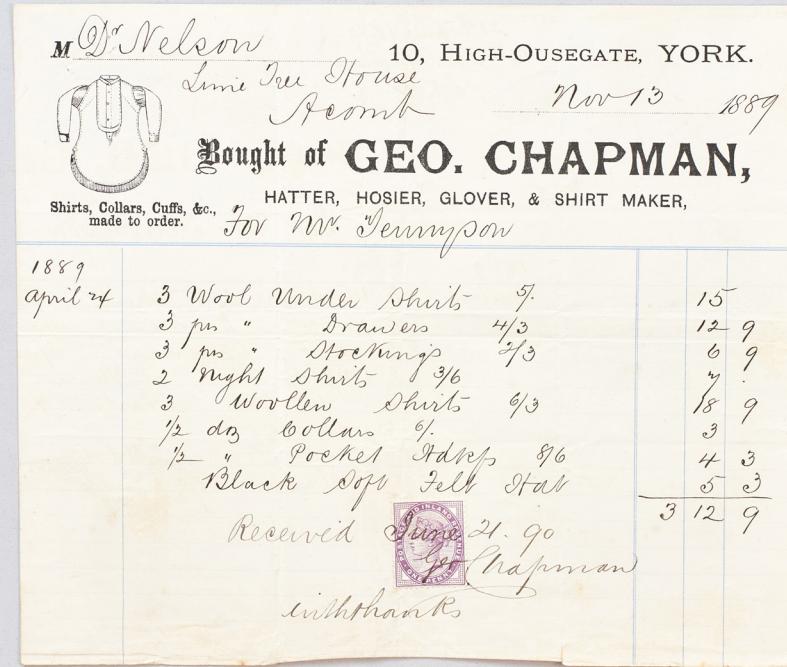
**But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still.**

Danica Maier has rediscovered the dynamic life of Fryn or 'F. Tennyson Jesse': an admired criminologist, war correspondent and novelist who now warrants a sizable entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.<sup>8</sup> I must confess at this point that I was unaware of Fryn, despite having worked on the TRC for more than a decade. Fryn's father's grandmother was Emily Jesse (born Emilia Tennyson), Alfred's sister. She was engaged to Arthur Henry Hallam the poet's intimate friend, whose early death inspired both 'Break, Break, Break' and *In Memoriam*, for many Tennyson's greatest poem. Maier's work questions why Fryn is now a peripheral story in her distant relative's archive. She imagines absent narratives and highlights a fascinating archival contradiction: while Alfred Tennyson overwhelms Fryn we might well ask if her archival traces would have survived at all in the absence of her famous relative?

6. Tennyson, Charles. *Alfred Tennyson* (London: Macmillan, 1968)

7. Tennyson, Alfred. 'Break, Break, Break' *The Poems of Tennyson* ed. Christopher Ricks, (London: Longman, 1969) p. 602.

8. Cordero, Raymond. "Jesse [married name Harwood], Wynifried Margaret [Fryniwyd] [pseud F. Tennyson Jesse] (1888–1958), writer and criminologist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 5 Oct. 2020. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/39087>.



**fig. 3** Voucher for purchases of clothing etc. made on behalf of Edward Tennyson - Geo. Chapman dated November 13th 1889 for £3 12s 9d (Edward Tennyson Trust Box 8778)



**fig. 4** W.H. Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1857, from Moxon's Illustrated edition of Tennyson's Poems,  
engraver/J Thompson

Hallam Tennyson has been described as "a hero of filial piety" an oxymoronic phrase that signals both devotion and a lack of distinguishable individuality.<sup>9</sup> Bracey's choice to display Hallam's childhood notebooks seems to seek redemption for this simultaneously conspicuous and yet invisible member of the family. The visual appropriation of the notebooks promotes the idea that they might retain traces of the private child and Bracey's focus on the visual rather than verbal qualities signals the value of artistic practice. Archives can definitely show us things that they were not intended to divulge but we need to adopt creative strategies to uncover them. Remediating the notebooks into woodblocks connects this work with another famous visual adaption of Tennyson, the so called 'Moxon Tennyson' within which Pre-Raphaelite artists designed woodblock illustrations from Tennyson's 1842 Poems. Neither Alfred nor Emily Tennyson were impressed, forcing the long-suffering publisher, Edward Moxon into the terse apology: "I am sorry to hear that with few exceptions you would not care to have the illustrations 'at a gift'. All I can say is that neither labour nor expense has been spared in getting up the book..."<sup>10</sup> Tennyson's objections were rooted in a loss of control over his text. For example, he objected to the way that Hunt had developed visual elaborations such as the Lady's swirling hair in illustrating 'The Lady of Shalott'. Responding to the image, Tennyson admonished Hunt: 'an illustrator ought never to add anything to what he finds in the text'.<sup>11</sup>

The distinction between public and private, so visible in the lives of both Alfred Tennyson and his son Hallam, seeps into the pieces made for Bummock. Alfred Tennyson never resolved his own conflicted feelings on this subject, a dilemma that produced the almost comic comment: "Why am I popular I don't write very vulgarly?"<sup>12</sup>

**9.** *The Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* eds Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr, 3 Vols, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 1: p. 17.

**10.** TRC/Letters/7887.

**11.** W. H. Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* 2. Vols (London: Macmillan 1905-6) II: pp. 124-5.

**12.** Allingham, William. *William Allingham a Diary*, ed. by H. Allingham and D. Radford (London: Macmillan, 1907), p. 132.

The boundary between popularity and vulgarity was moving fast in the 1860s and 1870s. In another outburst Tennyson suggested that Shakespeare was lucky to have died in the absence of biographical records because the contemporary desire for 'anecdotes and acquaintance with the lives of great men was treating them like pigs to be ripped open for the public...he knew he himself should be ripped open like a pig'.<sup>13</sup> Ironically this conversation was reported by Julia Margaret Cameron, a seminal photographer and one of those who sought to promote their own career through Tennyson's fame.

Tennyson's pathway to fame was mediated by publishing, a process that turned his poetic concepts and sounds into physical objects purchased by his readers. Eighteenth-century poets relied on wealthy patrons to provide them with income, while Tennyson was arguably the first poet to benefit in a sustained way by the sale of books to a mass audience. He was successful but troubled by the mode of his success and the Victorian press seized upon this feature of his work and criticised his poetry as a self-perpetuating brand: "The Idylls of the King is already the most popular volume of modern poetry, and it has not been more than three weeks among the booksellers, so that its success arises from the character earned by its predecessors."<sup>14</sup> The transformation of poetry into material form and the subsequent use of books is reassembled in intriguing ways by Bennett's *Bound* which confronts the viewer with a copy of *The Princess* confined by 'snake' weights: designed to keep books open in line with modern conservation standards.

<sup>13.</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 15 October, 1892, p. 492.

<sup>14.</sup> 'Poets and Poetry', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, (August 1859), 464-5.

The snakes both open up the book and obscure the text, they make it available but in doing so highlight some lines and exclude others. Bennett implies a reading of this complex poem by revealing the poet's progressive side. By 1848 when he published *The Princess*, Tennyson was under pressure from his friends to address modern subjects and he responded with a characteristically ambivalent poem: a narrative about a heroic princess who establishes a women's university in the face of patriarchal oppression but through a contorted plot involving both cross dressing and machismo also appears to negate the nascent feminist argument. Victorian readers were confused, and Tennyson decided to intervene with extensive revisions: adding lyrics, omitting passages and changing emphasis. The tone of the poem is still difficult for modern audiences: is this a refutation of the idea of women's education, or a radical liberal statement supporting it? *The Princess* like most of Tennyson's best poetry, remains elusive.



**fig. 5** Sarah Bennett, *Bound* (detail), 2020, original copies of *The Princess*, excerpts from eighteenth century treatises for women's higher education, snake weights, foam and MDF



**fig. 6** Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln

Although a bummock is hidden, as "a downward projection or ridge on the underside of sea ice" it is not amorphous.<sup>15</sup> A ridge has implicit direction and shape albeit obscured by submergence. Tennyson's legacy, like his archive, is vague but shapes still emerge as Bracey, Maier and Bennett demonstrate through the methodologies employed in *Bummock*. Whether we admire his poetry or not, we should acknowledge Tennyson's struggles with some surprisingly contemporary issues. He was home schooled by a mentally unstable father, feared for his own sanity and was surrounded by siblings who struggled; mental health problems were a continual factor in the poet's life. Tennyson had to cope with the unsettling implications of writing for an anonymous mass audience, he was one of the first people whose fame was mediated by photographic portraits and one of the first 'celebrities' who evaded tourists and fans. The poet's personal trials are reflected in the pressures and failures that his success imposed on his contemporaries and descendants: historiographical cleansing, neglect of siblings, overshadowing of relatives and the foundations of a dubious Tennyson myth. But his conflicts and dilemmas live on in the poetry: the narrator of *Maud* becomes conspicuously unstable as the poem progresses, and *Idylls of the King* can be interpreted as a sustained critique of gossip, fame and scandal, despite the fact that this is ostensibly a narrative set in the middle ages.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps most significantly, Tennyson was a key innovator of the 'dramatic monologue', a literary form that urges the reader to detect and uncover the biases and prejudices of the poem's narrator. *Ulysses* and Tennyson's other narrators are characters and we should not accept their pronouncements at face value, doing so is as risky as seeing the tip of an iceberg as an accurate indication of what lies beneath.

