

Swaffham revisited: A review of the earlier conservation of books in the Swaffham Parish Library

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Abstract

A research project started in 1998 to examine the bindings on the books in the Swaffham Parish Library has brought into sharp focus the dangers of creating irreversible historical damage implicit in even carefully executed and recorded conservation work. It has forced a consideration how changes in our understanding of the significance of material discounted only two decades ago must be reflected in changes in the way in which we approach its conservation today. This paper looks at work carried out by the author on a small number of books in the library over 20 years ago and examines how this has hindered his current research. To explain the significance of this material, English and French bindings on a collection of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century recusant editions are examined in detail, describing how they can be distinguished by differences in structural technique and materials which might be lost or obscured in conservation. The composite binding on an Italian edition of 1555 which now has an Italian structure and an English cover is discussed to show how a close structural analysis can contribute to our understanding of the history of an individual book as well as to the wider history of the ownership and movement of books.

Zusammenfassung

Ein Forschungsprojekt, das 1998 begann, um die Bucheinbände der Pfarrbibliothek von Swaffham, England, zu untersuchen, hat die Gefahr, daß irreversibler historischer Schaden bei selbst sorgfältig ausgeführter und dokumentierter Restaurierungsarbeit entstehen kann, ins Blickfeld gerückt. Es hat die Überlegung notwendig gemacht, daß Veränderungen in unserem Verständnis von der Bedeutung von Material, das noch vor zwei Jahrzehnten als unwichtig abgetan wurde, zu einer Veränderung unserer heutigen Herangehensweise führen muß. In diesem Artikel werden Restaurierungsarbeiten, die vom Autor vor 20 Jahren an ein paar Büchern der Bibliothek ausgeführt worden sind, besprochen und dabei untersucht, inwieweit sie seine heutige Forschungsarbeit behindert haben. Um die Bedeutung dieses Materials zu erklären, werden englische und französische Einbände an einer Gruppe von Ausgaben des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im Detail untersucht und es wird beschrieben, wie sie durch Unterschiede in der Bindetechnik wie der Bindematerialien, die durch eine Restaurierung verloren oder verdeckt werden könnten, auseinandergehalten bzw. klassifiziert werden konnten. Der zu-

sammengesetzte Einband einer italienischen Ausgabe von 1555, der heute eine italienische Bindestruktur mit einem englischen Deckel hat, wird vorgeführt, um zu zeigen, wie eine detaillierte Analyse der Bindetechnik zu unserem Verständnis der Geschichte eines individuellen Buches wie der Geschichte im breiteren Kontext von vorherigen Besitzverhältnissen und der geographischen Wanderung von Büchern beitragen kann.

Introduction

It is a salutary experience for any conservator to revisit work after a long period and see whether it might have been done differently in the light of further experience. To go back to a collection after 20 years but to use it as a researcher rather than treat it as a conservator is particularly salutary, and an experience which has reinforced in my mind conclusions which have been forcing themselves into my consciousness increasingly in recent years.

I was first asked to look at the parish library of Swaffham, a sizeable market town in Norfolk, a county on the east coast of England, in 1977, at a time when I was coming to the end of my apprenticeship with Roger Powell. It was at his suggestion that the Council for the Care of Churches asked me to carry out a survey of the collection and make recommendations for the repair of some of the books. Filled with the enthusiasm and the confidence of the newly trained, I was excited to visit the collection, the first of many such visits to neglected collections that I have made in the course of my work. I spent a day in the cluttered and dusty chamber over the vestry of the fifteenth-century church where the books were kept on wooden shelves on three sides of the small room. Access was via a narrow stone spiral staircase, and there was no form of environmental control - beyond the draughts, which blew through the gaps under the eaves of the roof. I worked my way through the books and listed a number as candidates for repair or boxing, looking particularly at books identified as being of special interest by earlier visitors sent by the Council. I repaired ten of these books in the workshop which I set up in 1977, after leaving Roger Powell's workshop.

The work was done according to the principles and techniques which I had learned from Roger Powell, but it is clear that I was also making a distinction in treatment decisions which was based on the decorative value of the bindings. Amongst the books selected were five which would normally be classified as finely bound, and for which I made drop-spine boxes. These included three more or less badly damaged English blind-panel bindings (Fig. 1) and two well pre-



Fig. 1 *Fortalitiu[m] fidei contra Judeos: Sarracenos: aliosque christiane fidei inimicos*, Lyon: Joannes de Romoys for Stephan Gueynart, 1511 (Swaffham Parish Library SWD 4/2, Lyons 238). Front cover with the Royal Arms panel of John Reynes.



Fig. 2 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone di Messer Giovanni Boccaccio nuovamente stampato et ricorretto per Messer Lodovico Dolce con la dichiaratione di tvtti vocaboli, detti, prouerbij, figure, & modi di dire incogniti & difficili, che sono in esso Libro*, Venice: Francesco Bondoni & Napheo Pasini ad instantia di Curtio Navò & Fratelli, 1541 (Swaffham Parsh Library SWD 4/01, Lyons 98). The book in the drop spine box made by the author in 1977.

served gold-tooled bindings, one a fine Venetian binding on sufficient, value to the undecorated books in similar condition which I did repair. What I have discovered since then is that undecorated books can be as eloquent - sometimes more so - about their provenance as any decorated binding, and that to make distinctions about treatment based solely on the

amount of tooling a binding has is mistaken and will result in significant historical loss.

