

---

CONSERVATION REPORT	CR 604.06.24
CLIENT	Inner Temple Library
CONTACT DETAILS	Robert Hodgson <RHodgson@innertemple.org.uk>
ITEM / REFERENCE	Fitzherbert's Abridgement
REPORT DATE	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024

---

## DESCRIPTION

Illuminated vellum bound manuscript of Fitzherbert's Digest. The vellum cover is not contemporary to the text block; the text block appears to be early 14<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the cover is later but still medieval. The text block, perhaps, originally had a different cover. Paper endpapers were also added at the same time as the new cover.



Image 1 – Front cover



Image 2 - Spine

---

<i>Dimensions</i> (L x B x H, mm)	137 x 108 x 45
<i>Binding type</i>	Laced on limp vellum
<i>Gatherings</i> (material and make-up)	16, with 5 bifolia per gathering of vellum
<i>Text/media</i>	The main body of the text is written in iron gall ink. Illuminations have been added to nearly all pages. All titles have gold leaf added to the first letter. From the date of the manuscript, the pigments used are likely to be gold leaf, Verdigris, vermilion or red lead, lapis lazuli or azurite, white lead and ochre. The volume is paginated.
<i>Collation</i>	Pastedown/endpaper bifolio tipped to textblock – 1 bifolio of vellum – 16 gatherings – 1 extra vellum bifolio – endpapers/pastedown (2 bifolios) tipped to text block.

<i>Endpapers</i>	Handmade laid paper – perhaps added at the same time as the limp vellum cover.
<i>Sewing</i>	flexible sewing on double cord supports. Alum tawed thong supports woven through the original cord supports. These thongs form the cover attachment.
<i>Covering material</i>	Vellum
<i>Housing</i>	Bespoke archival clamshell box

---

## CONDITION

<i>Text block</i>	<p>The overall condition of the text block is fair. There is some staining at the head of the text block in the final gathering. Overall surface dirt present, particularly on the original vellum endpapers of the volume, which are quite dark with ingrained particulate dirt, and also the text block edges.</p> <p>Pages 90, 91 and 92 are all slightly distorted, with creases present - possibly through exposure to high humidity, heat or both. The vellum also feels slightly stiffer and less flexible. This is the case also for the final vellum endpaper.</p> <p>The spine of the text block is fully accessible from the front of the volume due to the alum tawed thongs having broken at the joint. The backs of the gatherings have a thick layer of very discoloured adhesive (most likely from their previous binding) and there are heavy deposits of dirt.</p> <p>The profile of the spine has also become concave, meaning the fore-edge juts out beyond the edges of the cover.</p>
<i>Media</i>	<p>The iron gall ink manuscript text is stable throughout.</p> <p>Pigments: The pigments are generally stable. There is burn through of the Verdigris in every instance that it is applied due to the copper content. Of all the colours used in the illuminations, the gold seems to have suffered the worst with areas having flaked off. Under magnification, it appears stable and so the damage presumed to be historic.</p>
<i>Endpapers</i>	<p>The additional paper endpapers and pastedown are in fair condition. At the front it has detached where it was tipped to the text block, has surface dirt and is slightly discoloured. It is also starting to split along the fold and there is evidence that it was once sewn.</p>

At the back there are two free end leaves and then two pastedowns. The end leaves and top layer of pastedown have signs of insect damage. The pastedowns also have a vertical split that runs most of the way up.

*Sewing*

All three of the original cord sewing supports have split halfway across the width of the spine. The sewing at the kettle at this point, at both head and tail, has broken too. Within the text block the sewing still seems strong, apart from within the 9<sup>th</sup> gathering, which is loose.

*Board attachment*

The alum tawed thongs that were the primary cover attachment have split at the front and the additional paper endpapers have detached from the rest of the text block. The cover is now only attached by the laced thongs at the back and sewing thread which goes around the original supports and through the fold of the end leaves.

*Covering*

The covering, although in poor condition, does still offer some protection to the text block. There is a small area of the front fore edge, towards the bottom, that has been eaten by a pest. The back of the cover has a large area of planar distortion, which is what has caused the split in the pastedown.

The turn in at the tail has worn away in areas.

Due to ingrained particulate dirt, the cover has an overall grubby appearance.

*Housing*

Good.

*Overall condition rating*

Poor



Image 3 – Split sewing supports



Image 4 – Split text block



Image 5 – Fore-edge protrusion



Image 6 – Abraded gold leaf



Image 7 – Loose gathering

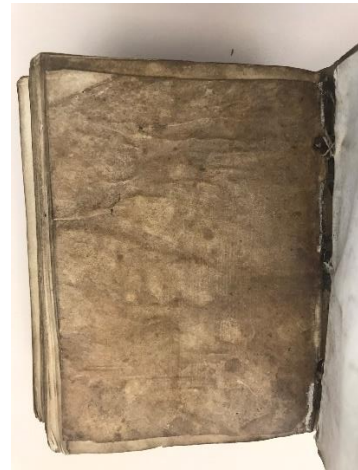


Image 8 – Creased, discoloured vellum endpaper

## TESTS AND (RESULTS)

No tests were carried out as part of this report.

## RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

<b>Option 2</b>		
	Treatment step	Materials
1.	Surface clean throughout	Chemical sponge, soft brush
2.	Remove text block fully from cover Clean adhesive off spine and remove original sewing	Wheat starch paste poultice (applied through goldbeaters' skin)
3.	Repair folded area of front paper endpaper	Japanese paper 12gsm, wheat paste
4.	Resew text block on new thongs Lace cover back on OR if the cover no longer fits add a new flax paper cover	White tawed goatskin, wheat paste, linen thread Flax paper

## TREATMENT DESCRIPTION/OBSERVATION

To be completed following treatment