
Condition Assessment and Treatment Report

conservator	Stephanie Gibbs
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owner	Guildhall Library (Peter Whitehead)
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 item bibliographical data

Prynne's Plea for the Lords (spine piece)

A Plea for the Lords, / and / House of Peers / or / A full, necessary / seasonable, enlarged Vindication / of the just, antient [sic] hereditary Right of the Lords, Peers, / and Barons of this Realm to sit, vote, judge in all the / Parliaments of England.

William Prynne Esquire, a Bencher of Lincolnes Inne.

London: printed for the Author, 1658.

 structure and appearance

Binding:

Traditional tightback binding, covered in polished sprinkled calf. Boards blind tooled (imprecisely), 2 blind lines around each cord on spine, gold tooling along board edge. Red title label with gold tooled border. Leather trimmed in turn-ins, boards infilled.

Textblock:

Sewn on 4 raised cords. 3 colour endbands, only extant at head. All edges gilt. Very little rounding and only some backing. Laid paper, printed short grain. Sections are of two bifolia (4 pages). The initial collation is slightly uneven, with the printers marks reading:

[A]

[a†]

[b†]

[B]

As the volume is quite thick, the section markings continue through to Ttt, whence follow an unnumbered leaf of omissions [sic] and errata, and then the endpapers.

Guildhall Library stamps throughout, ex libris bookplate on front pastedown, pencilled shelf marks on front pastedown:

~~C.9.3~~

AN.15.5

AN.11.2.18

Possible alterations to the binding during the previous rebacking procedure include: Endpapers different from textblock; may date to previous rebacking, but no evidence to support this. Covering leather coated in a shellac[?] based layer probably at this time, as evidenced by the uneven discoloration along the board edges, where some of the gilding has been discoloured by the shellac, and a border of varnish is visible. Brush strokes are also visible on the boards. This may have been done as a preservative, much as modern repairs might incorporate aluminium alkoxide, microcrystalline wax, or leather dressing on weakened leather to add strength.

 condition assessment

Binding:

The item has been previously rebacked, as evidenced by marks of lifting of the leather from the boards, change of leather visible at turn-ins; discoloration on pastedowns from new turn-ins (no discoloration from original leather). [figure 3]

The corners are bumped and splitting. Front board is detached from textblock. Back board: leather has deteriorated in the joint, especially at the head; the leather is broken between the head and the second cord and the tail and the last cord. [figures 1, 2]

Textblock:

Textblock quite dirty, especially the first half, which has been read and underlined in ink. This use of the textblock is evident in the changed shape of the spine. The spine has almost no rounding. Gilding along head completely obscured by dirt. Fore-edge gilding wearing off from use. Headband quite dirty; tail endband missing.

Foxing begins from page 425 (section Iii) to end.

treatment proposal

Remove the extant spine leather, saving as much of the original spine and label as possible.

Lift any spine linings, clean the spine of animal glue and other residue. Lift the leather from the boards along the spine edge. Lift the pastedowns from the boards along the spine edge.

Oversee the existing sewing along the exterior of the spine using linen braid. Line the spine with aero cotton. Reattach the textblock to the boards by splaying the braids and spine lining onto the boards.

Consider using a hollow construction instead of the original tightback – depending upon the literature on this topic.

Tone new calf leather to match extant. Recover the spine. Reattach any original pieces of the spine and label.

additional treatment notes

Following the construction of a maquette binding using raised cords and a paper mache hollow, it was determined to use this conservation technique with this project.

The maquette binding was sewn on 5 raised cords, incorporating made endsheets with a hidden cloth joint, and all 5 cords were laced into the boards.

Endbands were sewn of two colours over a vellum core.

The boards were lined on the inside using archival Kraft paper before the lacing in.

The spine was lined with aero cotton over the raised cords, and this was then adhered to the boards after they were laced on. The aero cotton attachment to the boards was slit 1 inch in each joint to permit the turning in of the leather.

A lining layer of HP watercolour paper was glued to the outside of the boards, being butted up against the line from the aero cotton. A second layer of this paper was then adhered over the entire front board. To even the amount of pulling tension, a layer of the watercolour paper was then adhered on the inside of the boards (over the laced in cords).

The book was then wrapped in cling film and placed in a finishing press. A spine liner was made by forming layers of Japanese tissue dampened with paste over the (covered) raised-cord spine. In all, 6 layers of Japanese paper were used in the construction of the hollow: two layers

of medium weight paper and four layers of heavyweight paper. The spine liner was then allowed to dry in place.

While still on the textblock, the shoulders, head, and tail of the book were marked onto the spine liner, which was then removed and trimmed to size.

The spine leather used for the maquette was also a calf from Hewit's, which was pared to a quarter-binding to most closely resemble the leather used in the rebacking procedure.