**15.** "bummock, n.2." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2020. Web. 8 October 2020.

**16.** Finnerty, Paraic. "Much Honour and Fame Were Lost": *Idylls of the King and Camelot's Celebrity Circle* in Charlotte Boyce, Paraic Finnerty, Anne-Marie Milliam, *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson's Circle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 191–233.

*Musings on the Place of a Space for an Archive Encounter*

BY SIAN VAUGHAN



# Musings on the Place of a Space for an Archive Encounter

BY SIAN VAUGHAN

...a key element  
of the Bummock  
project is the  
multiplicity of the  
artists' encounters  
with the archive

There is increasing interest in the materiality of archives in the archival, literary and historical fields, matching that of artists working with archives. For me, this project raises the complexities of space and place on experiences with archives. Alfred, Lord Tennyson is one of Lincolnshire's famous sons and the archive collections held within the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC) in this small cathedral city and county town are of international importance to literary scholars. Place is particularly important in relation to this archival collection. As part of

the iterative nature of the Bummock Project, this project has noticeable differences with the earlier Lace Archive residency in Nottingham.

Beyond the obvious differences in the subject and nature of the archive collections, and the different artists involved, I want to consider here the difference in the place and space of the archive. The duration of Danica Maier, Andrew Bracey and Sarah Bennett's engagement

with the TRC traversed a period when the Centre and its archives moved. As a result, the physical surroundings in which access to the archives took place changed substantially. As it unfolded, the Bummock residency at the TRC revealed and responded to complex relationships with place, both of the TRC with its institutional settings and of Tennyson with Lincolnshire.

fig. 1 Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln



**fig. 2** Block of tobacco owned by Alfred Tennyson (LCNTE 2012/24.2)

As was evident with the earlier Lace Archive residency in Nottingham, a key element of the Bummock project is the multiplicity of the artists' encounters with the archive. Multiple visits enable selection through controlled rummage, affirmation of selected archival objects and an important period of *being with* the archival objects - an in-depth attention to the objects in response to experimentation in the art studio. The multiple visits to the TRC and its archive were to two different places and spaces - a return that was not a return.

The initial group visit to the TRC occurred when it was still housed at the Lincoln Central Library where it had been since the early 1960s. Housed within the dome of the building, it was a relatively informal and intimate space. Grace Timmins, the specialist responsible for the collections described the setting in an article in 2011:

*"Tennyson's library lines the room alongside the libraries of his father, son and brother. Thousands of letters, proofs, manuscripts and photographs are carefully packed in boxes stacked on shelves. His furniture is dotted around the room; artefacts that graced Tennyson's home are on window ledges and in cabinets. It smells of the 19th century: the books reek of coal fires and Tennyson's indefatigable smoking. This is not Tennyson's home but it has the contents: all the bits and pieces of his everyday life, his tobacco, pipes, quills, ink bottles, chair, desk, cloak, comb, locks of hair."*<sup>1</sup>

**1.** Timmins, Grace. (2011) 'The Tennyson Research Centre', NATE Classroom, vi3.

This quite personal archival environment seeded the initial relationships between the artists and the archive collection. In writing of *The Allure of the Archives*<sup>2</sup> historian Arlette Farge commented on the emotional connections that researchers make with the personal stories in archives. Arguably, this intimate and personal environment in the dome of Lincoln Central Library was conducive to Bummock's innovative methodology of controlled rummage that bypasses pre-formulated searches via catalogue queries to enable sensory and purposefully subjective selections of material from the archive. We can assume that experiencing an archive amongst the personal effects of its subject would undoubtedly encourage personal reflections and subjective connections to the archival materials.



**fig. 3** A controlled rummage in TRC at Lincoln Central Library, photographed by Danica Maier



**fig. 4** A controlled rummage in TRC at Lincolnshire Archives, photographed by Danica Maier

In 2017, the TRC reopened on an upper floor of the Lincolnshire Archives. When the artists returned to access the collections, it was in this new more controlled and institutionalised archival space. As I observed when I accompanied a visit in July 2017, the artists came in very much like traditional researchers in that they knew what they wanted, and asked for specific boxes which Timmins brought to the table at which Maier, Bracey and Bennett were sat waiting. On reflection, I wonder the extent to which the more institutionalised space effected this reversion to a more traditional mode of archival access. Controlled rummage was still possible and enabled enthusiastically by Timmins; I watched Bracey spin with his eyes closed within the rolling rack shelving to select additional boxes at random. However, this took place in an environmentally controlled and thus chilly storeroom amongst almost homogeneous shelves of similar archival boxes, behind the scenes and away from the other materials in the TRC room.

It seemed a sterile and controlled environment in which to search for embodied and sensory material encounters with archives. As Rawson (2009)<sup>3</sup> has argued both environment and language shape the ways in which people encounter archives and archival collections. But then, that is part of the overall research aim of the Bummock project, to explore the possibilities and potentialities of artistic responses and methods of access with a variety of types and places of archive collections.

**2.** Farge, Arlette. (2015 [1989]) *The Allure of the Archives*, translated by Thomas Scott-Railton, New Haven: Yale University Press. See also Antoinette Burton, ed., (2005) *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, London: Duke University Press.

**3.** Rawson, K.J. (2009) 'Accessing Transgender // Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics', *Archivaria*, 68: 123-140.

Whilst it changed the nature of the artists' access, the move of the TRC definitively has had positives for the archive collections, not least of which is the improved environmental conditions for long-term storage and preservation. Timmins herself also noted the possibilities of the move in increasing the public space for open storage of materials. She admitted that the more limited space in the central library had dictated "a league table of 'important' parts of the collection".<sup>4</sup> The move had to an extent changed the contents of the bummock of the archives collection:

*...What becomes the bummock and why, is fascinating and, most importantly, it changes. Things that haven't been of interest move centre stage, sometimes for that very reason: that they haven't been of interest before. It happened here in the site move. Tennyson and his family's three volume pot boiler reading, the equivalent of soaps, had been excluded from the centre in the library. Here we were able to find room alongside the other family libraries."*

So, whilst the move of the TRC from one place to another can be seen to create opportunities to bring visibility to parts of the otherwise-bummock, my question remains to what extent were the artists influenced by the different approaches to archives in the spaces of library and county archives. There is difference both in terms of institutional process and access protocols, as well as the different architectural codes and physical layout of historic stone building and late twentieth century brick-built facility. The two different spaces were also very different places.

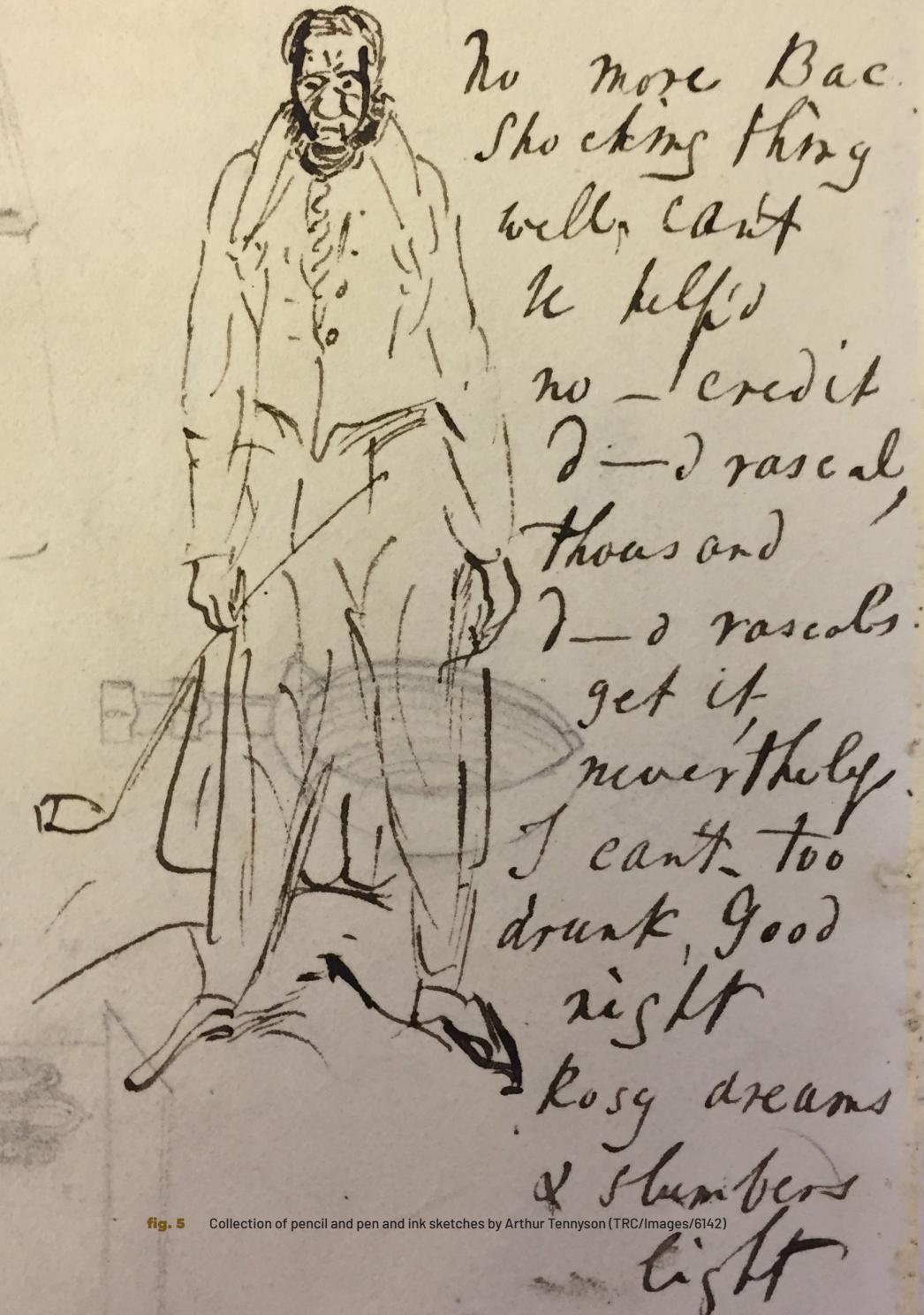
4. This and subsequent quotes from Grace Timmins are taken from an interview with the author in July 2017.