That said, it was still a relief to find, when I began my reacquaintance with the library last year (it is now housed in much better conditions in the library of Norwich Cathedral), that all the repairs that I had carried out were still sound and functioning as intended and the binding fragments and conservation reports were still to be found in the back of each of the repaired volumes (Figs. 3a and b). What was not so pleas-



Fig. 3a John Reynolds, *The triumph of God's revenge against the crying and exercisable sinne of (willful an premeditated) murder*, London: William Lee, 1635 (Swaffham Parish Library SWF 3/8, Lyons 434). Front board, showing reback by the author in 1977.

ing was the realization that had I, after the experience of surveying dozens of other libraries and after a great deal of research into the history of bookbinding, been asked to do the work in 1997 rather than 1977, I would not have done many of the repairs that I had carried out in that first programme of work. What I had found was that the repairs I had carried out were severely limiting the information which I was now hoping to gain from those books. The repairs had, in fact, in most cases made the books to a greater or lesser extent no longer useful for the sort of research that I am now doing. What I had done, competently and successfully as it appears, was to prepare those books for readers that they are never likely to receive at the expense of an historical integrity which can never now be returned to them. To explore this further it is necessary to look at two aspects of my connection with this small library - firstly the history of the library[2] and secondly the purpose of conservation as I understood it when I received my training.



Fig. 3b Ibid. Binding fragments pasted inside the back board.

Parish libraries were established to provide the essential theological and cataphetical reading matter for the local clergymen that they might not otherwise have had access to and, in many cases, would not have been able to afford to buy themselves. The period following the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 saw the foundation or revival of many ecclesiastical libraries, including those of several of the English cathedrals, which had suffered serious losses during the English civil war and the Commonwealth which followed it. The parish of Swaffham was given its library in 1679 by a local landowner, Clement Spelman of Narborough Hall who clearly felt that his library might be of use to the parish and its incumbent. Although the library was the gift of a single man, it in fact comprises books from several sources. Some of the earlier books came from the working library of the English historian, Sir Henry Spelman (1564?-1641), whilst the law books are clearly the cumulative collection of three or four generations of members of the Spelman family who worked in the law, especially another Clement Spelman (1598-1679), who was appointed Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer. A different, and rather unexpected, source, given the eventual home of the library, was Francis Willoughby, the brother in law of the Clement Spelman who gave the books to the church. He had strong Catholic leanings, and it is highly probable therefore that the catholic recusant books of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries once

formed part of his library. Clement Spelman also left the sum of £100 for the purchase of books for the parish library, some at least of which may have been spent on the purchase of patristic and other texts from the library of Matthew Violett, a minister in Norfolk who in 1678 was threatening to take action against the church for non-payment of money owed to him. As seven volumes in the library once belonged to Violett, it seems likely that part at least of Clement Spelman's £100 may have been spent in clearing the money owed to Violett for those books.

Some of the books published before Clement Spelman's death have written in them the names of later incumbents of Swaffham or members of their families, and may have been added to the library at a later date, in addition to which some of the books were bought secondhand by the Spelman family and therefore have in them the names of earlier owners. One book, a copy of *Amadis de Gaule*, [3] has the motto "*Mediocria Firma*" written on the verso of the final text leaf. This was the motto used by Sir Nicholas Bacon, and it may well be that this volume came from his library. The seventeen books published in the 60 years following Spelman's death may also have been bought with this money, but the 20-year hiatus which follows, for which no editions are to be found in the library, suggests that the formation of the library ground to a halt in the 1730s - perhaps in 1737, the date of the engraved bookplate to be found in many of the books (Fig. 4). Whatever their source, the books form a



Fig. 4 Samuel Hieron, *A Helpe vnto Deuotion. Containing certaine Moulds or Formes of prayer, fitted to seuerall occasions: And penned for the furtherance of those, who haue more desire then skill to poure out their soules by petition vnto God ...* The fourteenth Edition, London: by John Beale for William Lee, 1628 (Swaffham Parish Library SWD 5/26, Lyons 274). Inside the front cover, showing the 1737 bookplate.

largely coherent group (Fig. 5), the numbers of editions rising steadily from the 1560s to a peak in the 1630s, and dropping off sharply thereafter until the 1680s when the addition of new books slows to a trickle. The large difference between the number of editions printed in the 1630s (100) and that of the 1640s (41) does suggest that the bulk of the collection belonged to Sir Henry Spelman, who died in 1641. The books published from the 1760s onwards are mostly liturgical works, no doubt removed to the library when no

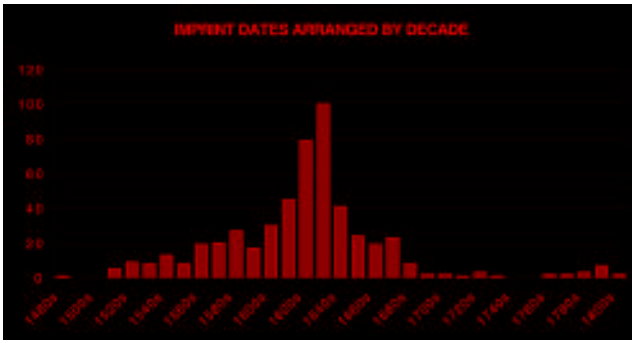


Fig. 5 The books of the Swaffham Parish Library arranged by decade.

longer needed in the church, and a few books relating to the town of Swaffham and its inhabitants.

The early collection therefore derives from several sources, some known, some not. What is known is that the bulk of these books were given to the church at the death of Clement Spelman in 1679 and that until their removal to Norwich in 1990 they remained in the church. With one exception,[4] the books were not repaired until I was asked to carry out work in 1977. That exception was the only incunable in the library which was rebound in the mid-nineteenth century on four thin recessed cords and covered in full reversed calf with a hollow back - a binding which had signally failed to support the thick quarto textblock. I would now recognize that a collection which has remained virtually untouched has a special quality and an historical value which requires that it be treated as a whole and not as a collection of individual volumes which might or might not be candidates for repair. Whilst the value of individual books can never be diminished by being part of a larger historical collection, the opportunity offered by a collection to make comparisons between books of similar age and provenance is likely to add considerably to their archaeological value. Failure to recognise this will result in serious historical loss.

