



The Cambridge Manuscript:

Above: Front cover.

Below: Title page and facing coat of arms of Edward Montague, Earl of Manchester, before conservation treatment.



# Conservation Treatment of a Rare Manuscript

BY LOUISE WILSON AND JULIANNE SIMPSON

In 2001 the Friends of the Baillieu Library initiated a special appeal to raise money for important conservation work on the University Library's Special Collections. The proceeds were contributed to the Baillieu Library Conservation Project, which was set up in 2001 to undertake conservation treatment of significant items. The first items to be treated were a volume of early colonial newspapers (from the McArthur Bequest, 1903) and an early edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. After the success of the first round of work, the Friends committee agreed to continue this support by funding conservation treatment of further items as recommended by curators of the Special Collections. What follows here is a description of the conservation of the 'Cambridge Manuscript', which was treated as part of the 2003 Baillieu Library Conservation Project using funds donated by the Friends.

## The Cambridge Manuscript

This 1662 folio-sized manuscript of 34 leaves has a very long title — *The Foundation of the Universitie of Cambridge with the names, and armes of all such noble persons, as have been Earles of Cambridge: and Chancelors of the Universitie, for 100 yeares last paste: the names and armes of the Principall founders, and speciall benefactors of the colledges, publike schoole and librarie, now extant in the same. The names of all the present masters and number of fellowes of every perticular college. Together with the names and number of magistrates, Governors and officers, there unto belonging: and the number of students now therein residinge*. The University Library published a printed facsimile of the manuscript in 1997.

The Cambridge Manuscript was compiled for Edward Montague, the second Earl of Manchester (1602–1671). It contains his full-page coat of arms and the bookplate of his son Robert, the third earl (1634–1683). Edward Montague was first appointed as chancellor to the University of Cambridge in 1649, removed in 1651, and then reinstated in May 1660. The title page is signed by William Sanderson, who may have been secretary to the chancellor, and is dated 1662.

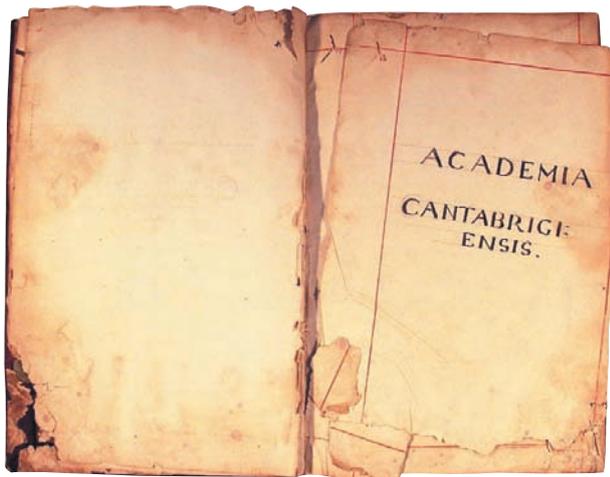
The manuscript remained in the Montague family for several hundred years. Some of the family papers were presented to the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester in 1969. The rest were sold in several auctions at Sotheby's in 1970. This manuscript was purchased by the University of Melbourne Library with the assistance of Dr Pierre Gorman in 1994 and is now part of the Cambridge collection.<sup>1</sup>

As a manuscript, the document is by its nature unique, but it is an example of a kind of historical/heraldic manuscript that was common in 17th century England. Around this time in particular there was a lot of scholarly interest in the origins of Oxford and Cambridge universities and the foundations of the colleges. The manuscript contains numerous hand-painted coats of arms of the various colleges of the university and a brief description of the foundation and situation of each college.

