

Treatment Report for
Abraham Walter Book of Maps
September 2025



By Clare Goulbourn,
Book Conservator
Lux and Livre



Contents

1. Project Background	1
2. Binding Description	1
3. Condition Assessment	5
4. Treatment	10
5. Additional Notes	15

1. Project Background

This report provides a description of the conservation treatment of the Abraham Walter Book of Maps. The book is currently held at the Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre (SWHC) in Chippenham and work was carried out on site, funded by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) and overseen by Pat Cocks and Ian Hicks (Collections Manager). This report includes a description of the binding style, an assessment of the books condition before treatment; details of the conservation treatment including materials used; recommendations for safe storage and handling.

Clare Goulbourn visited SWHC in June 2024 and met with Pat Cocks and Ian Hicks to discuss the potential project. A treatment proposal was compiled by Clare and sent to both parties, and this was used in the process of securing funding from the NMCT for the conservation of the book.

2. Binding Description



Figure 1: Binding before conservation treatment.

It is a reverse calf full leather binding with pulp boards; sewn in an all-along style onto cords which were laced into the boards. The textblock was sewn on five cord sewing supports; the sewing supports were laced into the boards to form the board attachment.

Originally there were handsewn endbands. These are no longer present, but some of the tie-downs (the points at which the endband thread was sewing through the fold of a section to secure it to the textblock) are still present (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Photo showing original tie down in textblock



The textblock is made up from sections of three bifolia of parchment. There are three blank paper flyleaves at the front and back, with a paper paste down onto the inside of the boards. The pages have been filled from front to back, with more than half of the pages still blank. The pages contain hand painted maps.



Figures 3 and 4: examples of hand painted maps from the

Book of Maps

The boards are approximately 335 x 220 x 6mm ; although they are not exactly square. There are clasps on the foreedge of the front board – the base is thick parchment, with leather on top. One half of this piece has been attached to the board with six metal pins that have been hammered through the board; the other half protrudes off the edge of the board. The metalwork (most likely a variation on brass) has been attached to the protruding piece of parchment/leather using metal pins which are flush on the front, and have been hammered flat over a square metal “washer” on the reverse. The clasp has been decorated with an etched pattern. The back board has the metal catches for the clasps which have been attached with metal pins.

The metal clasps are approximately 48 x 23mm at their widest parts. They are placed 45mm and 40mm from the head and tail edges of the boards respectively. The gap between the two clasps is 155mm.



Figure 5: Detail of the bottom clasp on the front board



Figure 6: Detail the double blind line decorations on the boards.

There is a double blind tooled line on the board approximately 53mm from the spine edge of both boards (see figure 6). Both boards also have remnants of a second double blind line approximately 8mm from the spine edge of the boards.

There is a paste down page of blank paper on the inside of the front board. The turn-ins are visible under the paste down and have not been trimmed back into straight lines. A smaller printed page of an illustration with manuscript additions has been pasted down all over (most likely with animal glue) to the paste down. There is a notable amount of glitter/glass on the painted areas of this paper.