An example of this phenomenon is to be found in the recusant books in the Swaffham library. These books, printed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries mostly in either St Omer or Douai, but a few also in Paris, Rheims and Rouen, were produced for distribution in England to support the catholic cause and, because they were banned by the protestant authorities, had to be smuggled into England. This could be done in many different ways, perhaps by slipping the unbound sheets into bales of new paper arriving through the English ports in the normal way or by smuggling in bound volumes more surreptitiously. Evidence of the latter can be deduced from the bindings on this material in the Swaffham library. Many of the books are in English bindings, and one can assume therefore that these were brought into the country in unbound sheets, but a significant number are in French or Flemish bindings, which makes it almost certain that they were imported illegally, as the importation of bound books into England was severely restricted and subject to a heavy duty, a measure intended to protect the jobs of English binders. It is therefore of some significance to be able to identify which bindings were made where, a question complicated by the fact that many of these books

were bound in plain, undecorated limp and stiffboard parchment bindings. This means that traditional methods of locating bindings by means of finishing tools are of no use, leaving only the structure and materials of the books to give the necessary information.

To do this, it is first necessary to identify what constitutes a typical English laced-case parchment binding of the period, and as the collection contains 23 English-printed books in limp laced-case parchment bindings which it is fairly safe to assume will be English in such a library, there is a useful amount of material to work on without even stepping outside the confines of the collection itself. The picture that emerges from about 1560 onwards is of books sewn on thin alum-tawed supports, sometimes reinforced with lengths of cord across the spine, which are laced through pairs of small holes punched very close to each other (2-4mm apart) on the joints of the books. The joints are marked by two creases, one on the edge of the spine itself made from the inside and a joint crease made from the outside which defines the distance between the exit and entry holes in the cover at each sewing support (Fig 6). These English bindings are further

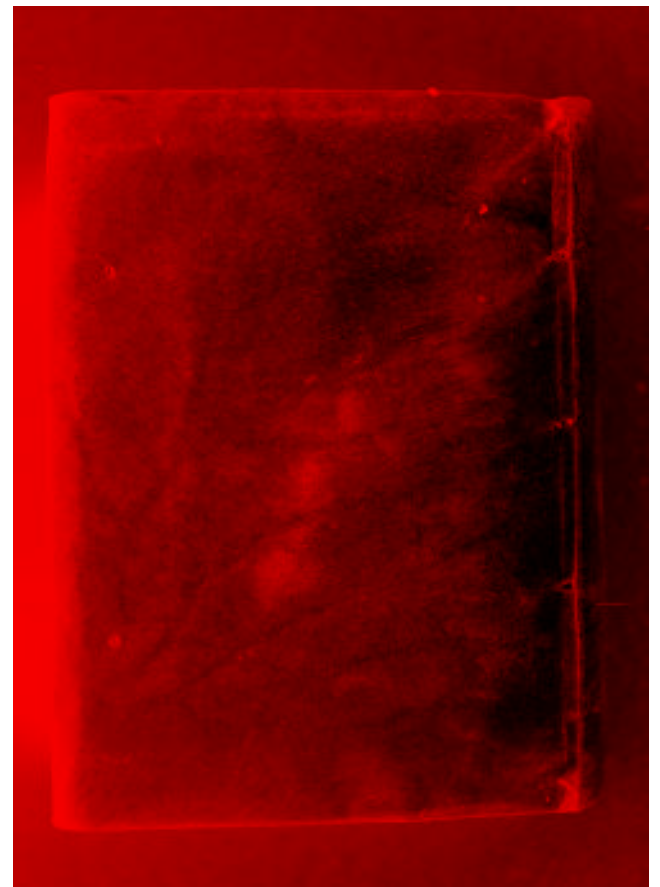


Fig. 6 An English laced-case calf vellum binding on a copy of: Stephanus Luzvic, *Cor Deo devotvm lesv pacifici Salomonis Thronvs Regivs è Gallico P. Stephani Luzvic, cui adiunctæ ex P. Binet imaginum expositiuncule, Douai: Ex Officina Balt. Belleri, 1627* (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 5/33, Lyons 352), showing the closely-spaced spine and joint creases and thin alum-tawed slips. This binding also has endbands.

distinguished by a common use of calf vellum for the covers (only 9 of the 75 English bindings I have so far recorded on my database are not in calf vellum covers), and a tendency

to cut the vellum small so that the turn-ins are very narrow (Fig. 7). Other distinctive features are the universal use of glue on the spines, often applied very heavily (Fig. 8), and the frequent absence of endbands on what were typically seen as inexpensive bindings. A comparison with records made in 12 other collections bears out these general conclusions.

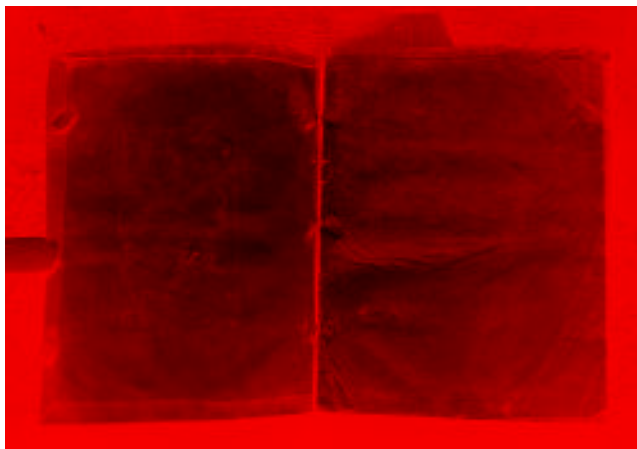


Fig. 7 Inside the front cover of: William Gouge, *Of domesticall dvties Eight Treatises*, London: Johan Haviland for William Bladen, 1622 (Swaffham Parish Library SWB 5/7, Lyons 259), showing the narrow turn-ins. Note also how the binder of this volume chose to trim the slips square and short inside the cover.