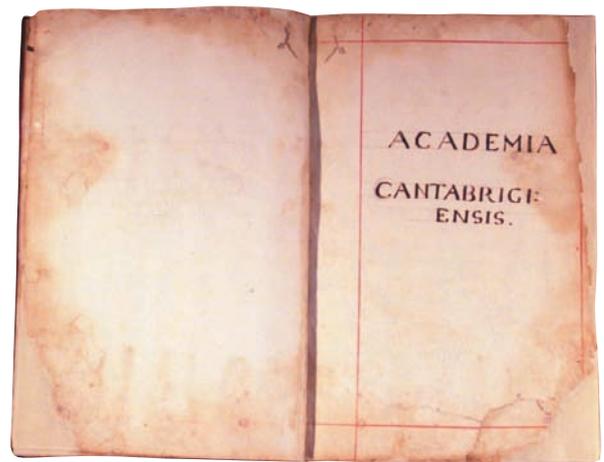
In the college descriptions, the text originally ended with a list of the current master and fellows. Many of the college officers named would have been appointed during the period of the Commonwealth and were then removed at the Restoration of Charles II.<sup>2</sup> These lists have been pasted over with slips bearing new names. The removal of the pasted over slips would make it possible, for the first time in 340 years, to see the original names.

## Paper and Watermarks

Pieces of handmade laid paper were pasted over 16 manuscript pages that contain the lists of names. In the past attempts had been made to remove these pieces of paper, resulting in skinning and tearing of the paper additions. Several of the pasted-in pieces of paper feature pot and foolscap watermarks and these were studied to determine their probable origin and date. The conservators hoped that by dating the pasted-in pages it would be possible to determine roughly when they were adhered to the manuscript and confirm that this censorship occurred very soon after the manuscript was completed.



Before treatment: first page, showing extensive tears and creases.



After treatment: tears were repaired using Japanese tissue and wheat starch paste. Creases were reduced using damp blotters and localised application of heat.

The pot watermark features a single handle, fleur-de-lis, quatrefoil and initials that could read 'L B', 'I R', or 'I B'. The pot denotes the size and quality of the paper and the initials are possibly those of the mill.<sup>3</sup> A number of related watermarks from the Le Mercer mill in Normandy and the I. Roussel mill in France were found on manuscripts dating from the 1650s to the 1670s.<sup>4</sup> Watermarks of pots are rarely found on papers produced after the 17th century when they were replaced by the Netherlands or English arms.<sup>5</sup> This information places the paper at approximately the same time as the Restoration (1660) and no more than 40 years afterwards at the most.

The foolscap watermark features a fool's head with a six-pointed collar and a number '4' with three balls dependent. Foolscap watermarks were used by many different paper mills from 1479 to denote the quality and size of paper.<sup>6</sup> It is one of the longest used watermarks and the term 'foolscap' is still used today to describe the specific size of the paper. The extent of use of this watermark makes it difficult to determine the probable date and origin of the paper, however, evidence of ink offsetting from the manuscript onto the verso of the pasted-in pages indicates that the pages were adhered when the ink was still quite fresh and soluble. Therefore, the pages were possibly adhered not long after the manuscript was written in 1662.

### Treatment of the Cambridge Manuscript

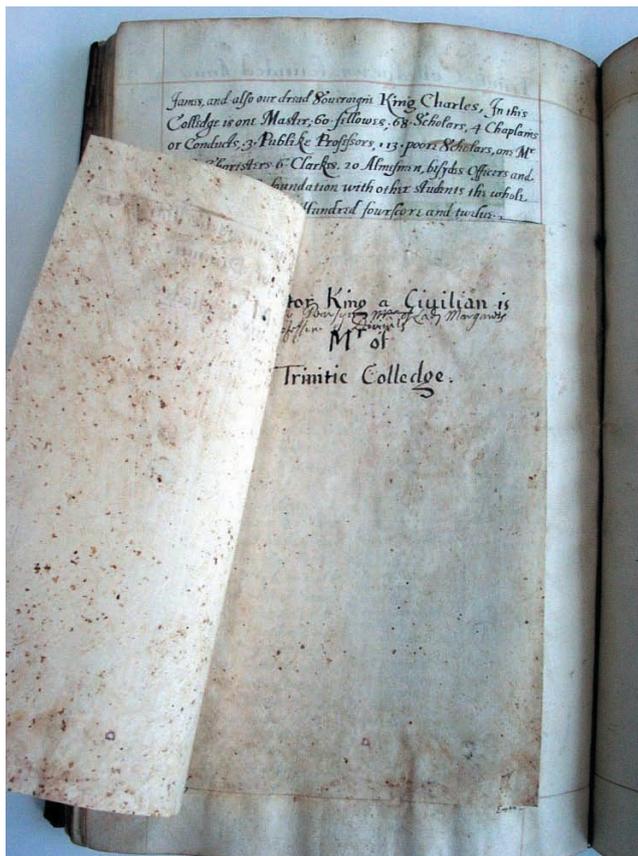
The conservators tested various visual analytical techniques in an attempt to view and record the master and fellows' names concealed by the pasted-in pages. Techniques tested included viewing the pages using transmitted visible, infra-red and ultraviolet light. Transmitted infra-red light was moderately