To my reading, the artists' engagement with the TRC seems to return repeatedly to relationships with place. Clearly, there is a significant importance ascribed to place for this particular collection, like many archival collections associated with individuals and local families. The archive came to Lincoln, and the TRC came to be, as a direct result of the city's 150th celebrations of Tennyson's birth in 1959. Tennyson was born in Lincolnshire in 1809 and spent his childhood in the county. He was descended from a family which had had property and businesses in the county for a few generations. However, whilst Tennyson was born and brought up in Lincolnshire, his poetry and fame came whilst he was living elsewhere. Tennyson the man is of Lincolnshire, whilst Tennyson the famous Victorian poet is both of, and yet not of, Lincolnshire.

**...questions continue to be asked about access mechanisms and the possibilities of the controlled rummage to enable sensory material encounters as routes into archival collections**

In taking the project, and their artistic responses, out into the countryside of Lincolnshire, Maier, Bracey and Bennett responded to the complexity of relationships with place and space in this iteration of the Bummock project. The Bummock: Tennyson Art Walk, held as part of the North Kesteven Walking Festival in the summer of 2019, enabled the public to encounter and engage with large-scale temporary artworks that were early outcomes of the TRC residency. Both Maier and Bracey produced artworks which drew on relationships with houses and homes uncovered in archival materials relating to other, less famous, members of the Tennyson family. Situated within the countryside of the Waddington Trail these could be read as responses to ideas of home and landscape as well as to the place of these individuals within the Tennyson family. Whilst Bennett's Bound brought a volume of Tennyson's poems in reproduction into the place of a Lincolnshire rural village. Wrapped in archival snake weights which both constrain and reveal, it can be read in relation to the contemporary tensions of the archival space as well as the constraints of expectations of gender in both the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. In bringing the project into the countryside of North Kesteven district of Lincolnshire through the Bummock: Tennyson Art Walk, the archives were taken out of the institution symbolically, and somewhat paradoxically, in doing so the othering of the concept of the archive as a sequestered 'space elsewhere' was reinforced.

In this evolution of the Bummock Project, questions continue to be asked about access mechanisms and the possibilities of the controlled rummage to enable sensory material encounters as routes into archival collections. Importantly, questions are also posed and attention drawn to the nature of the space and place in which the archives are held and the effects these might have on archival encounters.



**fig. 5** Collection of pencil and pen and ink sketches by Arthur Tennyson (TRC/Images/6142)

*Tennyson Art Walk*

BY LUCY LUMB

# Tennyson Art Walk

27 July – 14 August 2019

BY LUCY LUMB

As an early part of the action research phase for Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre, three large-scale photographic artworks were sited in the Lincolnshire village of Waddington along the Ridges & Furrows Arts & Heritage Trail in late July and early August 2019. These works had originally been proposed as temporary artworks on billboards in the city of Lincoln, but through an open dialogue between the artists and

project partner artsNK, the idea was developed to install the photographs on free-standing metal frames in Waddington. The project built upon a strong track record in the village for temporary and permanent art interventions along the Ridges & Furrows route. artsNK, now merged with The Hub: a National Centre for Craft & Design, is an arts development organisation based in Sleaford, with a brief to support

innovative contemporary projects that engage with the communities of the North Kesteven district. As the Visual Arts Co-ordinator, I worked with the artists Andrew Bracey, Danica Maier (both live in Waddington), and Sarah Bennett in the lead up to the installation and the event. On Saturday 27 July, artsNK hosted an art walk for the North Kesteven Walking Festival (in the pouring rain), led by the Bummock artists. The walk visited each of the art installations in turn - taking people along the Waddington Heritage Trail, moving from the lower village up to the older part of the village with artist talks, performances and readings, providing insights into the themes and subjects of their research and artworks.

The event concluded with Re-verses Poems, a creative workshop at St Michael's Church in Waddington, led by Lincolnshire-based artist Kate Buckley. Walkers, local residents and families were invited to 'converse' with Tennyson, by exploring and rearranging a selection of his key works using magnetic poetry. The participants formed their own poems through Tennyson's words, which were assembled on the back of old baking trays. Each poet was encouraged to read their work aloud at the end of the event, with moving, humorous and poignant results. The baking tray poems were photographed and displayed soon afterwards at a bus shelter in the village, in the Broadcaster notice boards in Wellingore and Waddington (2019), and at The National Centre for Craft & Design in early 2020.

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**Deep wild pipe kisses  
Gather in the fields  
Glittering, glimmering  
Slowly grows  
To freshen the verge  
Sweet fancy  
Then  
Dying by dawn**

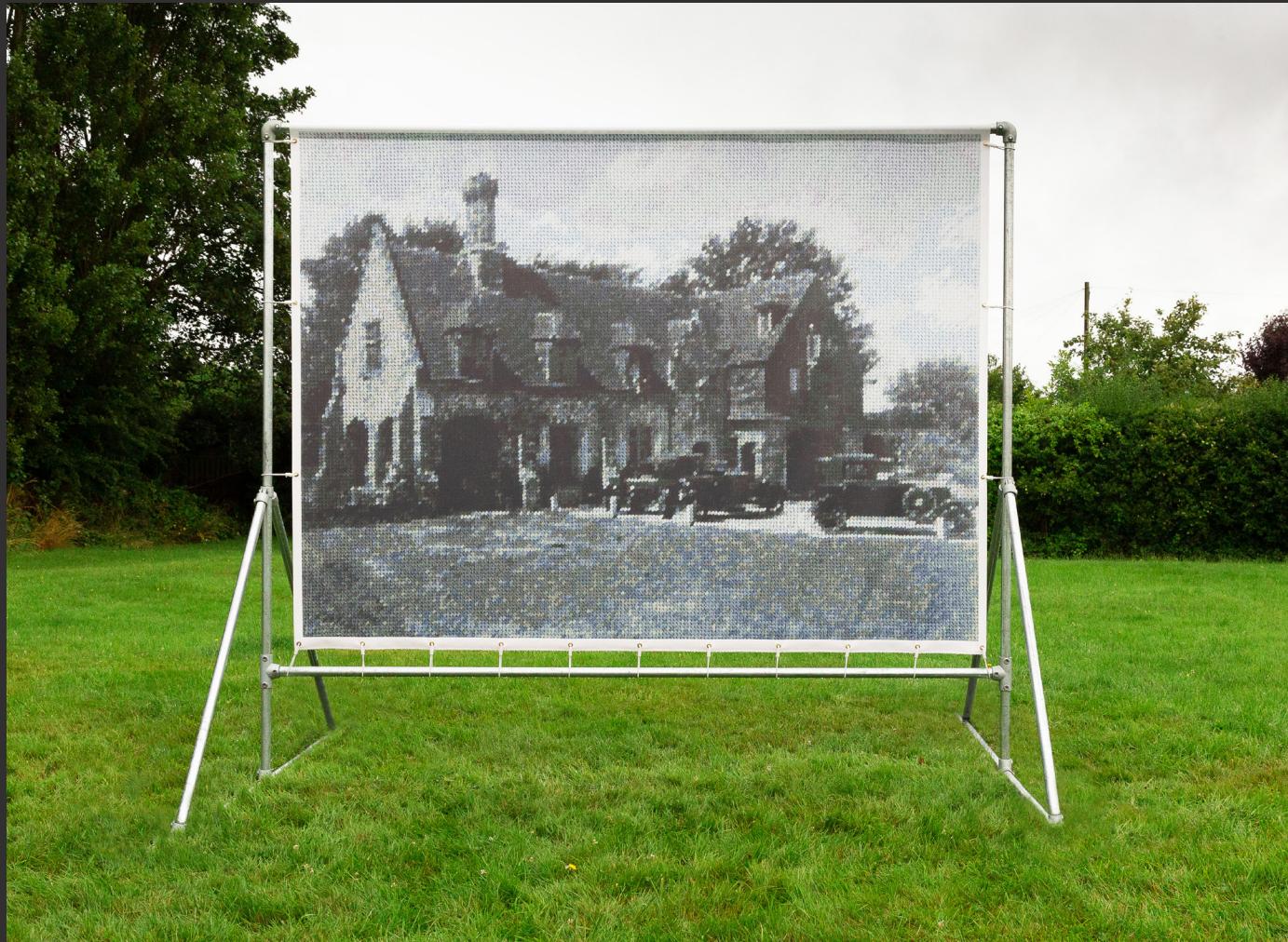
**fig. 1** Example of participant's poem created using words from Tennyson's *The Princess*.

