



*Guthrie's A General History of England*  
Offered to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

SPAFFORD BOOKS

Po Box 4373  
Regina, SK  
S4P 3W7  
(306) 525-4910  
[spaffordbooks@sasktel.net](mailto:spaffordbooks@sasktel.net)



*Exceedingly scarce first edition of William Guthrie's History of England, complete in four volumes bound in three. Though with notable blemishes, this set remains quite desirable given the importance of this work, the esteemed repute of the author, and the scarcity of this first edition.*

\$4,500CDN

**Title in full:**

A General History of England, From the Invasion of the Romans under Julius Cæsar, To the Late Revolution in MDCLXXXVIII. Including the Histories of the Neighbouring People and States, so far as they are connected with that of England. To which are added, Five Dissertations; I. Upon the Dark and Fabulous Ages of the British History; in which will be contained the Earliest Accounts we have of the History, Manners, Customs, Laws, &c. of the Ancient Britons; and an Examination of Credit due to the English and other Writers, who have treated of those Times. II. Upon the great Revolution of the English Government under Egbert, about the Year 828, and its concurrent Causes. III. Upon the Independency of the Crown of Scotland. IV. Concerning the Norman Engraftments upon the English Laws and Government. V. Concerning the Alienation and Accession of Property, with the great Effects they have had upon our Constitution since the Reign of Henry VII.

**Author:**

William Guthrie, Esq. (1708-1770)

*Note: Not to be confused with the eminent clergyman and writer William Guthrie (1620-1665), medical doctor and medical historian William Guthrie (?-?), and 19<sup>th</sup> century legal writer William Guthrie (1835-1908).*

**Publication:**

London: Printed by Daniel Browne, for T. Waller, at the Crown and Mitre, opposite to Fetter-lane, in Fleet-street. 1744-1751

**Condition:**

Complete – four volumes bound in three. Large folio. Re-bound in period half-leather over marbled paper boards; text-block untrimmed. Spine in six plain compartments; light-brown leather title compartment, lettered in gilt, compartment double-ruled at top and bottom in gilt; each compartment band once highlighted at top and bottom with gilt rule, now largely faded. Binding with notable blemishes, with rather extensive rubbing and wear to extremities. Textblock generally clean and presentable (numerous photographs of textblock provided by taking a photo every 100 pages of each volume - see photos); blemishes for each volume noted. Each volume of set with alphabetical index at rear. Previous owners (Bond family) evidently believed that they had a genealogical connection with the set; newspaper clipping and small sheet of notes laid-in (included in archival envelope); genealogical information in pencil on ffep of Vol.III, faint as it has been previously erased (included in photographs [75], digitally enhanced). Ada Stahl Bond's small signature at head of ffep of each volume.

Volume I – 1744. iv, 962pp, [30pp index]. Books I-V. Full title page. Uniform binding. Top board and ffep detached; ffep with previous owner's signature dated 1882. No frontispiece, as issued. Title page soiled; previous owner's name torn from top corner, with only date (1844) remaining. Amateurish repairs to leaf corners, including the title page (although these repairs may have prevented further damages, they are undeniably the work of an amateur [see photos]). Luckily, they were only done to six early leaves: title page, i/ii, iii/iv, 1/2, 5/6, 7/8). Internally, the textblock is generally clean and presentable. Periodic dirtying in inner-gutter; occasional dampstaining. Textblock with a couple toned rings, as from a cup. Occasional marginalia, light in pencil. Plates: lacking map "Britannia Romana" between p.iv and p.1, prior to the start of Book I; lacking map "Saxon-England according to the Saxon Chronicle" at p.76, explanation of the map has been tipped in at p.116, trimmed; "A Genealogical Table of the Posterity of Woden" misbound at p.127, as it should be p.116; lacking "A Geological Table of the Kings of South Saxons" and "A Genealogical Table of the Kings of Wessex" at p.132; lacking "A Genealogical Table of the Kings of Essex" and "A Genealogical Table of the Kings of Northumberland" at p.142; lacking "A Genealogical Table of the Kings of East-Anglia" at p.154; lacking "A Genealogical Table of the Kings of Mercia" at p.156; plate I present at p.210; King William the Conqueror portrait plate present at p.253; King William the II portrait plate present at p.253; King Henry the I portrait plate present at p.424 (with wrinkled crease); King Stephen portrait plate present at p.459; King Henry the II portrait plate present at p.495; King Richard the I portrait plate present at p.571; King John portrait plate present at p.622; King Henry the III portrait plate present at p.698; King Edward the I portrait plate present at p.878.