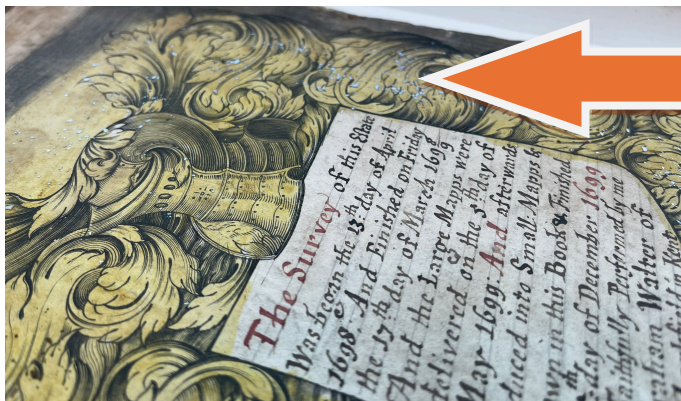


Figure 7: detail of glitter/glass on front paste down page

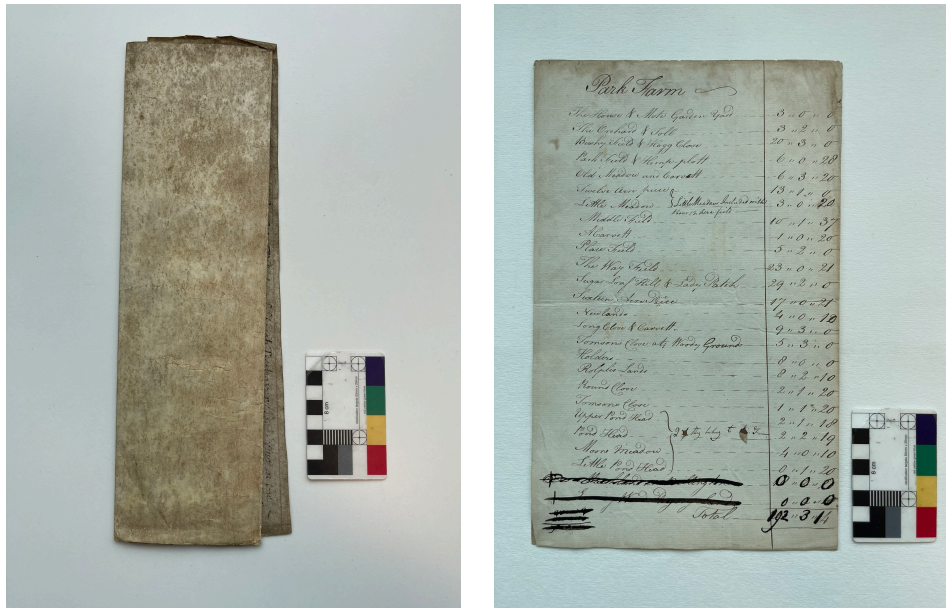


Figure 7 and 8: "Part 1 of 3" and "Part 2 of 3"

There is a folded large piece of parchment with manuscript in a separate envelope – labelled "Part 1 of 3"

There is a Single page and folded bifolium of paper with manuscript. This is housed in a second separate envelope labelled "Part 2 of 3"

3. Condition Assessment



Figure 9: Book before treatment



Figure 10: Shows where single parchment page has been heavily tipped onto previous section



Figure 11: Back of binding, pastedown detached from board



Figure 12: attachment between two sections

Boards;

- Both boards are detached from the textblock
- The covering leather is missing at the corners and edges leaving the boards exposed and delaminating and bumped.
- The leather covering is significantly damaged with large areas of loss, lifting and staining.



Figure 13: Detail of a board corner, and lifting covering leather

- The clasps are in good condition
- There are three blank detached pages of paper at the front and at the back. All the detached paper pages have suffered water/mould damage in the past and are very delicate, with losses, at the head edge
- The paste down for the back board is detached

Textblock;

- The sewing is broken throughout the textblock. The thread is still present in the folds of the sections – but all thread from the spine side is missing which suggests it was cut away.



Figure 14: Showing sewing thread still in place in centre of section

- There is some planar distortion throughout the parchment pages, consistent with its age and tendency to move
- There is some gold work embellishments on some of the pages



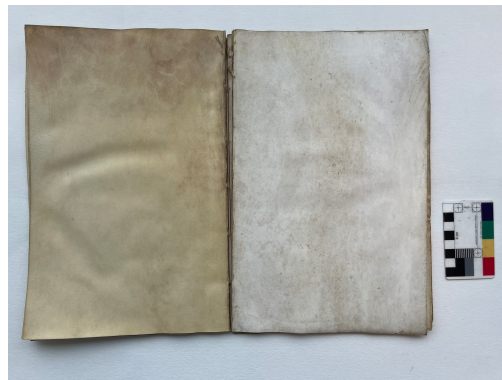
Figure 15: Detail showing example of gold work, and example of glittery deposits

- There is a “glittery” deposit which appears to have been applied as a decoration. SWHC staff have inspected it under magnification and believe it to be glass.
- Areas of the black ink are friable and likely to fall off with any abrasive contact (e.g. cleaning)
- Some old evidence of surface mould in between the blank pages
- The dis-colouration of the parchment varies widely from page to page due to several factors:

Natural differences in the skins

Difference in colour between the skin side and the flesh side of the parchment

Discolouration from old mould damage/staining



Figures 16,17 and 18: examples of variation in colour and patina of the parchment pages.