# Gros Cut Mill

BY DANICA MAIER

Danica Maier discovered a lesser-known 'archive within the archive' for Tennyson's great-niece Fryniwyd Tennyson Jesse. Maier comments "an artist, war correspondent, playwright and true crime writer - Fryn is an interesting and dynamic person in her own right; however, her legacy has been permanently housed under that of her distinguished yet distant male relative which renders her less visible than she deserves."<sup>2</sup>

Maier chose to recreate an early photo of Fryn's first marital home in Hampshire, which was "meticulously stitched into a small 20cm petit point, then photographed and enlarged by 1500% for the large-scale Waddington installation". Sited on the playing field, almost appearing to sit neatly at home in the corner of the field, the house could be clearly viewed from a distance, but on closer inspection the stitches transformed into abstract pixels and the detail became obscured. During a live performance on the walk, Maier read aloud a number of carefully selected excerpts from Fryn's biography, emphasising particularly moving and enlightening statements about Fryn's health, her political views and her family, by speaking through a megaphone. Both the work and the performance revealed an intriguing and important woman, with much to say.



Sited at the Sidney Hall Memorial Field, off Station Road.

**fig. 2** Danica Maier, *Gros Cut Mill*, 2019, Photograph on PVC

**2.** All quotes are from the interpretative panels sited alongside the artworks during *Bummock: Tennyson Art Walk*.



# House on the Way to Gainsborough

BY ANDREW BRACEY

The drawings and sketchbooks of members of the Tennyson family captured Andrew Bracey's imagination within the archive. Bracey states that "these visual records give a fascinating, alternative insight into the upbringing of Tennyson's children, and to Victorian life in general". Bracey was particularly drawn to the journals of Hallam Tennyson, Alfred's and Emily's first-born son. Two tiny books reveal the pre-teen's developing studies in geometry, mathematics, chess problems, history as well as records of travelling. Bracey wondered if Hallam's parents, like his own, required him to keep the journals, as a way of learning to be curious about the world. The artist made a woodblock print a similar size to one page of these miniature notebooks and "photographically reproduced the artwork, thirty times bigger, to reveal all the perfect flaws of a child's drawing and then my flawed attempt to capture it accurately". The final image sat proudly on the brow of the Lincoln Cliff (or Lincoln Edge), a narrow limestone ridge running north-south for over 50 miles. The location enabled the viewer to simultaneously admire the child's portrayal of a house, the artist's facsimile, and the magnificent view – playing with a sense of scale and reality.

**fig. 3** Andrew Bracey, *House on the Way to Gainsborough*, 2019, Photograph on PVC



Sited at the Junction  
of Hill Top and  
Station Road.



# Bound

BY SARAH BENNETT

Sarah Bennett's initial foray into the Tennyson archive explored issues with both 'viewing of' and 'access to' items, within the restrictions of the archive's systems and processes. Bennett is fascinated with snake weights (lead-filled cotton cords used in archives to gently hold precious books open) which resulted in her employing them to excess in the artwork. In this beautiful and curious work, snake weights were placed over the pages of a poetry book leaving visible only very specific passages from Tennyson's poem *The Princess* (1847), which references the Victorian debates about women's access to higher education and traditional roles of becoming a wife and mother. Bennett states that "the left-hand text is spoken by the princess who has founded a women's college and is refusing to marry the prince - so rejecting the expected female duties. The right-hand text is spoken by the prince's friend Cyril, after they sneak into the college disguised in women's clothing and find, to their surprise, that women are great learners, and are just as clever as men". Bennett read passages from the poem in front of the artwork, while segments of snake weights were passed around – lending a tactile insight to the weight of the words and their meaning. The fabric in the background of the image is a reproduction of a delicate scrap of Tennyson's grandmother's wedding dress, the rest of which was apparently cut up and used to decorate the walls of the family home at Somersby, Lincolnshire.



Sited at St Michael's Church on the High Street.

fig. 3 Sarah Bennett, *Bound*, 2019, Photograph on PVC



*From Bummock to Tip*

ARTISTS' INTERVIEWS & ITEMS FROM THE ARCHIVE



**fig. 1** Sarah Bennett working in studio, 2019. Photographed by Andy Klunder.

## Sarah Bennett

### INTERVIEW

#### How did you access the archive initially and through the project?

*My introduction to the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC) took place in the dome of the Central Library, where the archive was overseen by Grace Timmins. Whilst Grace was not a qualified archivist, she shared her considerable insights about the formation of the TRC and the many items held within it, with Danica, Andrew and myself. We discussed what content in the archive would be considered the ‘tip’ (e.g. Tennyson’s writing desk and quill pen, and the original script for In Memoriam) and what would be the ‘bummock’ (e.g. miscellaneous items relating to family members). We asked to see where these bummock items were kept, and spent the rest of the first visit delving into the rich array of artefacts in a small store room – where I was able to (literally) get ‘a feel’ for the collection, albeit through cotton gloves.*

*On our second visit, once the TRC had been relocated to the Lincolnshire Archives, Grace gave us access to the (closed) stacks to find the boxes associated with our emerging interests. On all subsequent visits to the TRC we had to make advance requests for items, as is the norm in archives. I then realised how exceptional the first two visits with Grace had been, in that they afforded me countless chance encounters with ‘marginal’ items, so that when I had to use the online catalogue, I already knew which items had incited my curiosity.*

**Comforter is a stop frame drawing  
of Elizabeth Tennyson's rattle  
with its own sounds  
crescendoing as it  
appears and  
disappears on  
the screen.**

**For a short  
period it  
animates  
the rattle that  
lies silently in  
the archive.**



**fig. 2** Baby's silver rattle comprising seven bells in two rows, whistle and a piece of teething coral.  
Hall-marked near coral. Similar to rattle pictured in portrait of Alfred Tennyson's mother (LCNTE : 2012/31)

**What did you choose in the archive & how and why  
did you choose this?**

*The items that preoccupied me were a mixture of both bummock and tip. A combined teether and rattle, made of silver with a coral tongue-like protrusion for a baby to chew on, fascinated me because it was so very peculiar. It is assumed to have belonged to Elizabeth Tennyson (née Fytche), Alfred's mother, as a small watercolour depicts her holding the rattle, complete with its bells and whistle. Three blocks of Alfred's tobacco also piqued my interest, probably because of their smell and the fact that their very existence seems somewhat 'precarious'. They only became significant to me later in the project, as did a scrap of Alfred's grandmother's wedding dress fabric, the rest of which had been used as a wall covering in the gothic room at Somersby. A box of embroidery patterns belonging to Alfred's daughter-in-law, Audrey Tennyson (née Boyle), also drew my attention as a tangible trace of another female Tennyson.*

*Grace had lent Andrew a biography of Tennyson and, knowing of my previous research into 19thC psychiatry, he recounted that Alfred's brother, Edward, had spent most of his life in "a home for the insane in York".<sup>1</sup> The only box in the TRC relating to Edward contained numerous vouchers for purchases made on his behalf, and for his care and lodgings, all paid for from a £3,000 trust fund set up by his grandfather, George Tennyson – the 'Old Man of the Wolds'.*

**1.** Martin, R.B. (1980) *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart*, London: Faber and Faber p.137



**A combined teether and rattle, made of silver with a coral tongue-like protrusion for a baby to chew on, fascinated me because it was so very peculiar.**

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**What knowledge (if any) did you gain from the information of the archive? And can you talk (if appropriate) about how you differentiated between information gained from catalogues/websites and the information/relationship with the archivist?**

*I knew very little about Tennyson or his life's works when commencing the residency, so I enthusiastically made notes during Grace's detailed account of the archive and its holdings. Her references made much more sense to me later in the project once I had a grasp of the Tennyson family relationships and chronology, but her trust in letting us carefully rootle around in the bummock of the archive was crucial for the subsequent momentum of my research.*

**fig. 3** Miniature watercolour portrait of Alfred Tennyson's mother, Elizabeth Tennyson (née Fytche), holding a rattle (TRC/Images/6155.2)

**I found out that all the Tennyson brothers had various addictions, nervous disorders, anxieties, and in Alfred's case, hypochondria.**

**Can you talk more specifically about how you found out more about the stuff in the archive; or if you did not feel you needed to, please say why?**

Some items had short handwritten notes attached that explained their significance or potency: “Scissors off his table and used for everything done in his room after he passed away”.<sup>2</sup> But it was through reading Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart that I found out that all the Tennyson brothers had various addictions, nervous disorders, anxieties,<sup>3</sup> and in Alfred’s case, hypochondria. Their father suffered from alcoholism and cataleptic seizures (more likely to have been epilepsy), and Alfred was concerned that he may himself have inherited the condition as he experienced trance-like states in his early years. These narratives became part of the hummock for me.



**fig. 4** Folder of embroidery patterns belonging to Audrey Tennyson (née Boyle) (LCNTE : 2013/13)

**2.** Lincolnshire County Council, ‘Pair of scissors in envelope’, accessed 2 November 2020, <https://www.lincstothepast.com/scissors/1111048.record?pt=S>

**3.** Ibid, p.137-138

**How did you approach the process of working with the archive?**

On the first visit to the TRC the process was effectively collaborative, as we showed each other various artefacts of interest as we discovered them in the archival boxes.

I made notes in my sketch book and took photographs as an aide memoir. The visit felt full of promise.

By the time of the second and third visits some conspicuous themes were emerging, so I became increasingly selective and discerning in my method of working in the archive – for example asking permission to record the sound of the rattle, and documenting each and every voucher in the Edward Tennyson box.

During our visits to the TRC I was reminded of the protocols and paraphernalia associated with accessing archives – the necessity of using only pencil, the use of foam supports for books to rest on, and the snake weights used to provide gentle pressure to keep the pages open. The foam support and snake weights became central elements in my artwork Bound.