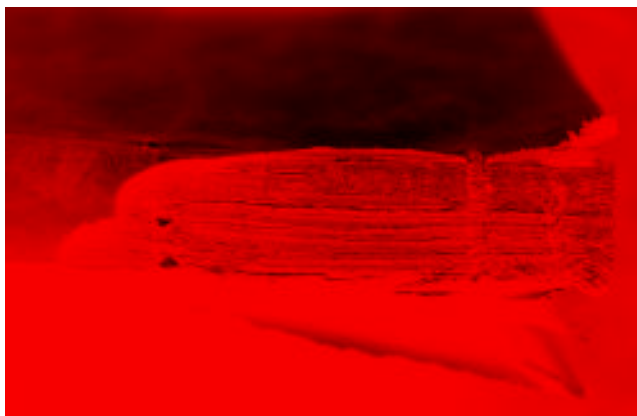


Fig. 8 The tail end of the spine of: Richard Montagu, *Appello Cæsarem. A ivst appeale from Two Vniust informers*, London: H. L. for Mathew Lownes, 1625 (Swaffham Parish Library SWB 5/8, Lyons 372), showing the heavy glue layer on the spine, the alum-tawed sewing support reinforced with a length of cord across the spine and the absence of tailband.

It is interesting to note, therefore, that while some of the recusant editions in the Swaffham library have bindings which conform to these criteria - and were therefore bound in England (see fig.6) - a group of 11 (8 printed in St Omer, 2 in Rouen and one in Paris) are sewn on cords which are cut at the joint and not laced though the cover (Fig. 9). In these bindings, the cover/textblock attachment is effected by lacing the endband slips only though the cover - a technique which is extremely unusual in English practice, if not unknown.[5] A single volume of spiritual epistles in the collection which is sewn on cords with endband lacing only, but which lacks a title page, was catalogued by Lyons as 'probably a London printing of the 1620s or 1630s'.[6] Its structure suggests that it is much more likely to be a continental



Fig. 9 The exposed spine of: *The Progenie of Catholicks and Protestants Whereby On the one side is proued the lineal descent of Catholicks, for the Roman Faith of the Primitive Church, euen from Christ's verie time vntil these our dayes: And On the other, the neuer-Being of Protestants or their nouel Sect during al the foresayd time, otherwise then in confessed and Condemned Hereticks*, Rouen: the widow of Nicolas Courant, 1633 (Swaffham Parish Library 4/21, Lyons 130), showing the four single cord sewing supports, cut at the joints, and the endbands laced through the cover.



Fig. 10a The inside of the back cover of: John Floyd, *A paire of spectacles for Sir Hvmfrey Linde to see his way withall. Or an answeare to his booke called, Via Tvta, A safe way: wherein the booke is shewed to be a labyrinthe of error and the author a blind guide*, Rouen: Widow of N. Courant, 1631 (Swaffham Parish Library SWE 5/19, Lyons 428), showing the single surviving piece of cartonnage used to reinforce the foredge.

edition, a supposition supported by the pieces of cartonnage inserted under the turn-ins of the cover, a type of reinforcement found also on a Rouen edition of 1631[7] in what is undoubtedly not an English binding. In this book, a strip of cartonnage survives tucked under the foredge turn-in of the back cover (Fig. 10a). The existence of a similar piece of cartonnage in the front cover is now shown only by the impression of the cartonnage in the flyleaf - the cartonnage itself is missing. I mention this only to show how slight some of the structural evidence may be, and it is not hard to imagine how easily this evidence - no more than a crease in the flyleaf - could be lost in the repair of the badly damaged front cover of this book (Fig. 10b).

Another continental binding on a recusant edition,[8] also sewn on cords, has inserted boards, but this uses a different type of construction which I believe to be particularly associated with Flemish bookbinding. Instead of inserting the cartonnage boards into the cover towards the end of the covering process, the boards were first attached to short parchment guards folded round the hook-type endleaves which

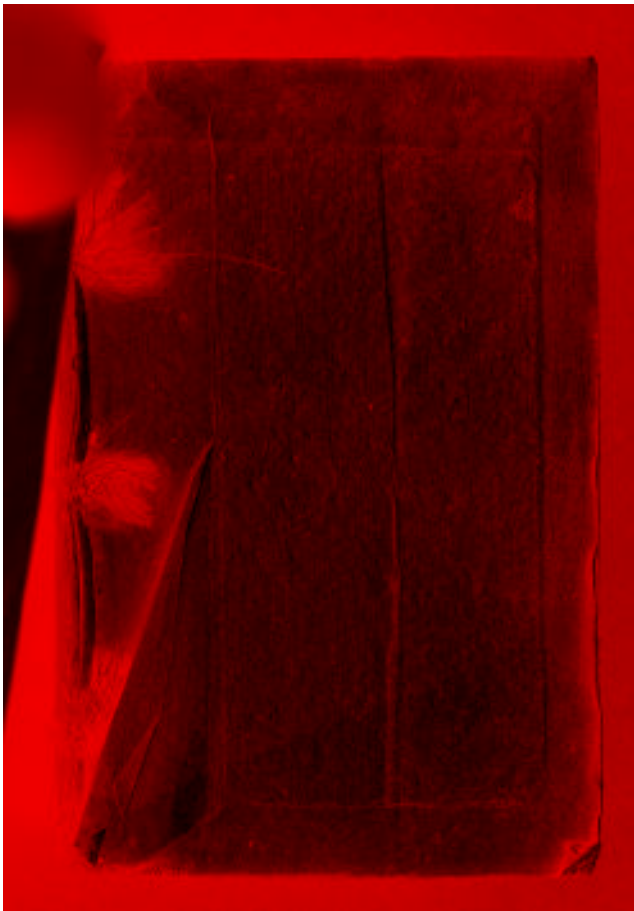


Fig. 10b Ibid. The front flyleaves, showing the impression left by the missing piece of cartonnage, originally tucked under the turn-ins of the front cover.

were themselves folded round the first and last gatherings (Fig. 11). The use of part of an endleaf gathering to supply a form of board-attachment is found in a number of northern European countries (seemingly with the exception of England), but the use of parchment guards for this purpose would appear to be more common on Flemish bindings - though Flem-