Volume II – 1747. 1130pp, [21pp index]. Books VI-VIII. Titled: "A General History of England Beginning with the Reign of Edward the Second, And Ending with that of Henry the Eighth". Uniform binding. Head and heel of spine badly damaged, leather curling at head. Bottom board, last index leaf, and rfep detached. No frontispiece, as issued. Title page soiled, though less so than vol.I; previous owner's signature at head, dated 1844 (presumably the same signature which was torn from vol.I). Same amateurish repairs at bottom corners of early leaves as vol.I, again restricted to first seven leaves. Textblock with similar issues of occasional dampstaining and soiling; textblock with a greater degree of toning, foxing. Small burn at p.759, affecting following six leaves (see photo 34). Some waving to leaves late. This volume with a notable 276 pages dedicated to Henry the VIII. Plates: King Edward the II portrait plate present at p.1 (torn at gutter; repair to bottom corner, toned from glue); King Edward the III portrait plate present at p.71; King Richard the II portrait plate present at p.289; King Henry the III (IV) portrait plate present at p.393; King the V portrait plate presumably lacking at p.447; King Henry the VI portrait plate presumably lacking at p.503/03; King Edward the IV portrait plate presumably lacking at p.688/89; King Edward the V portrait plate present at p.745; King Richard the III portrait plate present at p.752; King Henry the VII portrait plate present at p.771; King Henry the VIII portrait plate presumably lacking at p.855.

Volume III (vol.III and vol.IV bound together) – 1751. 1396pp, [12pp index]. Book numbers not continuous from vol.I/II; Books I-III. Titled: "A General History of England From Edward the Sixth, to the Restoration of King Charles the Second. With A Summary of Public Affairs from the Restoration to the Time of the Revolution, digested in Annals". Separate vol.IV title page lacking, as always with these period rebinds (photocopy of lacking title page included in archival envelope for reference); continuous pagination. Uniform binding. Leather beginning to pull free at head of spine. Top board and ffep detached, title page nearly detached; bottom board, last index leaf, and rfep detached. No frontispiece, as issued. Title page extensively

damaged; wrinkled, soiled, torn with some amateurish repairs; previous owner's signature at head as in vol.I and II. Same amateurish repairs at bottom corners of early leaves (photo 51 provides a great example of how the would-be conservator ensured that they did not cover the text, keeping the repair in the margins). Textblock more blemished than other volumes; more frequent dampstains late, with final leaves stiffer. Notable spotting to bottom corner of pp.10-60. Page number typo at head of p.431 (written 131) and p.1101 (written 1104). This volume with a notable 390 pages on Queen Elizabeth and 404 pages on Charles the I, which itself includes a separate section on the eighteen years covering the Civil War to the Restoration. Dissertations at rear. "The Republic of England," which begins on p.1225, opens with a wonderful description of the nature of writing rigorous works of history, as opposed to works of popular history or journalism. Plates: King Edward VI portrait plate present at p.1 (lacking in all other copies which we could uncover); Queen Mary portrait plate present at p.123; Queen Elizabeth portrait plate present at p.191; King James the I portrait plate present at p.624; King Charles the I portrait plate present at p.822.

### **Importance:**

William Guthrie (1708-1770) was a distinguished political journalist and popular historian. The *Bibliotheca Britannica* describes Guthrie as a "miscellaneous writer and compiler" while the Dictionary of National Biography recognizes him as "a historian and political journalist." Perhaps the most accurate description of Guthrie, then, can be found in the Dal-Mac which describes him as "an industrious historical and miscellaneous writer and compiler." Born in Angus, Scotland in 1708, Guthrie came to be esteemed as a notable scholar by his peers, earning respect from the likes of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell. Reputedly educated at King's College, Guthrie began his career as a writer early as a reporter of parliamentary business for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In fact, it was during his time as a parliamentary reporter that he began composing his impressive *General History of England*. By 1745, he was rewarded with a government pension of £200 per annum, which was renewed again in 1762.

Guthrie's *General History of England* brought what the Dictionary of National Biography describes as "considerable journalistic flair to the contemporary popularization of historiography." Although he would come to be best known was his work *Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar* (1770), the influence of his earlier work in *A General History of England* permeate his later works. This is especially evident when one looks at his commanding 12 volume *General History of the World, from the Creation to the Present Time* (1764-67) and his seminal 10 volume *General History of Scotland* (1767).

Guthrie's *General History of England* represents the first recognizable attempt by a writer to base a historical analysis on parliamentary records. Originally the work was published in weekly installments, with advertisements in contemporary publications soliciting subscription orders (one such advertisement can be seen at the rear of *Lives of Admirals, and other eminent British Seamen* (1744) by John Campbell). Although the work was technically issued in 4 volumes, the third and fourth volumes were continuously paginated and were consequently often bound together, and catalogues from the period describe the set as being both 3 and 4 volumes (our research was only able to locate a single 4 volume set in the market records which was auctioned in 1996 and which appears to be the only such set which was sold since 1789). The work appears to have been quite popular at the time, as shown by the numerous library

catalogues and auction records from the time. In fact, the work was considered desirable enough to have found its way across the Atlantic to the American Library in Philadelphia by 1770.