## What did you make?

*Bound* is an installation based on Tennyson's early poem – *The Princess* – which he wrote in blank verse. In it Tennyson 'attempts to deal with a thoroughly contemporary problem, that of the education of women in Victorian England'.<sup>4</sup> It is thought that the subject was prompted by an early conversation with Emily Selwood, his future wife, but he had also been roundly criticised by his contemporaries for avoiding social and political matters in his writing. In the poem, Princess Ida initially rejects the hand of the Prince, to whom she was betrothed in childhood, as she has established a women only college and wishes to pursue purely educational aims. *Bound*, comprises five small fragments of speech – voiced by the main protagonists – that are visible in separate copies of the poem between an over-abundance of snake weights. Each book rests on a foam plinth to which are pinned the characters' names, all cut from excerpts of 19thC treatises advocating for women's higher education.<sup>5</sup> I have treated the preclusion of Tennyson's sisters and wife from higher education as part of the bummock.

*Plant Seizures* is a series of composite layered drawings based on researching plant remedies used in the 19thC for the Tennyson men's various ailments. The centre of each drawing prefigures the source of each affliction, e.g. hypochondria was thought to be linked to the abdomen and digestive tract, so the intestinal villi are depicted in one drawing. Each Plant Seizure portrays a specific member of the Tennyson family, and includes other plants or items significant to that individual's emotional life, or their illness.

The vouchers that record the purchases of shirts, collars, morning suits, footwear and undergarments made for Edward from a gentlemen's outfitters in York, inspired the making of a parcel in which such items would have been wrapped for delivery. Entitled "Touch Me", it sits alone in the exhibition, covered in thorns. By all accounts, none of the Tennyson family ever visited Edward at York, where he died in 1890. Comforter is a stop frame silverpoint drawing of Elizabeth Tennyson's rattle with its own sounds crescendo-ing as it appears and disappears on the screen. For a short period it animates the rattle that lies silently in the archive.

## How did working with the archive benefit/impact on your practice?

Participating in the TRC residency over four years has enabled sustained research engagement with both materials and subject matter, with sufficient time for experimentation and some false starts. The visits to the TRC with Danica and Andrew, and the residency periods working together have been particularly beneficial in creating a critical space for ongoing dialogue and exchange in relation to our responses to the archive.

## How did the archive's specialism relate to your practice (if any)?

My positive response to the invitation to participate in the Bummock: Tennyson Research Centre project was based on my extant research in archives, rather than the allure of Tennyson. And on reflection, it is clear that I quickly identified items from the archive that related to my previous research trajectories. For example, *Touch Me* links directly to a previous work made during a residency at the Museo Laboratorio della Mente, Rome.



4. Ibid p.312

5. Fitch, J.G, (1890) 'Women and the Universities' in *The Contemporary Review* pp.240-255 and Reid, M, (1988) [1843] *A Plea for Woman*, Edinburgh: Polygon

fig. 5 Scrap of wedding dress belonging to Alfred Tennyson's grandmother (LCNTE 2016/1)



# *Andrew Bracey*

## INTERVIEW

**fig. 1** Andrew Bracey, work in progress, 2019. Photographed by Andrew Bracey.

## **How did you access the archive initially and through the project?**

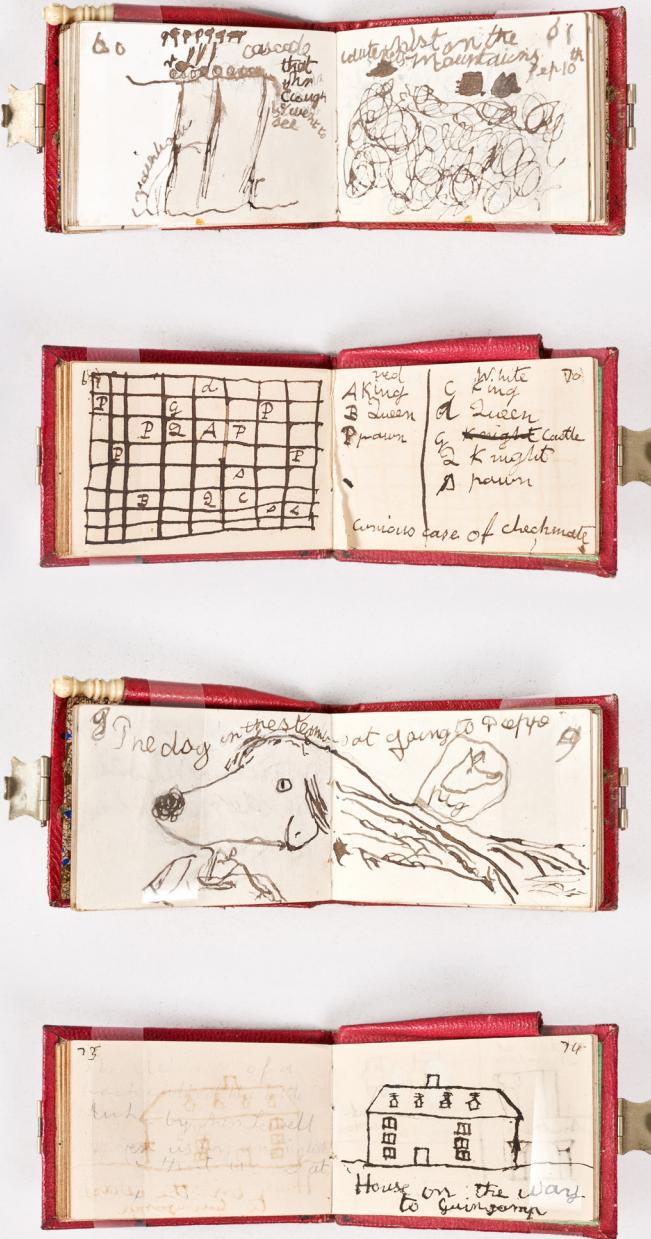
*I had been to the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC) previously in 2013 to set up a student project for the University of Lincoln. That project also ended with an exhibition, Some One Had Blunder'd, at the Collection and in many ways paved the way for bringing Bummock to the TRC.<sup>1</sup> The first visit with Danica and Sarah was thus with some familiarity; I knew it to be a treasure trove. The small domed room in Lincoln's Central Library helped this feeling, creating a 'portal' back to Victorian times. This archive filled me with a profound sense of curiosity and sustained excitement, as Carolyn Steedman puts it, "the archive is also a place of dreams."<sup>2</sup>*

## **How did you approach the process of working with the archive?**

*The initial visits to the archive were filled with an inquisitive spirit. I was able to ask the archive keeper, Grace Timmins, multiple questions and draw on her knowledge; look through the bookshelves; and get access to a side room containing archive boxes full of documents and objects. There was a plethora of choice and possibilities for what could be explored in the project. I asked Grace what item she would want someone to research, but had not been so far? She spoke of an uncatalogued box of items relating to Alfred and Emily Tennyson's second born son, Lionel. Although I did not use this, it was moments like this that led me towards researching the wider family. One of my favourite pieces of information in researching the children was that they were home-schooled till 1865, not primarily for pedagogic principles, but because their parents wanted to keep their hair long. Subsequent visits, especially after the move to Lincolnshire Archives, were more focused in direction, perusing items that dealt with the Tennyson family, especially Emily and Alfred's children.*

<sup>1</sup>. ‘Some One Had Blunder’d | The Collection’, accessed 11 November 2020, <https://www.thecollectionmuseum.com/exhibitions-and-events/gallery/some-one-had-blunderd>.

<sup>2</sup> Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001, p69.



**fig. 2** Two small notebooks containing drawings by Hallam Tennyson as a child (TRC/BC/7624) circa 1864.

**...the world of childhood, limited in physical scope yet fantastic in its content, presents in some ways a miniature and fictive chapter in each life history.**

**What did you choose in the archive and how and why did you choose this?**

By far the most captivating item, for me, was Hallam Tennyson's minute childhood notebooks that contained drawings, chess problems, holiday notes, geometry problems, handwriting practice and more.<sup>3</sup> I was drawn to these for four major reasons. First, they gave a fascinating insight into the mind of a Victorian child, with his future still to come, and more specifically someone whose identity would be forever defined by his father. Secondly, the content was encyclopaedic and rhizomic in nature, with multiple different subjects and interests all contained within the two books. The miniature scale was a further attraction. This is something I have been repeatedly drawn to as an artist, as a way to invite close looking that reveals the actual complexity of seemingly simple things. Susan Stewart has written of the connection of miniature books to the child: "...the world of childhood, limited in physical scope yet fantastic in its content, presents in some ways a miniature and fictive chapter in each life history."<sup>4</sup> Finally, they reminded me of my own childhood practice of keeping a visual and written record of my holidays, a similarly hotchpotch collection of things. Most of all, the books intuitively felt right to me and would sustain my interest over several years.

**3.** Emily and Alfred Tennyson's eldest son, Hallam, was named after Alfred's best friend at Cambridge, Arthur Henry Hallam. He is best known now as being the subject of arguably Tennyson's best-known poem, *In Memoriam*, written in 1850, 17 years after Hallam's death at the age of 22. It features the iconic lines: 'Tis better to have loved and lost Than never to have loved at all.'