- There is a folded large piece of parchment with manuscript in a separate envelope – labelled “Part 1 of 3”. This has significant surface dirt.
- There is a Single page and folded bifolium of paper with manuscript. It has been damp/wet/mouldy at some point and has losses and very delicate areas. This is housed in a second separate envelope labelled “Part 2 of 3”

Collation of textblock:

- Paper pastedown
- Blank paper bifolium
- Single bifolia of parchment, with single paper page adhered to front of page (tipped on very heavily – depth of approximately 50mm)
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment
- Loose section of 2 bifolia of parchment (*belongs after ***)

- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment with heavily tipped on (animal glue) additional single parchment page. (*** loose section belongs between this section and the tipped on single page*)
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment (*this section and the next are adhered together by approximate 60mm at the tail*)
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment (blank)
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment (blank)
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment (blank)
- Single page of parchment (blank)
- Section of 3 bifolia of parchment (blank)
- Single bifolium of parchment (blank)
- Single bifolium of parchment (blank)
- 3 detached single paper fly leaves.

4. Treatment

4.1 Textblock

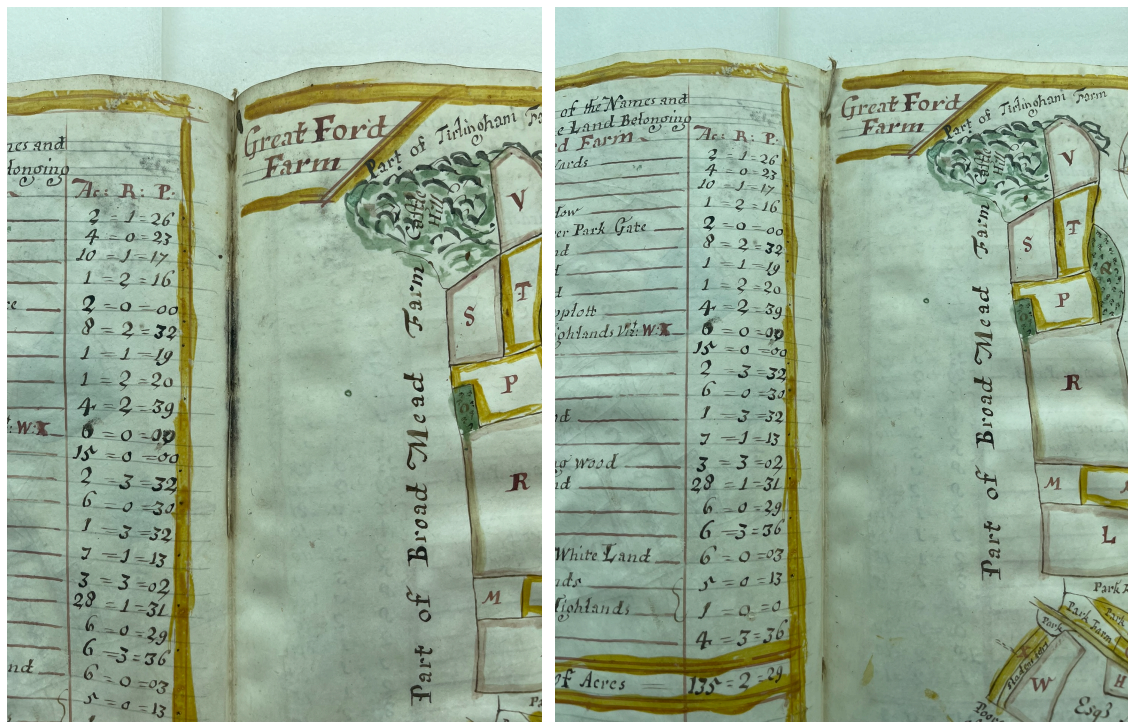


- Surface cleaned the textblock using soft brushes, smoke sponge, grated eraser and eraser. Areas with manuscript were not cleaned using smoke sponge or eraser due to the delicate status of some of the inks.

