
Condition Assessment and Treatment Report

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

[author] Roberti de Avesbury

Historia / de Mirabilibus Gestis

Accedunt

(1.) Libri Saxonici, qui ad manus / Joannis Joscelini venerunt.

(2.) Nomina eorum, qui scripserunt / historiam gentis Anglorum, / Et ubi exstant; / per Joannem Joscelinum. /

E codicibus mss. descripsit ediditque / Tho. Hearnius; / Qui & Appendicum sub nexuit.

OXO NII, / E Theatro Sheldoniano

M.DCC.XX [1720]

 additional item data

Guildhall Library ownership plate. Inner front board shelf mark: ~~C.2.1~~ AN.1.2.5. Pencilled inscription [illegible]. Flyleaf inscription: very fine copy / large paper / [illegible]. Title page pencil: Robert of Avesbury. Title page: Guildhall Library stamp

 structure and appearance

14.7 cm x 22.5 cm x 5 cm

Plain brown calf tightback binding; boards have double line of gilding and blind decorative stamping. Full gilt spine. Red label on spine: ROBERTUS / DE / AVESBURY. Gold tooling in third block of spine: per Hearnium. Board edges gilt with a decorative roll.

Sewn on 5 raised cords. 3 colour endbands woven around 3 cores, tied down at 3 places (beginning, middle, end). Textblock edges gilt

 condition assessment

Binding:

Front board almost detached: held only by bottom laced-in cord. [figures 1, 2]

Back board leather has failed at the joint, but is still held in place by laced in cords.

Leather sound with some scuffing; some leather loss at corners.

Significant loss of leather at head and tail of spine; spine darkened and some cracking. Gold tooling on spine scuffed. [figure 3]

Textblock:

Textblock edges dirty.

 treatment proposal

The problem in treating this item is to reattach the front board without causing disturbance to the

full gilt spine. This may be accomplished through several methods:

1. Lift all leather from spine, retaining as much integrity of the spine as possible. Reback with new leather (either with or without a papier mache hollow) and adhere original spine over new spine. Form inner joint of Japanese tissue.
2. Lift leather from upper board only. Create an aero cotton joint from the top of the original spine to underneath the leather on the front board. Patch with tinted Japanese tissue to disguise cotton. Form inner joint of Japanese tissue.
3. Reinforce cords to form a new joint using a 'hitch' of thread from within the textblock, through the joint (drill a hole through the joint of the textblock for the thread) and out onto the spine. Adhere thread from spine onto front board. Reinforce outer joints with tinted Japanese tissue. Form inner joint of Japanese tissue.
4. Slit leather over cords only. Wrap new thread / linen braid around original cords. Lift leather along spine edge of both upper and lower boards. Fray braid onto surface of both front and back boards. Consolidate losses on spine using leather or Japanese paper as is deemed appropriate by the behaviour of the materials. Consolidate inner joints using Japanese

additional treatment notes

It was determined to use treatment method #4 after some consideration. This method was chosen as offering the strongest attachment of the textblock to the boards without fully rebacking the item, and it was not anticipated that lifting the spine leather would be successful; as the beauty of this item is in the gilt spine, as much as possible of that appearance was desired to be saved. A further element of strength was, however, given by modifying treatment #4 to replace the spine leather at the head and the tail only, permitting the formation of new headcaps and offering protection to the endbands.

final treatment

The textblock and textblock edges were dry-cleaned using a chemical sponge and white eraser.

The leather was lifted for 1 inch (2.5 cm) along the spine edge of the upper and lower boards.

The leather on the spine of the textblock was consolidated using Klucel G 2% in IMS to prevent surface delamination.

The leather was lifted from the cords. [figure 4]

SCMC (4% w/v) was used as a poultice along the cords and at the head and tail to clean the spine prior to further treatment.

5 lengths of linen braid and 60/3 thread were cut for the cord reinforcements. The textblock sections were evenly divided (8 sections were used). The cords were dampened from the outside with a water pen. The lengths of linen braid were oversewn over the existing cords, wrapping the thread around both the braid and the cord, and inserting into the next marked section. [figures 5, 6]

The linen braid was frayed out and adhered to the boards using EVA. [figure 7]

The endbands were no longer held at the middle tie-down, and so were attached only at the beginning and at the end of the textblock. After the spine leather was lifted from the head and tail, the endbands were reinforced using 40/3 thread, with 5 tie-downs. The spine was dampened

during this process to ease strain on the paper (which was brittle due to adhesive residue), but it was felt that a great number of tie-downs would have caused a weakening of the paper at the head and the tail. The head and tail were then consolidated using [PO5] medium weight Japanese paper. [figures 8, 9]

Hewit's semi-aluminium tanned leather was coloured using Hewit's aniline leather dyes, mid-brown and dark brown, to achieve a closer tone to that of the original leather.

Both tinted Japanese paper and thinly pared leather were tried as coverings for the cords along the exterior of the spine. While the paper would have offered a certain amount of strength which the thin leather lacked, the leather had a significantly superior fit over the cords and onto the existing spine leather. The paper cockled and did not adhere well.

3 pieces of leather were cut into a 'dumb-bell' shape, to lie straight over the cords with wider 'anchors' on the boards. The middle three cords were covered with this leather. [figure 10]

The dyed calf as used for the cord covering pieces was pared for covering at the head and tail, taking into consideration the need to cover the 2 remaining cords and the need to form headcaps over the endbands.

The tail was covered (leather, paste), with the leather extending over the bottom cord. A new headcap was formed, and the book was tied up and pressed very briefly (5 minutes).

The head was covered, with the leather extending over the top cord. A new headcap was formed, and the book was tied up and pressed very briefly (5 minutes). [figure 11]

The leather was checked for evenness of application, the book was tied up, and allowed to dry under weight overnight.

Small piece of leather were pared very thinly to offer protect to the joints, as there was a complete loss of leather and the joint of the textblock was exposed. The leather used was the same as for the other operations, and was adhered as 8 small pieces between the cords and onto the boards. The adhesive used was a paste and EVA mix. [figures 12, 13]

The lifted leather from the upper and lower boards was re-adhered to the boards using paste. The book was pressed for 10 minutes to encourage adhesion. [figure 14]

The book dried under weights overnight.
