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Fiona meets Justin Croft (Phillip Thornborrow in background)

# Antiques No-Show

**Fiona MacLellan** took some University books and posters to the Antiques Roadshow at Althorpe in the summer.

In March I received a phone call from the university's Marketing and External Communication Department enquiring after the special collections held in the library, asking whether we had any rare or old books that might pique the interest of some producers from the Antiques Roadshow. I looked out some items I thought might just fit the bill, and sent the details off; if I'm honest I never expected to hear any more about the matter. So I was surprised to hear in May that two producers were coming in to take a closer look at the items, along with the Osborne Robinson Poster Collection from the School of the Arts.

The producers came and sounded enthusiastic, and before I knew it had left again telling me that they looked forward to seeing me at Althorpe house for filming. At this stage I have to admit panic set in. I contacted Philip Thornborrow (Collections and Learning Resources Manager), who has responsibility for the special collections; to check whether all the resources were able to be taken to the filming day. I also begged him to come along, mainly in the hope that he'd get to go on camera rather than me!

The 22nd May saw myself, Philip, Sarah (from Marketing and External Communications) and Suzanne Stenning (School of the Arts) having an early start, packing posters and books into the back of two cars and travelling over to Althorpe House. When we arrived the grounds were in a state of chaos with people queuing along the driveway. The stewards were doing an admirable job ensuring everyone managed to get parked safely and there were lots of busy looking people with clipboards trying to maintain some kind of organisation. We were, thankfully, rushed past the long queue and ushered to some seats to wait

for one of the producers to come and speak to us. After about twenty minutes sitting in the gorgeous Northamptonshire sunshine we spoke to one of the senior producers, who arranged for the 'experts' to come and view the items we'd brought along.

Justin Croft, the resident antiquarian book specialist, came to look over the items we'd taken. Although he liked some of the art books we'd brought, he felt that the books on leather and boot-making would be more interesting, as they could link in a local connection for the story. The producer agreed and Philip and I were given 30 minutes to practice what we wanted to say on camera. At this point the producers decided that I should be on camera, with Philip in the background, and seemed only slightly put out at my admission that I'd never actually watched a full episode of the programme!

I was taken through the BBC field make-up process, honestly not as glamorous as it sounds, and then it was almost my time in front of the camera! My main concern at this point was for the four books that were to be viewed, as a rogue camera man had placed them underneath a large bottle of orange juice and in direct sunlight. Not ideal conditions for such delicate items. Justin obviously had the

same concern as the books were quickly moved to a safer location.

The filming process on one hand seemed to take forever. Each section had to be filmed around 4 or 5 times from different camera angles, yet on the other hand it seemed to be over in seconds, possibly due to relief on my part that the day was finished! The first take had to be stopped due to someone from the catering team pushing a trolley over the gravel courtyard while we were filming. Thankfully I didn't fluff my lines, and I feel that for a first time on camera I managed ok. With a bit of luck no-one will ever be able to dispute this as the piece sadly didn't make the final edition of the show from Althorpe, which was shown at the beginning of September. I may yet be shown in a compilation show later in the year, but even if the piece never sees the light of day I can always say I've been filmed for the Antiques Roadshow, which is something I never thought I'd be owning up to!

For those of you who are interested in such things, the books we'd taken were valued at around £1000, and one book in particular caught the interest of Justin who thought the quality of the leather and binding was spectacular.