**4.** Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1992, p44.

**Can you talk more specifically about how you found out about more about the stuff in the archive; or if you did not feel you needed to, please say why?**

The description for item TRC/BC/7624 is listed as “two small notebooks containing drawings by Hallam Tennyson as a child.”<sup>5</sup> The only supplementary information is that “Some content relates to the journeys taken to France and Germany 1864.”<sup>6</sup> This allowed me to ascertain that Hallam worked on the books when he was aged around 12 years old. There is a passing mention in *The Unquiet Heart*, Robert Bernard Martin’s biography of Alfred Tennyson, of a two-month family trip to “...the Arthurian country in Brittany and Normandy.”<sup>7</sup> The holiday appears to have been arranged as a way of escaping Alfred’s increasing celebrity status. Tennyson was the first author to gain considerable wealth from his work and is an early instance of a celebrity, something that his children both benefited and suffered from.<sup>8</sup> Lionel is said to have grown tired of being referred to as ‘the poet’s son’ and instead retorted, “As a matter of fact, he’s my father.”<sup>9</sup>

The main way that I found out more about the notebooks was through ‘looking attentively’ at them. From this I was able to build up a picture of the life of a/this Victorian schoolboy. This was done with the physical object in the TRC and through photographs of the notebooks. This approach based on looking can be seen to invite speculative ideas, as opposed to factual information. However, I believe that the rich tapestry of subject matter in the books is an excellent way of establishing the character of an individual and gaining a sense of the period in which they were created.

5. Lincolnshire County Council, ‘Two Small Notebooks Containing Drawings by Hallam Tennyson as a Child.’, accessed 4 September 2020, <https://www.lincstothepast.com/Two-small-notebooks-containing-drawings-by-Hallam-Tennyson-as-a-child-/1745154.record?pt=S>

6. Ibid.

7. Martin, Robert Bernard. *Tennyson, the Unquiet Heart*, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, p456.

8. For example, Hallam wrote the first biography of his father and left Cambridge early to serve as his secretary and most constant companion in later years; in doing so he put his own career on hold. After inheriting Alfred’s papers, Hallam (with Emily) sought to edit out sordid details of Tennyson’s life, such as aspects of his ‘Tennyson black blood’, depression, fits of obscenity and foul language and his poor ability to nurture friendships. He did this by destroying over 30,000 letters; by scraping and inking out words or literally cutting out parts of correspondence; and by not making reference to these things in the biography.

9. Martin, p506.



**fig. 3** Julia Margaret Cameron, Tennyson and his sons, 1865, albumen print, 1865 NPG P285 © National Portrait Gallery, London

**Can you talk (if appropriate) about how you differentiated between information gained from catalogues/websites and the information/relationship with the archivist?**

*Lincolnshire Archives has a useful online repository called Lincs to the Past, which I used to find out more about items after my initial controlled rummage. The secondary information provided is somewhat inconsistent, with some items having extensive information and others very little. I found Timmin's knowledge more useful for my purposes. I felt that through our conversations in the archive she was able to offer information and point me towards items that were likely to be of interest. In many ways she was the 'control' in my unsystematic rummage through the archive.*



**fig. 4** J.E. Millais, *The Day-Dream* from Moxon's Illustrated edition of Tennyson's Poems, 1857, engraving by C T Thompson



**fig. 5** D.G. Rossetti, *Mariana in the South* from Moxon's Illustrated edition of Tennyson's Poems, 1857, engraving by W J Linton



**fig. 6** D.G. Rossetti, *The Lady of Shalott* from Moxon's Illustrated edition of Tennyson's Poems, 1857, engraving by Dalziel Brothers

## What did you make?

*In my research I was drawn to Lionel as a character, Martin describes Hallam as conventional, whereas "Lionel was far more interesting, with poetic ability, a mercurial personality, a talent for getting in to scrapes, and a charm that his elder brother never had." <sup>10</sup> In fact, for a time I mistakenly thought I 'was' using Lionel's childhood notebooks! I still want to make work in response to Lionel but have not yet found the right opportunity for this. I made woodblock prints that replicated pages from Hallam's notebooks. Although they were done as accurately as I could, they diverge in multiple ways: through shifting the size to be more akin to my hand than a child's; human error; the mirroring effect in the print process and the intricacies of and flaws in that process; the type of paper and ink and so on. I am interested in how they do differ. In an online conversation with Jim Cheshire during the lockdown of 2020, I was directed towards the woodblock illustrations of Alfred Tennyson's poems by several important Pre-Raphaelite artists. This additional connection feels pertinent, and one that I am still considering the intricacies and relevance of as I write.*

*It was only after a year of carving the woodblocks that I realised the connection to previous work. Specifically, this was an installation that used compositions taken from my eighteen-month-old niece's drawings. I had a similar intent with that work, to show the perfection of a child's creations. Hallam's notebooks disclose a child's innate curiosity in so many things, which can be side-lined as we become adults. I was intrigued by a story I found during my early research in the TRC, but was not able to form into an idea for a work until after I had finished the woodblock prints. In April 1827 the first poetry of Alfred Tennyson was published, together with work by his elder brothers Charles and Frederick. On the launch day Charles and Alfred travelled to Mablethorpe to celebrate by antiphonally shouting their poems to the sea.*

*Charles recalled how if “anyone had met us they would have thought us out of our minds.”<sup>11</sup> In July 2021 I filmed myself reciting selected Tennyson poems along the South Devon coast where I grew up; in August the same poems were shouted to the sea at Mablethorpe, close to my current home for my work Shout Their Glory to the Sea.*

**What knowledge (if any) did you gain from the information of the archive?**

*The main knowledge I believe I gained from working in the TRC is an increased confidence in my specialist skills as an artist. My practice largely focuses on visual and material facets; looking attentively; incidental or peripheral aspects; and making non-obvious connections between things. This expertise is often underrated by artists, as well as by society at large. ‘Tacit’ or ‘embodied’ knowledge is often difficult to translate into tangible and digestible forms and so can be treated with suspicion or considered ‘improper’, especially in a research environment.*

Vytautas Michelkevičius has noted that “method determination in artistic research often happens in reverse order. Naturally, this also depends on the difficulties artists encounter in trying to formulate a research hypothesis, as their knowing is embodied in materials and processes, and thus difficult to put in words.”<sup>12</sup> Strangely, from an archive of one of the most famous English poets, I gained a greater confidence in non-linguistic information.

**fig. 7** Andrew Bracey, works in progress, 2019, photographed by Andrew Bracey

**10.** Martin, p378.

<sup>11.</sup> Rawnsley, Willingham Franklin. *Tennyson 1809-1909: A Lecture*, London, Forgotten Books, 2019, p6.

**12.** Michelkevicius, Vytautas. *Mapping Artistic Research. Towards Diagrammatic Knowing*, Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2018, p144-145.



**How did working with the archive benefit/  
impact on your practice?**

*On a practical level I have learnt a new skill. I have never made a woodblock or printed in this way before. The time in the archive has been spent in parallel with undertaking a PhD and I have been increasingly conscious of the importance of looking attentively as a methodology. The interplay between two forms of research (reading and looking) with a third form (making) is ultimately what drives my practice.*

**How did the archive's specialism relate to  
your practice (if any)?**

*I am largely an ignoramus when it comes to poetry; I think being dyslexic and aphantasic does not help in this regard, as perhaps poetry encourages the creation of pictures in the mind. In terms of my practice there is little to connect either Tennyson, the Victorian era or poetry to it. However, I believe there are subtler connections when you dig beneath the surface, such as: the physicality of the archive space; the celebration of the periphery (in other Tennyson family members that are in the TRC); Alfred's lifelong interest in drawing (many of his poem's manuscripts are scrawled with drawings of buildings and people's faces and, curiously, fingers and toes); and even the overwhelming presence of books and reading. These are all concerns within and drivers for my practice.*

**Hallam's notebooks disclose  
a child's innate curiosity in  
so many things, which can be  
side-lined as we become adults.**



**fig. 8** Andrew Bracey, studio work in progress, 2020, photographed by Andrew Bracey



**fig. 1** Danica Maier, self-portrait at Hospitalfield, 2019, taken during art residency

## Danica Maier

### INTERVIEW

#### How did you access the archive initially and through the project?

When Sarah, Andrew and myself started this project the Tennyson Research Centre (TRC) was held within Lincoln Central Library. Initially access was through booking in with the TRC Collections Officer, Grace Timmins, who after many years working within the TRC, knew it inside and out. I felt it a great privilege to start our research journey with Timmins, and we made good use of her insights and knowledge, including a familiarity with what others have researched. It was through Timmins' informative tour of the TRC that I initially accessed the archive – asking questions that prompted her to highlight and discuss the 'bummocks and tips'. During this initial group research period Timmins introduced us to Fryn Tennyson Jesse, described by Timmins as a 'definite bummock of the archive' and a seldom researched member of the Tennyson family and collection.

Before settling my focus solely on Fryn in our preliminary visit(s), I took a sustained overview of many different objects and themes within the TRC, and my early interests included: handwriting styles and lines; family sketchbooks and wonderful pencil drawings of landscapes; a small hand cut puzzle; and other fragments. In the TRC's new site, Tennyson's library is still housed together within its own room, on beautiful bespoke wooden shelves, yet the bulk of the items are housed within the belly of the archive. We were allowed into this exclusive space for a final controlled rummage – which 'dug up' some great journals, sketch books, and objects from the wider family. However, it was Fryn that continued to draw me back and became the sole focus of my enquiry within the TRC.