Figure 19: Process of cleaning page using smoke sponge

Figures 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25: examples of before (lefthand side) and after (right hand side) surface cleaning





Figures 26 and 27: examples of before (lefthand side) and after (right hand side) surface cleaning

- Detached the two adhered sections mechanically.
- Detached the heavily tipped on single page mechanically. This was possible because the animal glue attaching them is degraded and had become brittle.
- Removed as much of the animal glue and leather remnants from the spines of the sections as was possible mechanically.
- Repaired the paper pages. As the pages were all blank and mould damaged – the decision was taken to reinforce the damaged edges of the pages with tengujo Japanese paper and WSP applied to the reverse, and trim the repairs back – rather than spend significantly more time infilling the pages.
- “Part 1 of 3”: Surface cleaned using brushes, smoke sponge and eraser. Avoided areas with manuscript due to the delicate nature of the ink. Unfolded creased corner using locally applied humidity and gentle weights.



Figure 28 and 29: parchment before (left hand side) and after (right hand side) surface cleaning

- “Part 2 of 3”: Repaired and reinforced top edge and top foredge corner as needed on the pages using tengujo Japanese paper and WSP, applied to the reverse.

4.2 Boards

- Surface cleaned the leather gently using a soft brush.
- Surface cleaned the paper using brushes and smoke sponge (avoiding areas with manuscript and glitter/glass deposits).
- Readhered the detached back board pastedown using WSP applied around the edges of the page with “dots” in the middle – in order to make it easy to remove if ever necessary.
- Consolidated covering leather by applying minimal dry paste under lifting areas. Consolidated board corners and edges by applying WSP between the layers and drying under pressure.

4.3 Re-housing

- A bespoke archival box was made to house the boards. The boards were placed with a piece of 12mm plasterzote in between them, and the inside edges of the box were packed out with plasterzote in order to prevent the boards from moving in the box.

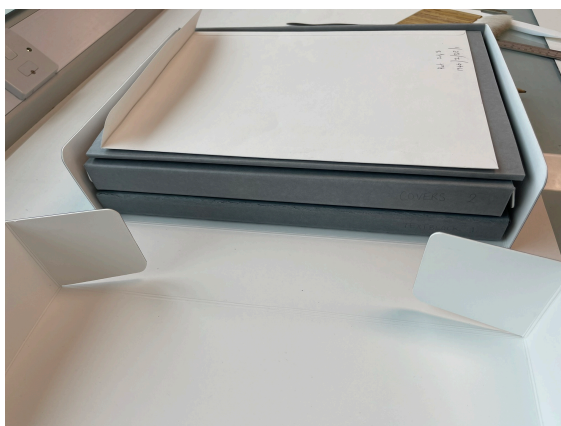


Figure 30: housing for "Part 1 of 3"



Figure 31: Housing for textblock

- A folder was made from archival thin card which could house "Part 1 of 3" in its envelope. The folder was the same footprint as the box that housed the boards. It was packed out internally with 3mm plasterzote in order to secure the object within it.
- A four-flap-folder was made with the same footprint as the box for the boards. Heavy weight box board was used for the horizontal part, forming a firm front and back board to help apply a constant gentle pressure to the parchment textblock. The vertical strip of the folder was created from a lighter weight archival card. The inside of the folder was packed out using plasterzote.



- An archival box was made to contain (in this order) the four-flap folder containing the textblock, the board box, the folder housing "Part 1 of 3" and the envelope with "Part 2 of 3".