The sheet of the left hand side illustrates some of the conservation problems faced. There are tears from previous attempts to remove the sheet and the pigments used on the coats of arms have seeped through the paper.

successful, but it was still not possible to clearly read and record the hidden names. As a last option it was proposed to physically remove the pasted-in pages and then reattach them in a way that they could be easily lifted to study the names beneath.

To release the adhesive used to paste in the laid paper additions, the following procedure was developed. A sheet of blotting paper slightly larger than the manuscript pages was placed behind the page to be treated. A small piece of thick



During treatment: the top pasted-in page is partially removed, revealing another pasted-in page underneath. Note the straw inclusions in the paste layer on the page being turned.

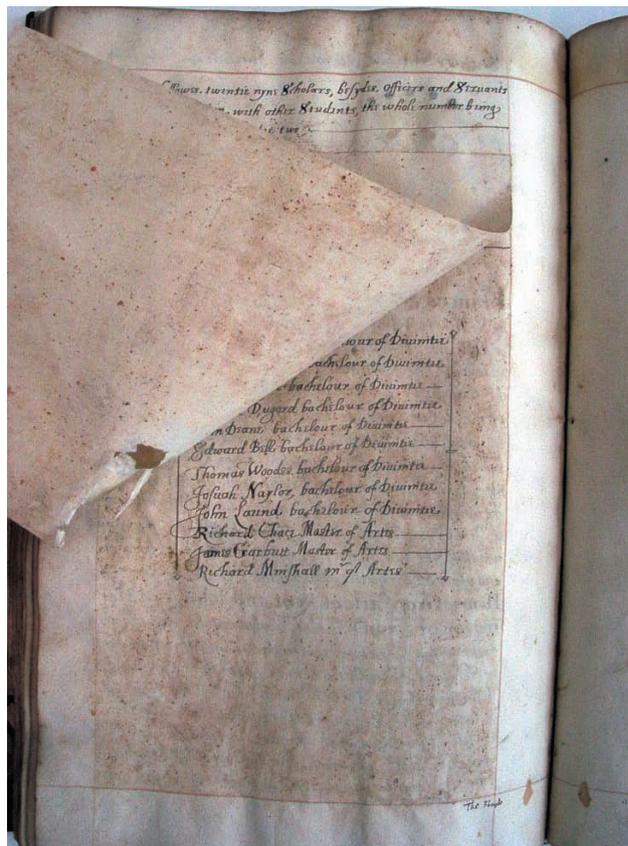
blotter was moistened with deionised water and placed on the laid paper addition. A heated spatula set to 100 degrees Celsius was rubbed over the damp blotter and the resulting steam penetrated through the pasted-in paper and softened the paste adhesive underneath. Once the adhesive was softened, the laid paper addition was separated from the manuscript page using a septum elevator. Any dampness that had penetrated the manuscript page was dried immediately using the heated spatula to avoid the formation of tide-lines and localised cockling. This process was repeated until the entire laid paper addition was released. The most difficult regions to release were those that corresponded with the position of coats of arms. There may have been some change in the chemical nature of the paste in these regions due to the migration of binder from the gouache used to paint the coats of arms.