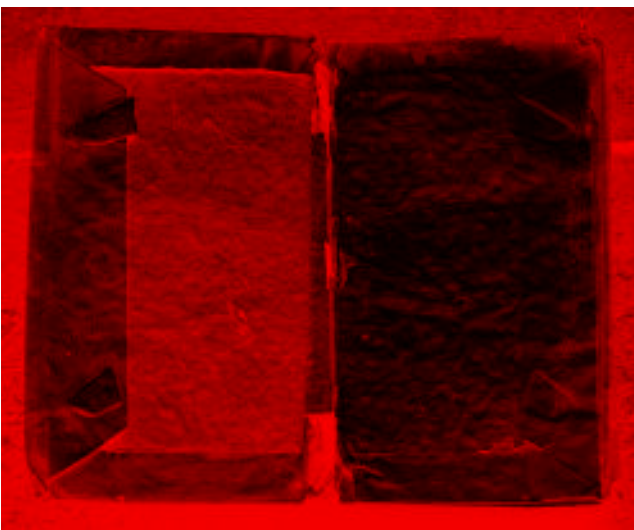


Fig. 11 Inside the front cover of: *St Augustine of Hippo, The Meditations, soliloquia, and Manvall of the Glorious Doctour S. Augustine*, Paris: Nicolas de la Coste, 1631 (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 5/22, Lyons 22), showing in the joint the short parchment guard which was pasted to the outside of the board before the book was covered.

ish in this context could well include the towns of both Douai and St Omer. What is clear, however, is that the structure of the book suggests very strongly that this Paris edition was bound in northern France or Flanders on its way to England.

Other types of sewing support may also indicate the provenance of a binding, sometimes in rather confusing circumstances. The library contains a number of Italian imprints, a handfull of which are in Italian bindings, including the magnificent Venetian binding on the 1541 Boccaccio mentioned above. A much damaged two-volume edition of Plutarch's *Lives*,^[9] however, appears to be in what can only be an English gold-tooled laced-case binding (Fig. 12a), with thin alum-



Fig. 12a The front cover of: *La Seconda Parte delle Vite di Plvtarcho, Nvovamente da M. Lodovico Domenichi tradotte. Con dve tavole: l'vna delle cose piu notabili, e l'altra di diuersi nomi antichi e moderni di paesi, città, mari, promontori, uenti, fiumi, monti, e luoghi, che, in tutta l'opera si contengono*, Venice: Appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, et Fratelli, 1555 (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 4/21 Lyon 422)

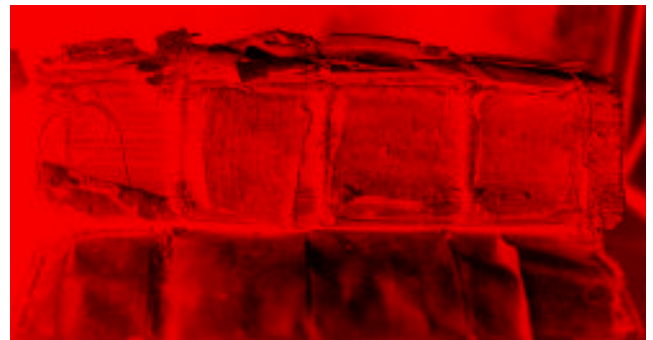


Fig. 12b Ibid., showing the exposed spine with, surviving on the back joint only, the alum-tawed slips stabbed through the sewing support, the remains of the endbands and the panel spine linings.

tawed thongs laced through closely-spaced holes in a calf vellum cover. A closer examination of the binding (facilitated by its poor condition), shows that the books are not in fact sewn on these alum-tawed thongs, but on single supports of rolled tanned skin - a support type which is characteristic of Italian practice - with short lengths of the alum-tawed skin stabbed through the ends of the supports and then laced through the cover (Fig. 12b). This indicates that the binding may not be entirely English, though some structural components, such as the endbands, which are not of a type found in Italy in the sixteenth century, almost certainly are. The typical Italian endband of this period has a primary sewing with either a back bead or no bead at all, in which the absence of the front bead allowed secondary sewing in coloured silk to be added to the endband if required. The endbands on both volumes of the Swaffham Plutarch are worked with a primary sewing with a front bead, of the basic type still in common in hand binding, and not commonly used in Italy until later in the seventeenth century.

The endleaf type - a single fold of paper folded a second time to form an outside hook - does not offer any definitive indication of provenance as it was used in several European countries, but a comparison of the sewing thread used in the endleaves with that used to sew the book shows a distinct difference. The textblock is sewn with a Z-twist thread while it is clear from the small fragments of thread surviving in the mould damaged and defective endleaves that they were sewn with an S-twist thread. This shows that the endleaves were not sewn with the rest of the textblock. The use of a Z-twist thread for the textblock is suggestive, but cannot be taken as proof, of an Italian origin. (62 of the 91 examples of books that I have recorded as being sewn with Z-twist thread are in Italian bindings, the rest being either German or from the Low Countries, with no English examples.) But the combination of Z-twist thread, rolled tanned skin sewing supports and Venetian printing does point fairly conclusively to a textblock sewn in Italy.

The second text leaf bears a partially legible manuscript inscription in Italian recording the purchase of the book by W. Cressweller in August 1594 'in presentia de Sr Richard Juxon'. There is an additional note in a different hand which reads 'ego Ri: Juxon hoc testor [I, Richard Juxon, witness this], possibly written by the Richard Juxon who was the father of the then twelve-year-old William Juxon, the future Archbishop of Canterbury. These inscriptions, together with the physical evidence presented by the book allow us to construct a hypothetical history of the two volumes. They were bought by W. Cressweller in Italy (which would explain the use of Italian in the inscription - a not uncommon habit amongst travellers at this date) as two bound volumes, most probably in either limp paper or parchment covers. The books were brought back to England, and in order to avoid paying duty on the bound volumes, the covers were stripped off both volumes, a process which would have removed also the Italian endleaves and quite probably the endbands as well. An English binder was then asked to supply new, gold-tooled covers, to secure which new endbands were worked and extra slips were stabbed through the original, Italian sewing supports in order to be laced through the new cover. New

endleaves were also sewn to the existing textblock, and panel linings of coarse linen canvas were glued to the spine. There are two other possible explanations for the way the books are bound. One is that Cressweller bought the books as sewn textblocks, which might explain why he chose to write his inscription on the second text leaf, so as to keep it away from damage, or that the original covers were damaged and replaced, though it is perhaps less likely that this would have happened to both volumes.