The method of covering which was used was to have the book (unwrapped!) in the finishing press, with the spine liner in place on top of the raised cords. The leather was dampened and pasted out twice, and the spine liner coated with a thin layer of EVA to increase tack. No direct connection between the spine liner and the textblock was used, aside from that between the leather on the spine liner and the leather on the boards. The book was covered as for a traditional quarter leather binding, working the leather over the cords, onto the boards, forming the turn-ins, forming the headcaps, and then pressing for thirty minutes. The boards were then set, and the book dried overnight under a weight.

The boards were covered using a marbled paper, and the inside of the boards infilled using HP watercolour paper. The aero cotton internal joint of the endpapers was pasted down with the book open, and then the endpapers were pasted down open using a mixture of PVA and paste.

Making the maquette binding was useful in a number of ways, as the spine suffered unduly from wrinkling at the turn-ins as a result of the hollow construction. This was probably a result of the spine liner softening during the covering operation, a problem which was overcome in the covering of the repair volume by making two changes. First, the spine liner now made used thicker Japanese paper to produce a stiffer hollow, which would resist softening from the paste. Secondly, the covering operation was altered to allow the spine liner attachment to the leather to dry before working the turn-ins and headcaps.

final treatment

The textblock was dry-cleaned using smoke sponges and white art eraser.

A piece of medium weight Japanese paper was tinted with acrylics to match the tone of the textblock, and guarded around the endsheet to form the internal hinge of the volume between the textblock and the pastedown.

The volume was placed in a finishing press to facilitate working on the spine. The spine was lifted dry using a knife, scalpel, and lifting spatula. Due to the deterioration of the leather (red rot: dry and powdery), the leather only lifted well at the head and the tail, where it had been loosened by the turn-ins and by separation from the spine due to use. The combination of hard animal glue and brittle leather meant that it was difficult to lift much of the spine. A poultice of SCMC (4% w/v) was used to clean the spine.

The original cords were dampened using SCMC, and over sewn with a linen braid support and 60/3 cotton thread. The cords and sewing were very brittle (and dry, probably resulting from the animal glue and migrating leather deterioration) and this wetting was necessary to sew without causing structural damage. [figure 4]

The spine was pasted, and rounded and backed using light pressure. Due to the brittleness of the spine as mentioned above, it was very difficult to reshape the textblock to any extent, but it was possible to redefine the backing joints.

The entirety of the spine was lined with a layer of medium weight Japanese paper and paste, and

then a layer of aero cotton was adhered over the entirety of the spine

The original leather was lifted from the board along the spine edge, and the leather from the earlier reback was trimmed down to the line of the original leather on the boards. The edges of the boards were very uneven and not at all square, either from a rough original binding (as evidenced by the rough tooling) or from the rebinding.

The pastedowns were lifted from the boards on the inside spine edge, to accommodate the inner paper hinge. The edges of the pastedowns were consolidated using RK-0, Japanese spider tissue.

The linen braid was trimmed and glued (using EVA) to the boards. The aero cotton spine lining was also glued to the boards, forming a second hinge in addition to the leather joint. [figure 5]

A semi-alum tawed calfskin from Hewit's was toned using Sellaset dyes to match the existing leather, and then pared.

To form the spine liner for the book, the volume was wrapped in cling film and placed in a finishing press. Seven layers of medium weight Japanese paper were used in total. These were dampened with wheat starch paste before being formed over the spine, where they were worked over the cords using a damp sponge and bone folder. The spine liner was allowed to dry in place, and then trimmed to size at the shoulders, head, and tail. [figures 6, 7, 8]

In covering the volume, the following process was used:

The book was wrapped in cling film and placed in a finishing press.

The leather was dampened and pasted out, the first layer being over the entire piece of leather, the second paste layer only at the location of the spine liner.

The spine liner was placed in position over the cling-film protected book, and a thin coating of EVA applied. The leather was worked over the spine liner, being smoothed out onto the cling film (rather than onto the boards), and was worked over the cords. The leather dried in place overnight. [figure 9]

The book was removed from the press, and the cling film unwrapped. The spine leather was then removed from the cling film, and checked to fit with the raised leather from the boards. [figure 10]

The leather was redampened and repasted, paste now being applied to the areas of the leather around the spine liner. The boards (under the lifted leather) were given a layer of paste to encourage adhesion of the leather. The leather was worked into place, by lining the spine liner up with the raised cords, and then smoothing the leather onto the boards. The turn-ins were then formed, and the headcaps.

The volume was pressed using tins for 20 minutes, and then allowed to dry under weights.

To readhere the raised leather over the new leather, a mix of paste and EVA was used; the volume was pressed for 10 minutes and then allowed to dry under weights.

To form the internal hinge, tinted Japanese tissue was worked across the joint and under the raised pastedowns. The pastedowns were then readhered using a PVA and paste mix, and allowed to dry with tins in, under weights.

The leather which was lifted from the board edges, and the fragments of original leather from the

spine, were reattached using EVA. [figures 11, 12]

bibliography

Honey, Andrew. "The conservation of *Annotationes in Libro Evangeliorum* using a natural cloth hollow over a moulded Japanese paper spine-former.' *The Paper Conservator* [IPC], vol. 27, 2003.