End of    Summer    1925

**fig. 2** Cut Mill Bosham photo album, 1922 – 1927, F. Tennyson Jesse and Tottie Harwood's Cut Mill photo album of their first material home which they converted from an old water mill into a home and work space. (TRC/FTJ Box 13)

### How did you approach the process of working with the archive?

The early description given to us by Timmins of Tennyson's great-niece, Fryn (Winifred) Tennyson Jesse, sparked my interest, prompting me to look further into her life and works. An artist, novelist, war correspondent, playwright and true crime writer,<sup>1</sup> Fryn was an interesting and dynamic person in her own right; however, her legacy has been permanently housed under that of her distinguished, yet distant, male relative. For me the choice within the archive was focused on an individual (Fryn Tennyson Jesse) rather than a specific object(s). The best way to state this comes from a text within one of my artworks for the project:

"The research into Fryn Tennyson Jesse and the artist residency within the Tennyson Research Centre over the years has allowed me to be with and spend time with Fryn, to get to know and enjoy her company. Time spent accessing the archive items, reading her books and Colenbrander's biography has bought up some interesting similarities between us. Small details that cross over with my own life and family history; small resonances between her life and my own where I find a mutual kinship, similar to reading a book with a great lead character who becomes a friend. In reality, would I have been Fryn's friend and her mine? I'm not sure. There are of course many differences between us but overall it is the moments of connections that stick out to me."<sup>2</sup>

1. Colenbrander, Joanna. *A Portrait of Fryn: A Biography of F. Tennyson Jesse*, London: André Deutsch, 1984.

2. Maier, Danica. *Her Words. My Voice* (text-based artwork), 2020.

**Can you talk more specifically about how you found out more about the stuff in the archive; or if you did not feel you needed to, please say why?**

*My initial starting point for information about Fryn Tennyson Jesse was through discussions with Timmins. I did an initial survey of Fryn's items within the TRC, followed by a more thorough exploration of each of the archive boxes related to her. I was permitted special dispensation to retrieve all 14 boxes from Fryn's part of the TRC and spent an intensive few days going through them in detail, capturing as much of an overview as I could through notes and photographs.*

*Interestingly, the items related to Fryn were "donated to the Tennyson Research Centre by Jesse's assistant and biographer Joanna Colenbrander in 1983".<sup>3</sup> The archival items and Fryn's own autobiographies, written at different points in her life, as well as one she was working on when she died, were part of the source materials for Colenbrander's book 'A Portrait of Fryn: Biography of F. Tennyson Jesse'.*

*Colenbrander's 1984 biography became a great resource for understanding Fryn as a person and put into context the multitude of objects, including personal and professional letters, news clippings, photographs, scripts, drafts, etc., found within her boxes. While I am aware Colenbrander's biography gives a partially subjective perspective, I found it became an accessible narrative bringing to life the 14 boxes of archival material held in the TRC on Fryn. Additionally, I felt it important to understand Fryn's writing and published work, so I tracked down and purchased a few of her own publications via eBay. Seeing, holding and reading these well used works gave me a more embedded insight into Fryn and her writing.*

**fig. 3** Sabi Pas photo album, 1927 – 1932, F. Tennyson Jesse and Tottie Harwood's French home Sabi Pas (Provençal for I don't know). It was the basis of F. Tennyson Jesse's publication *Sabi Pas or, I Don't Know*, (1935). (TRC/FTJ Box 1)

**3.** Lincolnshire County Council, 'The Papers of Fryn Tennyson Jesse', Accessed 8, October 2020. <https://www.lincstothepast.com/The-Papers-of-Fryn-Tennyson-Jesse/1527865.record?pt=S>





**fig. 4** The Milky Way, 1913, by F. Tennyson Jesse's, authors personal copy opened to title page (TRC/Library)

Harwood  
Salei Pas

**Can you talk (if appropriate) about how you differentiated between information gained from catalogues/websites and the information/relationship with the archivist?**

*The initial conversations with Grace Timmins were invaluable to gaining an overview of the archive and what is or could be considered the 'tip/bummock' of the TRC. For myself, the various points of information - Grace Timmins' insights, the items within the TRC, online resources, Fryn's books, Colenbrander's biography - all interweave together to create a larger picture. Each adding a different 'voice' to the mix.*

**How did you approach the process of working with the archive?**

*After an initial overview, I combed through all items related to Fryn with particular attention on her photo albums, and personal letters – though admittedly dipping in and out in the depth of reading of the hundreds of letters and newspaper clippings. The biography was a rich source of information and, in many ways, it is a summary of what is held in the archive. This seemed to be confirmed through a 'to and froing' of research between the two. Notes, sketches and quotations from all the various places of my research, were recorded as I went, for future reference. Additionally, conversations with Sarah and Andrew alongside studio experimentation were important in the development of the archival research into artworks.*

## **What did you make?**

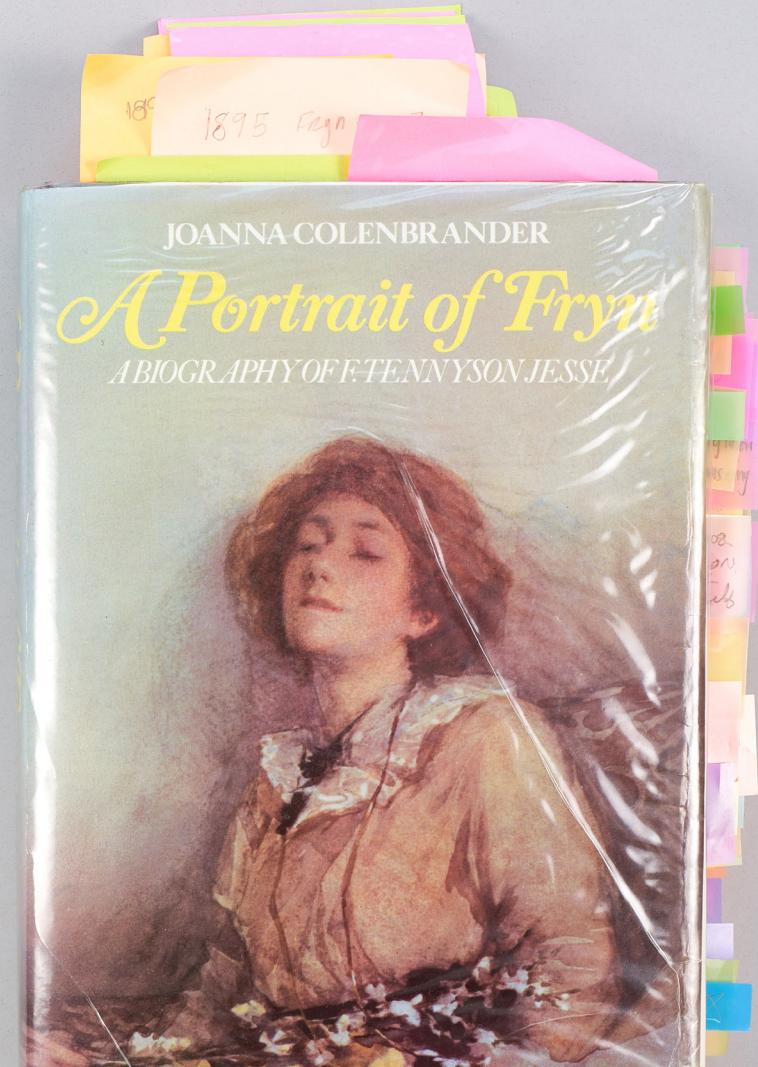
Rather than describe the work created I would recommend experiencing the work in person, or viewing it through documentation found within this publication. As artist Ian Kiaer states, “The very nature of how an art-work works is so different to how a text works ... It’s important to think about the kinds of knowledge that are held within an art work which are different [to writing]”.<sup>4</sup>

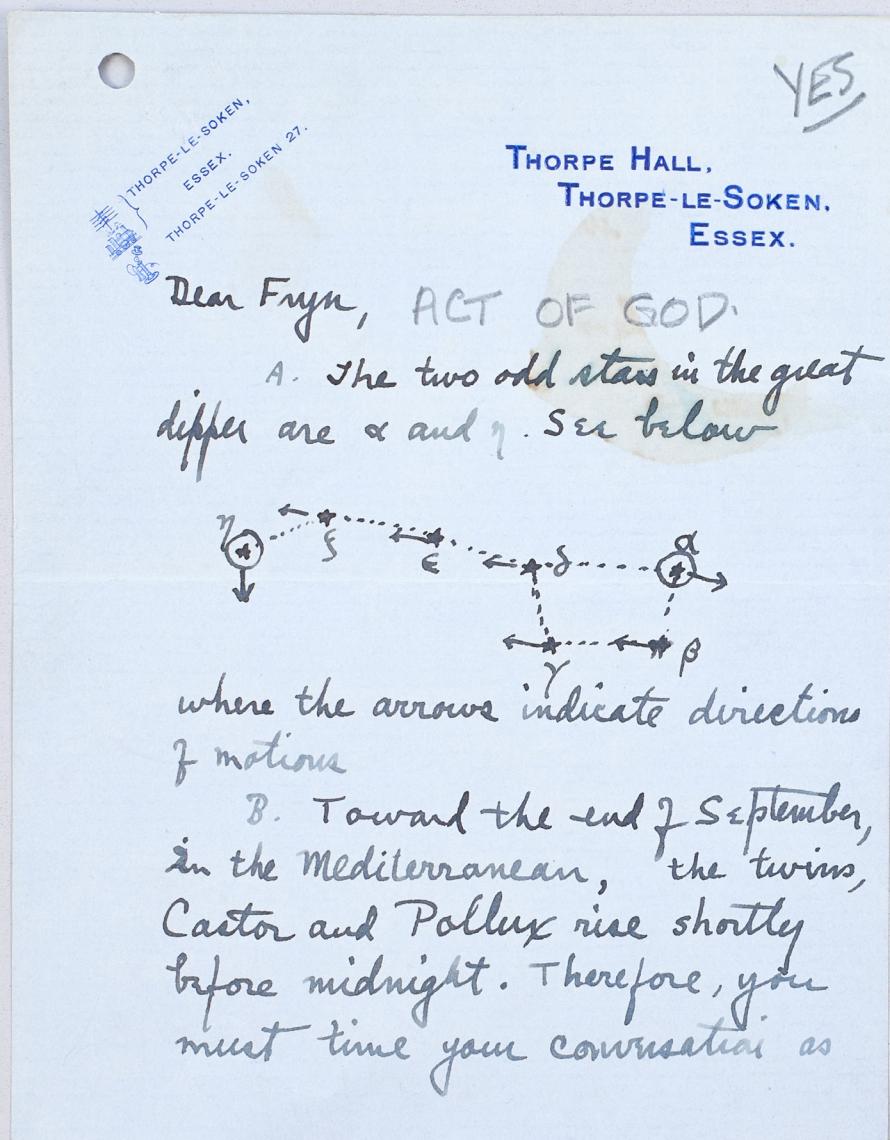
*The artworks created for this project fall under core themes and contemplations around intertwining narratives, auto/biographies, and portraits. Much of the early developments of these thoughts and initial starting points were generated during an interdisciplinary artist residency in the historic rooms and studio's at Hospitalfield, Arbroath. During this time, I pondered the imagined and remembered narratives that come through the archived items of Fryn's life. There are similarities and cross overs within Fryn's life and my own; leading to my own personal and family histories coming to mind while exploring her narrative. Through the research and artwork created, I have imagined Fryn's life stories and remembered my own. This exploration has seen our narratives become intertwined into a new whole. The similarities of imagined and remembered stories has been a key focus; playfully exploring her memories to inhabit them, to understand them, to know them. Exploring her stories until they become as if my own. Playing with them as they intertwine with my own stories; until I inhabit her memories and imagine mine.*