There are two lessons to be learnt from these books. One is that identifying where a book might have been bound is an integral and sometimes significant part of its history, and that the clues which may allow the identification to be made may lie in small details of construction which are not always easy to preserve in the course of conservation. The second lesson, and one more germane to the subject of this paper, is that had I selected the Plutarch for repair in 1977, some, if not all, of the evidence of its history would not have survived. The extent of the damp damage is such that the original endleaves had mostly disappeared, taking with them a large amount of the thread used to sew them (Fig. 12c). The



Fig. 12c The back of the textblock of: La Prima Parte delle Vite di Plutarcho, Nvovamente da M. Lodovico Domenichi tradotte. Con dve tavole: l'vna delle cose piu notabili, e l'altra di diuersi nomi antichi e moderni di paesi, città, mari, promontori, uenti, fiumi, monti, e luoghi, che, in tutta l'opera si contengono, Venice: Appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, et Fratelli, 1555 (Swaffham Parsih Library SWC 4/20 Lyon 421), showing the extent of the mould damage to the endleaves and textleaves.

extra alum-tawed slips had mostly broken, releasing the covers, and the condition of the textleaves was such that it would

have been inevitable that both volumes would have been pulled to allow for aqueous treatment and extensive paper repair. The level of detail given in the reports that I wrote for the books I repaired at that date would have allowed for a brief a description of the original sewing supports and the added slips, endbands and spine linings, but there is little chance that these would have been returned with the repaired volumes, and could not therefore have been used to confirm the provenance. In any case, the endbands (see Fig. 12b) were so badly damaged that it would not have been possible to preserve them intact off the book.

The Swaffham Plutarch therefore presents a very clear dilemma in terms of conservation, a dilemma common to many books in similar condition in other collections. The books may be damaged in ways which would inhibit if not prevent safe access to the text by a reader, yet repairs will inevitably destroy much of the historical value of the artefact. In 1977, the artefactual value of a binding was still very much tied to the amount of decoration present on the binding, and relatively plain or undecorated bindings were largely seen as belonging to an amorphous mass of material which largely lay beyond the reach of traditional bookbinding research, and was therefore seen as relatively expendable - to be saved if it was simple to do so, but to be discarded if it was likely to cost too much money to preserve it or if the text was thought to merit a more secure binding.

This attitude, which is still with us, is exemplified in the Swaffham library by the copy which I repaired of Francis Bacon's *Essayes*,^[10] the spine of whose original English calf vellum cover was badly eaten away by mice, together with the spine folds of some of the gatherings. The report that I wrote on 16 December 1977 and tipped into the back of the rebound volume is as follows (with typing errors corrected!):

When received, the original limp vellum cover of this book had been badly eaten by rodents, the damage extending to the spine folds of the first sixty leaves. There was damp staining throughout and the fore-edges of many leaves were affected by mould. The sewing structure had broken down and only fragments remained of the original endpapers. These appear to have been made up from a single folio of plain paper folded round the first and last sections.

The book was pulled, and the leaves cleaned with Draft-Clean powder. They were then resized in a 2% solution of gelatine size in warm water, with Industrial Methylated Spirit being used as a wetting agent on the mouldy areas. The leaves were then repaired with long fibre tissue, stuck with boiled wheat flour paste (with magnesium carbonate and PVOH). New endpapers of handmade paper were supplied, and the book was resewn on three alum-tawed pigskin double thongs, in place of the original single thongs, with linen thread. The spine was lined with unbleached linen, stuck with boiled wheat flour paste, and new headbands were worked with linen thread, with a bead at the back and front, tied down in every section. The thongs were then laced into a new vellum cover, equipped with alum-tawed pigskin ties.

I recorded some additional information on the record sheet which I used in my workshop at that time, from which I now learn that the book was sewn 2-on on its three supports - but without a record of the route taken by the thread to achieve

this. I have no record of the sewing thread used. I can only guess that I was accurate in my description of the sewing supports as being of alum-tawed skin, and that they did not have the cord reinforcements across the spine so common in England on these laced-case bindings. I did record that the book had a slight round in the spine, the consequence probably of the swelling created by the sewing thread in the thin quarto gatherings, but not always present in English bindings of this type. The original cover, however, went virtually unrecorded, beyond that it was made of vellum - which according to my rather imprecise usage at the time probably meant calf vellum, but could possibly have meant goat as well - and that it had two pairs of alum-tawed ties on the fore-edge. The damaged cover was not re-used as the resizing, repair and all-along sewing of the textblock increased its thickness so that it would no longer fit back into it. The original cover was therefore discarded, as its lack of decoration was taken to mean that it was of little or no evidential value. Fortunately, I made a practice in those days of keeping such discarded pieces of bindings, and found this cover amongst them when I began my research project (Figs. 13a and 13b). It has now been returned to the library.

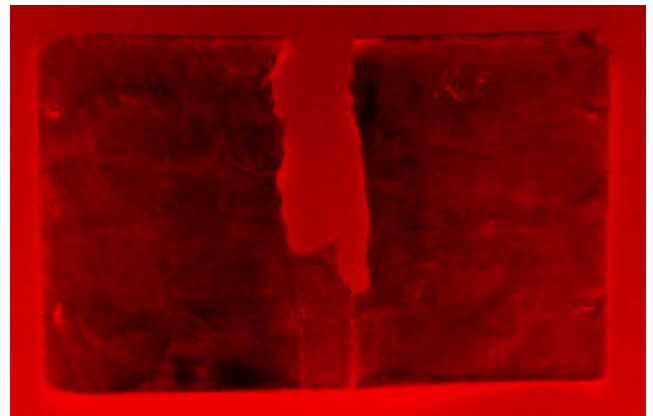


Fig. 13a The original calf vellum cover of: Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Covnsels civill and morall*, of Francis Lo.Vervlam, Viscovnt St. Alban. Newly Enlarged, London: by John Haviland for R. Allot, 1629 (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 4/1 Lyons 25), showing the outside of the cover.

