

Framing of a Facsimile of the Magna Carta

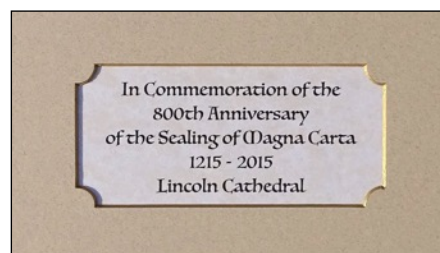
2015 sees the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta by King John at Runnymede on 15th June 1215. To celebrate this occasion a facsimile of the Magna Carta on vellum has been commissioned and is to be auctioned at an event at Lincoln Cathedral. The event, to be held in the nave of the Cathedral, is a celebratory dinner for 800 paying guests at £80 for each ticket, aiming to raise the sum of £80,000 for the Cathedral.



The frame is made from 12th century oak taken from the Cathedral and the facsimile suitably mounted and protected for future generations. My task as a Conservation framer was to:

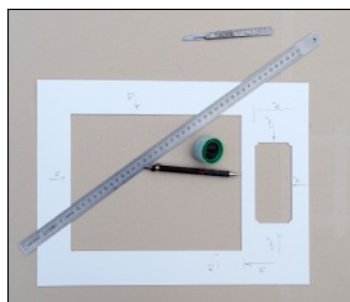
- Liaise with the Cathedral workshops for the spindle moulding of the oak and manufacture of the frame as it would be too hard for normal underpinning and would require biscuit jointing.
- Conservation mounting of the Magna Carta along with other necessary Conservation processes.

First, the layout of the Magna Carta, the mounts and proportions, a text box and other details were discussed with the customers. They wished to see the edges of the document along with a border of around 10mm of the vellum; as there was plenty of vellum surrounding the facsimile it would be easily supported within an overthrow clip mount. A double mount was to be used with the bevels painted gold and a text box which included an agreed form of wording, printed on vellum effect paper.



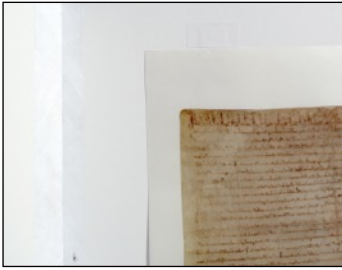
The customers had arranged for the Cathedral workshops to manufacture the frame, but before work could proceed I needed to establish the amount of oak available so that mount size and proportions could be calculated. I met with Cathedral craftsmen and we agreed all the relevant dimensions; the use of a pesticide/fungicide preservative and a Jacobean dark oak stain and clear wax finish agreed. I requested that the rebate should not be treated as I was concerned that it could cause 'off gassing' within the mount package. In any case the rebate would be sealed and the package sealed as per Conservation practice.

Once the frame dimensions had been confirmed the glass (ArtGlass WWUV) was ordered, cut-to-size, and the mounts cut to the relevant dimensions.



The border dimensions were calculated at 100mm sides and top with 120mm at the bottom. These were lightly marked on the mountboard and Scotch 3M removable tape was taped around the two mounts before cutting the apertures. Once the apertures were cut, the bevels were given two coats of antique gold acrylic paint. When the paint had dried the tape was carefully removed. The undermount was taped along the





long side of the window mounts using 48mm wide Tyvek tape.

I spent some time considering the method I would use to support the vellum; first, I decided to use 'T-Hinges' along the top edge but because the vellum was too heavy to use Japanese papers and starch paste, I opted for cotton museum gummed tape. I checked that the tape adhesive would take by placing a small tab in position, weighted it and left it overnight to check adhesion. All

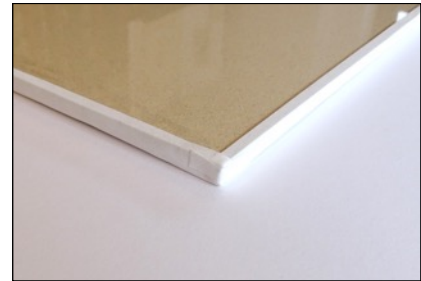
was well so three 'T-Hinges' were placed along the top edge of the vellum with suitable gaps as normal to allow for any expansion/contraction. Due to the acute hygroscopic properties of vellum, the absolute minimum amount of moisture was used on the tape. I remained concerned that some support was required at the bottom because of the vellum's weight. I decided to make a paper trough/tray for the bottom edge of the vellum to sit in and this was achieved by using archival

cotton fibre high purity paper (80gsm) It was cut into thin strips approx 25mm wide and using a micro-spatula, creased down the centre and folded to make the tray. I had to glue two strips together, using EvaCon-R, to cover the full width of the vellum. The vellum was placed in the tray and the two ends taped to the undermount; in addition, a number of small tabs of EvaCon-R were used along the length of the tray to ensure it remained in a horizontal position.



The glass chosen was ArtGlass WWUV which would provide a combination of outstanding clarity (98% light transmission) and a UV protection factor of 92% and an anti-reflective coating thereby reducing unwanted reflections to less than 1%.

The glass was placed onto the mount package and sealed around the edges, with cotton museum tape, This would provide added protection against insects, a stable environment and some protection from problems caused by changes in temperature and humidity.



After picking up the finished frame from the Cathedral workshops I lined the rebate with Lineco frame sealing tape; the

aluminium foil within the tape would provide a barrier against the preservative agents used by the workshop and those carboxylic acids associated with the deterioration of any residual lignin. For further protection from atmospheric pollutants, oxidising gases and moisture, a sheet of Reactive Interface Barrier System(RIBs) Foil was included between the mount package and the backboard.



Finally, a pH neutral conservation quality backboard was used, secured using Framers Points and then sealed with brown gummed tape.

Strong and secure hanging fittings were attached and bumpers placed at the bottom corners of the frame to ensure air circulation over the back of the frame.