The foundation of the Universitie of Cambridge
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This unique heraldic manuscript depicts the arms of the Earls of Cambridge, and of the chancellors
and colleges of Cambridge University, plus lists of founders, benefactors,
masters, fellows, other officials and
current students. Compiled for
Edward Montague, the second Earl
of Manchester (1602–1671) and
Chancellor of the University, and
containing a bookplate of his son
Robert, the third Earl (1634–1683),
the manuscript consists of 34 leaves,
written on both sides, with one large
full-page coat of arms and 61 smaller
coats of arms, all with contemporary
hand colouring. It is bound in
contemporary red morocco English
panelled binding, gilt decorated, with
remnants of green silk ties.

The manuscript is dated 1662.
The volume celebrates ‘[T]he
foundation of the Universitie of
Cambridge with the names, and arms
of all such noble persons, as have been
Earles of Cambridge; and Chancellors
of the Universitie, for 100 years last
paste’. The volume also contains the
names of the masters and fellows of
each college and the names of
‘magestrates, governors, and officers,
there-unto belonginge: and the
number of students now therin
residinge.’ The pages that contain the
entries for the masters and fellow of
each college have been pasted over
with a sheet of paper containing a
single name. This may have been an
updating of the volume when it was
collected by W.S. Sanderson.

The volume was in poor
condition. A number of pages were
creased, detached and torn, and there
was extensive bookworm damage.
The first page was detached from the
text block and had been sitting proud
of the case for some time. As a result
it had sustained considerable
mechanical damage. The volume was
disfigured by extensive surface dirt,
water staining and mould damage. As
noted a number of pages had paper
sheets pasted over original text.

The pages were dry surface
cleaned, mould mycelium was
removed mechanically, and the
affected area was deactivated with
ethanol/deionised water. Losses,
mould-weakened areas and
bookworm damage were repaired
using medium-weight Japanese tissue
and wheat starch paste. Tears were
repaired and losses were filled with
Japanese tissue and wheat starch
paste.

On pages where paper sheets had
been pasted over original text there
was tearing indicating previous
attempts to lift pages in order to read
the obscured text. In order to reveal
this original text, damp blotters and a
heated spatula were used to create
steam to soften old adhesive. The
paper sheet overlays were carefully
removed, and then washed in buffered
deionised water and pressed. Once
dry and flat, the pages were hinged
back into their original positions with
small Japanese tissue hinges and
wheat starch paste, providing access
to all the information in the volume
while retaining the historic integrity
of the manuscript.