*I am haunted. Haunted by my past, both recent and distant. Remove the negative connotations one might expect with such a statement and focus instead on the meaning of 'haunt': to frequent, visit regularly, spend time with, be familiar with, indulge in. My past is here with me now, it visits me regularly, a frequent part of my day. With a detailed visual memory, I walk through the past as if I am (almost) there. I can pull the smells and tastes (nearly) into being. My mind thinks, imagines, dreams, and remembers – in multisensory 3-dimensional technicolour – all in the same manner and space. They are distinct, yet are only tenuously separate; memories and dreams are sometimes confused.*

4. Kjaer, Ian, 'Studio' in Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum (Eds.), *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013, p120      **fig. 5** *A Portrait of Fryn: A Biography of F. Tennyson Jesse, 2018-2021*, Maier's well used and noted copy of Colenbrander's biography of Fryn

*Our personal memories are told and retold slightly differently in each telling – these stories are not set in ‘fact’ but are in flux. At the core is a nugget of truth but all too often the stories take on a life of their own. The (re)told stories of reminiscing become their own (new) memory. The remembered ‘truth’ becomes intertwined with the imagined which in turn are interwoven into new narratives. So, what did I make? I made a series of ‘portraits’ and ‘ghost heirlooms’ intertwining my life narratives alongside that of Fryn’s – creating a new remembered and imagined narrative of Fryn and me.*





**What knowledge (if any) did you gain from the information of the archive?**

There has been, and will continue to be, much knowledge gained from the development and making of the artworks. At the moment I write this, the artistic research is still ongoing and therefore will take time and further reflection to fully understand the knowledge gained. However, I can state that I do have a better understanding of Alfred Tennyson, his family and their relationship to Lincolnshire. I have attained specific petit point skills while making three new embroidery artworks. Most significantly, I now have an extensive familiarity with Fryn Tennyson Jesse and her work.

**How did working with the archive benefit/impact on your practice?**

The work from this project has taken a different approach to that of my normal practice, as in essence it has developed through an ongoing dialogue and relationship with Fryn. Approaching the work as a relationship with an individual through which a series of work is created to unfold stories and narratives, has meant new processes and working methods have been developed.

**How did the archive's specialism relate to your practice (if any)?**

Tennyson Research Centre, at first glance, is not related to my practice and admittedly I have little knowledge of English Victorian poetry. My focus on Fryn's professional life and her discipline area of writing, also falls a bit outside my usual professional interests, however in herself she was someone I could recognise, relate to, and for whom I feel a great affinity.

**fig. 6** Personal letter to Fryn from Edwin on Wednesday 7 October 1936, discussing 'two odd stars in the great dipper' presumably for her upcoming publication ACT of God (1937) as noted on the letter at a later date. (TRC/FTJ Box 3)

# Contributors

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Sarah Bennett** is a practicing artist and an academic. She has a PhD by practice (2010) and her artistic research traverses fine art, cultural geography, architectural history, museology and the history of psychiatry. She frequently engages an archival/historical lens through which to research institutional systems, codes and mores in order to flip the focus back onto contemporary attitudes and contexts. Her recent exhibitions include *Materiality: provisional states* at Hestercombe Gallery, Somerset, and *Safe-keeping (custodia)* at the Museo Laboratorio della Mente, Rome, and the Museo Manicomio di San Servolo, Venice. Bennett has 35 years of experience in Higher Arts Education – most recently as Head of the School of Art and Architecture at Kingston University, London, where she is now a Visiting Fellow. She has been involved in the delivery of international collaborative Masters and PhD programmes in Fine Art and is on the Board of EQ-Arts, based in Amsterdam.

**Andrew Bracey** is an artist based in Waddington. His work emphasises the importance of looking, attentiveness and materiality in appropriation and explores the slippages between the original/reproduction, artist/curator, painter/artist. His current PhD by Practice is testing the original position of the 'Parasitical Painter'; how contemporary artists use historical paintings to initiate new dialogue between the past and the contemporary. Solo exhibitions include Project Space Plus, Lincoln; Isherwood Gallery, Wigan; Usher Gallery, Lincoln; Nottingham Castle; Manchester Art Gallery; Wolverhampton Art Gallery; Transition Gallery, London and firstsite, Colchester; alongside over 150 group shows and 20 curated exhibitions. He is Programme Leader of MA Fine Art at The University of Lincoln.

**Sue Breakell** is Director of the University of Brighton Design Archives, and a Principal Research Fellow. She co-leads the 'Museums, Archives, Exhibitions' strand of the University's Centre for Design History. A visual arts archivist, she formerly worked as head of Tate Archive and at the Imperial War Museums. Her research bridges critical archive studies, twentieth century art and design history and material culture. Publications include 'Beginning with What Remains' in the *Archive of the Misspelling of Graham Fagen*, Matts Gallery, London, 2021; and *The Materiality of the Archive: Creative Practice in Context*, ed. Breakell and Wendy Russell, Routledge, forthcoming (2022).

**Jim Cheshire** is Associate Professor of Cultural History at the University of Lincoln and works on nineteenth-century visual and material culture, Victorian medievalism and literary celebrity. His latest monograph, *Tennyson and Mid-Victorian Publishing: Moxon, Poetry, Commerce* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2016 and he has recently written essays for the *Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism* the *Bloomsbury Cultural History of the Interior* and *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*.

**Jenny Gleadell** is the Exhibitions and Interpretation Officer at The Collection and Usher Gallery. As a curator and producer, her interests include collaborative exhibition making, testing pedagogical frameworks and exploring and reframing the relationships between the contemporary artist, the artwork and the museum space. Jenny studied for a BA in Art History at the UEA and an MA in Art History and Curating at the University of Birmingham, where she is currently an M4C-funded PhD researcher looking at the relationship between the museum and the Internet. She has worked for Liverpool Biennial, The Wilson: Cheltenham, The Collection and Usher Gallery and Frequency Festival.

**Lucy Lumb** is a freelance visual arts producer, with over fifteen years' experience working in the public realm. Her role is to support the artist's vision, facilitating public art commissions, temporary interventions and community engagement in non-gallery settings including parks, villages, churches, schools and healthcare centres. Lumb is inspired by unusual contexts and produces projects that are celebrated by their communities. She aims to bring high quality arts experiences to a wide range of people, challenge barriers to engagement, and believes the best results occur when those that think art is 'not for them' turn around to become advocates for creativity at all levels. She is also the Visual Arts Development Co-ordinator the Hub in Sleaford.

**Danica Maier** is an American artist and academic currently living and working in Lincolnshire. Her practice focuses on the un-repeating-repeat, material processes, transposition, conflating expectations, and how an audience looks / listens; as well as the dialogical nature of collaborative projects that foster independent artworks alongside wider group outcomes. Her work uses site-specific installations, drawing, and objects to explore expectations, while using subtle slippages to transgress propriety. Recent exhibitions / live events include: *Score: Mechanical Asynchronicity* (with Martin Scheuregger), Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham; *Associated Thoughts on Line*, as part of the Convocation: On Expanded Language - Based Practices within the Research Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale; *re-turning*, AirSpace Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent. Maier is an Associate Professor in Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University, where she supervises PhD candidates.

**Sian Vaughan** is a Senior Lecturer in Birmingham School of Art at Birmingham City University. As a former Keeper of Archives, she has a long-standing interest in the conceptualisation and methodology of the archive in relation to creative practice. She is an art historian by training whose broader research interests concern the pedagogies that underpin research in art and design and the modalities of interpretation and mediation of public engagement with contemporary art.

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