Figure 32: Archival box housing all of the book

5. Additional Notes

It appears that the parchment textblock was constructed and bound before being used. Evidence includes;

- that double page illustrations/maps are sometimes across sections,
- and in one case the thread in the gutter of the section seems to have been in situ when the sea was painted – the thread is coloured by the paint and the area under the thread is blank.
- Approximately half of the pages are blank, the user seems to have worked through the book and stopped before the book was filled.

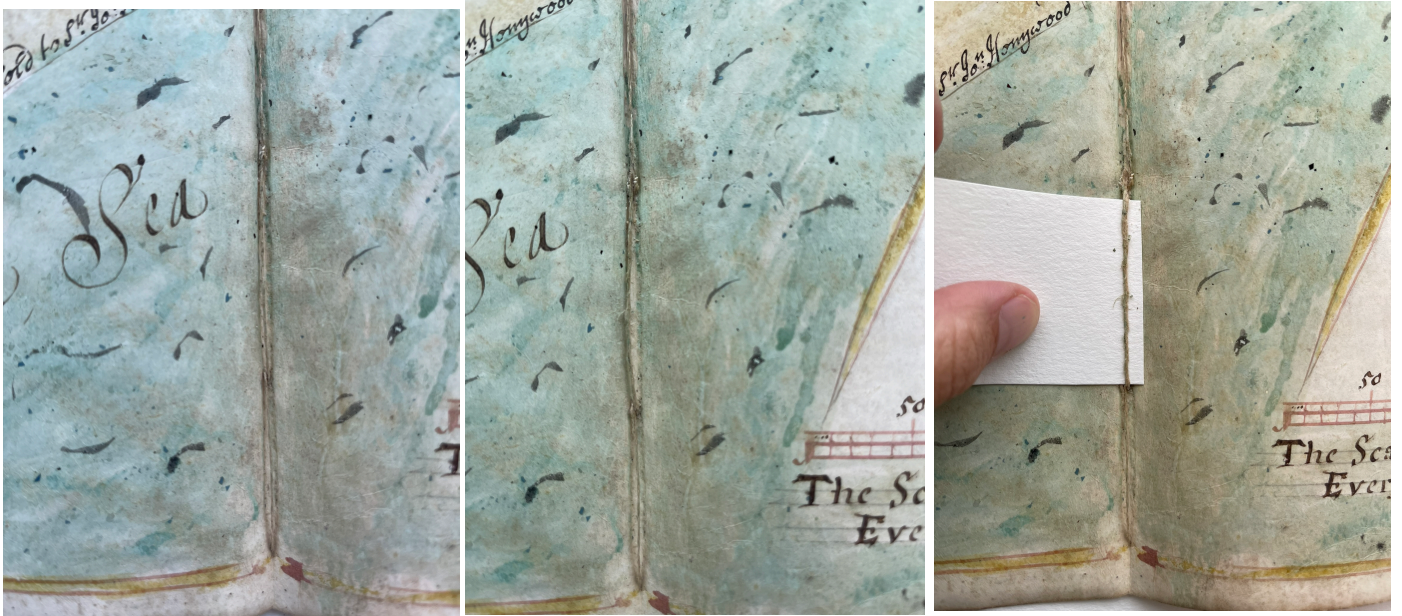


Figure 33: thread appears to have been painted the same colour as the painted page

Figure 34: the parchment behind the thread is not coloured

Figure 35: showing the thread appears to be coloured – not it's original plain colour

Materials and Suppliers

Evacon R (EVA) adhesive

Shofu Wheat Starch Paste

Tengu 7.3gsm Natural

Tengu 7.3gsm White

Watercolour paints

Smoke sponge

Staedtler eraser

Grated eraser

Plastazote

Archival Box

Preservation Equipment

Preservation Equipment

Preservation Equipment Ltd

Preservation Equipment Ltd

Winsor and Newton

CXD

CXD

Conservation Resources

Conservation Resources

PADs at Bodleian Library