Traces of paste remaining on the manuscript pages were reduced as much as possible using damp cotton swabs. The paste used to adhere the pages had contained numerous straw-like inclusions, and where possible, these were removed mechanically using a size 15 scalpel blade.

Once released, the laid paper additions were washed in buffered deionised water to reduce acidity, remove traces of paste and facilitate flattening. After flattening, the paper additions were hinged back into their original positions using small Japanese tissue 'V' hinges and thin wheat starch paste.

In addition to removal of the pasted-in pages, the manuscript required treatment for surface dirt and extensive water and mould damage. Approximately ten pages at the front of the text block had sustained losses as a result of mould activity. There were also channel-like losses in the top left corner of pages in the first section. This type of damage is typical of bookworm activity.

The manuscript pages were dry surface cleaned to reduce surface dirt. Tears were repaired and losses were filled using medium-weight Japanese tissue and wheat starch paste. These repairs are sympathetic to the tone and character of the manuscript pages, but different enough to not be confused with the original. Mould conidia were removed mechanically using Groomstick Molecular Trap and a soft brush. Mould-affected regions were deactivated using 70%/30% v/v ethanol/deionised water. Although these areas have been treated, they will always be vulnerable to further mould activity. To avoid reactivation of these areas, the manuscript is stored and displayed in areas where relative humidity does not exceed 60%.



After the conservation work the pasted down sheets can now be lifted to reveal the original names underneath.

The Cambridge Manuscript is now in sound condition and the names of the previously concealed college Masters are, for the first time, accessible for further research.

Louise Wilson is Conservator for the Baillieu Library Conservation Project, Ian Potter Art Conservation Centre, University of Melbourne. Julianne Simpson is Deputy Curator of Special Collections at the University of Melbourne Library.

**Author Acknowledgement**

Special thanks to Sean Loughrey from the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation at the University of Melbourne for undertaking the infra-red examination of the Cambridge Manuscript.



The Japanese paper repairs are visible in the bottom corners of the pages.



Title page and facing coat of arms after treatment.

**Notes**

1. This collection, now comprising about 2500 volumes dating from the 16th century to the present, consists of books about Cambridge University and the city of Cambridge, and has been collected by Dr Pierre Gorman.
2. The mid-17th century in England was a period of great upheaval generally, but in particular in government, the church and other institutions. It was the time of the English Civil War, which culminated in the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of the Commonwealth government under Oliver Cromwell. After Cromwell's death in 1657 there was further civil war until Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660.
3. The pot watermark features on the smallest handmade paper size and it was traditionally used for writing and drawing papers (Silvie Turner, *The Book of Fine Paper*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 1998, p. 211).
4. The presence of papers that are possibly of French origin is of interest given that France was predominantly Catholic and the paper was used to conceal Protestant names and replace them with Catholic ones. These related watermarks were found in the Thomas L. Gravel Watermark Archive located at <<http://www.gravell.org>>.
5. Dard Hunter, *Papermaking: the history and technique of an ancient craft*, New York, Dover Publications, 1974, p. 262.
6. The foolscap watermark was used on papers designed for writing, drawing and printing (Silvie Turner, op.cit.).

**SYMPOSIUM**

**Care and Conservation of Middle Eastern Manuscripts**  
 8 to 12 November 2004  
 University of Melbourne

Hosted by the University of Melbourne Information Division in collaboration with the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation

**The Symposium**  
 Under the guidance of a diverse group of specialists from the University of Melbourne, the British Library, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation in Malaysia, and the Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia, delegates will gain an understanding of the social context of Middle Eastern manuscripts, the materials and techniques of their manufacture and the cultural sensitivities associated with their care and use.

The symposium is aimed at scholars, custodians, conservators and interested members of the public.

**The Exhibition**  
 To coincide with the symposium, an exhibition will showcase the University Library's Middle Eastern manuscript collection. On show at the Baillieu Library will be key manuscripts dating from the 15th century to the 19th century.

**Information**  
 For more information about the symposium please contact:  
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