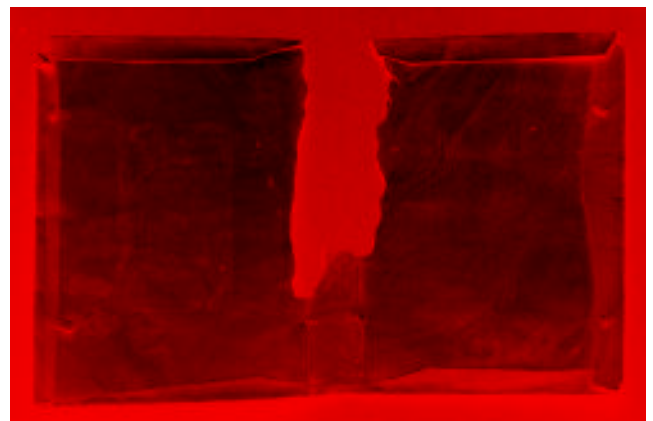


Fig. 13b Ibid., showing the inside of the cover.

An examination of the cover quickly confirms that it is of calf vellum, but it also shows us evidence of the use of a scraper on the fleshside of the skin by the parchment maker. The narrow turn-ins confirm its English origins, as do the

scoop-type cut-away areas in the turn-ins at head and tail of the spine, cut to facilitate turning the parchment in after the cover had been laced onto the textblock. Some binders preferred to make the turn-ins at head and tail before attaching the cover to the textblock, others, as here, did not. The narrow yapp edges on the foreedges of the cover are also very typical of such a binding, as is the narrow joint and the (two surviving) very closely-spaced lacing holes for the thin sewing support slips. It can be seen that these lacing holes are not lined up at right angles to the joint, but at an angle, the entry hole on the front cover being higher than the exit hole, and lower on the back cover. The use of angled lacing is a particularly (though not uniquely) English characteristic in laced-case bindings of this period, but often in distinct (and different) combinations of perpendicular and angled lacing which may well have been intended to identify different workshops or even the work of individual binders. The missing portion of the spine of this cover has removed that evidence, but the two surviving lacing points at least indicate that angled lacing was used.

The tail end of the spine area of the original cover also shows clearly that there are no holes for lacing in any endband slips, indicating, as my report did not, that originally the binding had no endbands. I now realize that the absence of endbands is an important indicator of the economic status of a binding, particularly at a time when most bindings of any intended permanence had endbands. The lack of them suggests a retail binding for the book trade. By working endbands on the rebound textblock, especially by conscientiously tying them down in every gathering, I effectively hid the evidence of the original absence of endbands, and the very presence of new endbands could be taken as an indication that the original binding may have had them - which would place the original binding in a more exalted position in the economic hierarchy of early seventeenth-century bindings. The same might be said of the use of double supports in resewing the textblock, a support type I have not yet seen used on English laced-case bindings of the second half of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, as well as the use of split lacing (Fig. 13c). These techniques were the result of an enthusiastic reading of Christopher Clarkson's 1975 publication on limp vellum bindings, which gave my binding its rather Italianate appearance.[11] I have, however, no misgivings about the quality of the work done, nor about the structure used on the rebound textblock - both have resulted in an apparently durable and flexible binding. I certainly believe that entirely new bindings on early textblocks do not need to follow slavishly an original that has inbuilt weaknesses which will result in the early collapse of that structure.

What I doubt in the context of this seldom-used collection is the wisdom of carrying out such radical work on a book which, although damaged, was otherwise in entirely original condition. It is not a copy which is likely to, or indeed needs, to be exposed to normal library use (i.e. reading), but could safely have been boxed for its long-term preservation, just like the fine bindings, and be brought out on the few occasions when bibliographical research made access to *this* copy necessary. For such occasions it would then

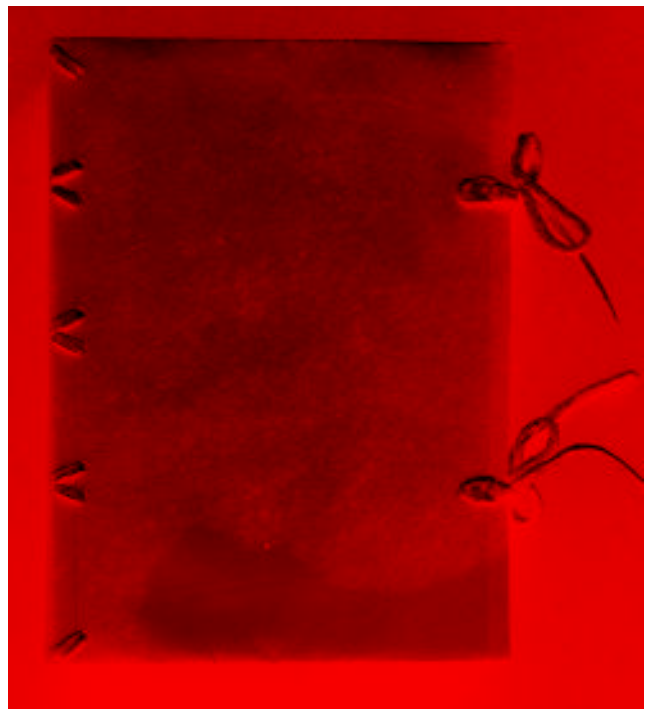


Fig. 13c *Ibid.*, showing the new binding completed by the author in 1977

retain its full complement of historical information and, if handled carefully, would not need to suffer further damage. The problem of how to preserve and/or record accurately and accessibly the full range of information contained within a single binding is one that now occupies a great deal of my research effort. In common, I suspect, with other attempts to do the same thing, the quantity of information about a binding that I consider worth recording grows continuously as I examine more books and am able to make more informed comparisons. I cannot know what I am likely to find significant in years to come, nor can I always be sure that anyone else will understand my notes (I cannot always guarantee to do so myself). Photographs, drawings and diagrams help considerably, but are only as good as those taking or making them, and even so are inevitably selective in the information that they record. The more intangible qualities of a binding, best described as its character, are exceptionally difficult to fix in word or image. It is therefore hard to escape the realisation that the most reliable method is to preserve the untouched original and to take comfort in the fact that damage may sometimes be beneficial in allowing visual access denied in well-preserved books. Minimum intervention repairs where absolutely necessary, intelligent control of use and improved handling regimes are a much safer option for our ever-dwindling stock of original material.

It would be possible to repeat the arguments presented in this paper for almost every damaged book in the Swaffham collection, but there is not room here to show examples of all the significant historical information that could be lost by repair. The examples given do show what has been and what can be lost. Attitudes today have, in some cases, changed, and the recent programme of work to make book shoes and a variety of enclosures for the more badly damaged books in the collection, financed again by the Council for the Care of Churches and carried out by Caroline Bendix

in 1998, is a reflection of the current awareness (on the part of the Council at least) of the need to protect historic collections of this sort as much from repair as from the risk of further damage, with the specific aim of preserving the artefactual value of the books and the collection as completely as possible.

Notes

1. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone di Messer Giovanni Boccaccio nuovamente stampato et ricorretto per Messer Lodovico Dolce con la dichiarazione di tutti vocaboli, detti, prouerbij, figure, & modi di dire incogniti & difficili, che sono in esso Libro*, Venice: Francesco Bondoni & Napheo Pasini ad instantia di Curtio Navò & Fratelli, 1541 (Swaffham Parish Library SWD 4/01, Lyons 98). I am grateful to Anthony Hobson for identifying this binding as coming from a small, unnamed Venetian workshop from which a handful of bindings are known to have survived.
2. The information about the history of the library is taken from the introduction to the catalogue of the library completed in 1987: Mary Cecilia Lyons, *Swaffham Parish Library A Catalogue of printed books and manuscripts*, Norwich and Dublin, 1987. The Lyons number given in the references to the Swaffham books in this paper refer to the numbers given to the volumes in this catalogue.
3. *Le Cinqiesme Livre d'Amadis de Gaule, mis en Francoys par le Seigneur des Essars Nicolas de Herberay, Commisionaire ordinaire de l'artillerie du Roy etc.*, Paris: Estienne Groulleau, 1560 (Swaffham Parish Library SWE 5/35, Lyons 6 and 7). This volume is in a contemporary French laced-case parchment binding.
4. *Biblia*, Venice: Franciscus Renner de Heilbrun, 1483 (Swaffham Parish Library SWF 3/10, Lyons 39)
5. The only example known to me is an atypical binding on another Swaffham volume: *The prvdentiall ballance of religion, Wherein the Catholicke and Protestant religion are weighed together with the weights of Prudence, and right Reason*, St Omer: F. Bellet, 1606 (Swaffham Parish Library SWE 5/20, Lyons 129). I believe this binding to be English, though it is unusual in a number of respects, not least in the use of exceptionally wide paper transverse linings - otherwise unknown to me on English laced-case limp bindings. It was possibly sewn in France and given its calf-vellum cover in England.
6. *Spirituell Epistles*, 1620s or 1630s (Swaffham Parish Library SWE 5/22, Lyons 215)
7. John Floyd, *A paire of spectacles for Sir Hvmfrey Linde to see his way withall. Or an answeare to his booke called, Via Tvta, A safe way: wherein the booke is shewed to be a labyrinthe of error and the author a blind guide*, Rouen: Widow of N. Courant, 1631 (Swaffham Parish Library SWE 5/19, Lyons 428)
8. St Augustine of Hippo, *The Meditations, soliloqvia, and Manvall of the Glorious Doctour S. Augustine*, Paris: Nicolas de la Coste, 1631 (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 5/22, Lyons 22)
9. Plutarch, *La Prima [La Seconda...] Parte delle Vite di Plytarcho, Nvovamente da M. Lodovico Domenichi tradotte. Con dve tavole: l'vna delle cose piu notabili, e l'altra di diuersi nomi antichi e moderni di paesi, città, mari, promontori, uenti, fiumi, monti, e luoghi, che, in tutta l'opera si contengono*, Venice: Appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, et Fratelli, 1555 (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 4/20-1, Lyons 421-2)
10. Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Covnsels civill and morall, of Francis Lo. Vervlam, Viscovnt St. Alban. Newly Enlarged*, London: by John Haviland for R. Allot, 1629 (Swaffham Parish Library SWC 4/1, Lyons 25)
11. Christopher Clarkson, 'Limp vellum binding and its potential as a conservation type structure for the rebinding of early printed books: a break with 19th and 20th Century Rebinding Attitudes and Practices', *ICOM Committee for Conservation 4th Triennial Meeting*, Venice, 1975

Biography

Dr Nicolas Pickwood. After training with Roger Powell, established a conservation workshop in Norfolk, England in 1977. In 1978 became Adviser on Book Conservation to the National Trust and in 1983 was appointed conservation consultant to the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Served on the Committee of the Institute of Paper Conservation (1977-88) and was editor of the *Paper Conservator* from 1984 to 1989. Lecturer on *The History of European Bookbinding 1500-1800* at the annual Rare Book School in the U.S. from 1985. Elected Fellow of the I.I.C in 1988 and was 1989 Rosenbach Fellow in Bibliography at the University of Pennsylvania. Was Visiting Professor in the Columbia University School of Library Service, Conservation Education Program from 1990-92. From 1992-5 was Chief Conservator in the Harvard University Library. In 1993, gave the Homee Randeria Lecture in Bookbinding for the Bibliographical Society of Great Britain. Research fellow at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel in 1996. In 1998 appointed Visiting Professor at the London Institute with responsibility for organizing a conservation programme for the library of the monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, Egypt.

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