Although the set appears to have found popularity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has become quite scarce in modern markets. After having scoured numerous auction catalogues and sale records, we have only been able to uncover two complete sets which have sold since 1975 (1996-4 volumes; 2015-3 volumes), though a single volume 1 appears to have sold a few times in the same period. The scarcity of the set can also be seen in institutional holdings, with the majority of copies being housed only in the world's most notable antiquarian collections. Indeed, we have been unable to locate either single volumes or the set in any Canadian institution. In fact, although many institutions now have access to a digital copy of the set via the British Library, those records are incomplete as it is lacking volume II. After conducting many hours of research, it is indeed quite striking how this once popular work from such a well-respected author has become so exceedingly scarce.

## Sources

### Descriptions of Author and Work

Allan, David. "William Guthrie (1708?-1770)." In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11792?docPos=4>]

Kidd, Colin. *Subverting Scotland's past: Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689–c.1830*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2003: pp239.

MacVeigh, James. *Dal-Mac: Volume II of the Scottish Nation: Or, the Historical and Genealogical Account of All Scottish Families and Surnames*. Dumfries, Scotland: James MacVeigh, 1889: pp392-393.

Smith, R. J. *The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688-1863*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2002: pp55-56.

Watt, Robert. *Bibliotheca Britannica: Authors*. Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1824: pp 452.

Wiles, R. M. *Serial Publication in England Before 1750*. Reprint. London: Cambridge University Press, 2012: pp148, 339.

### Catalogue Entries and Auction Records for A General History of England

*\*\*These listings were taken as a sampling of the numerous antiquarian catalogue entries from the mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> century which our research uncovered. The entries below are by no means intended to be an exhaustive list of these antiquarian catalogues.*

Angus, Alexander. *Catalogue of a large and valuable collection of books; Being the libraries of the late Doctor Alexander Rose, Physician in Aberdeen; Alexander Gordon, Esq; at Hallhead; And The Revd. Mr. Robert Garden, Late Minister of the Gospel at St. Fergus. Which will begin to be sold by auction in Pitfoddell's-Hall, Castlestree, Aberdeen, on Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, 1779*. Aberdeen: Printed by J. Chalmers and Co., 1779: pp 61.

Booth and Son. *A Catalogue of Books, Containing more than Twenty Thousand Volumes, including the Libraries of The Rev. John Brooke, D.D. Rector of Colney; The Rev. C. Topping, M.A. Vicar of Bradenham; and The Rev. J. Arnam, M.A. Rector of Postwick; and several other collections*. Norwich: Both and Son, Booksellers, Market-Place, 1789: pp18.

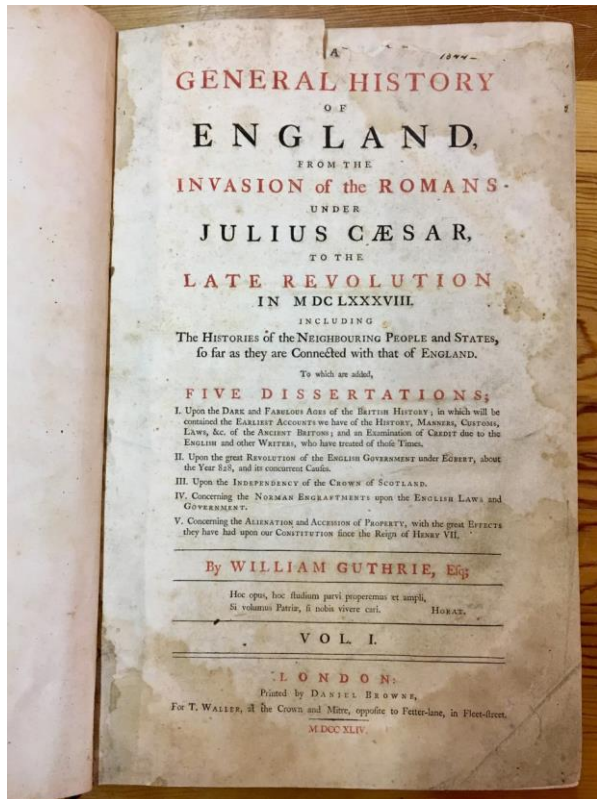
Library Company of Philadelphia. "Books in Folio." In *The Charter, Laws, and Catalogue of Books, of the Library Company of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph Crukshank, 1770.

Vallance, James. *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late Right Honourable Denis Daly. Which will be sold at auction, on Tuesday, The First of May, 1792*. Dublin: Printed for the Proprietors, John Archer, No. 80, and William Jones, No.86, Dame-Street, 1792: pp46.

Whiston, John and Ben J. White. *Bibliotheca Utilissima & Elegans. A Catalogue of Many Thousand Volumes; Including the Libraries of Lomax Martyn, Esq; Serjeant at Law, and Henry Thomas Carr, Esq: Both lately deceased.* London: John Whiston and Ben J. White, booksellers, in Fleetstreet, 1759: pp27

Whiston, John, and Ben J. White. *A Catalogue of a Very Choice and Curious Collection of Books in All Arts, Sciences, and Languages: Consisting of Several Valuable Libraries, lately purchased.* London: John Whiston and Ben J. White, booksellers, in Fleetstreet, 1762: pp25.

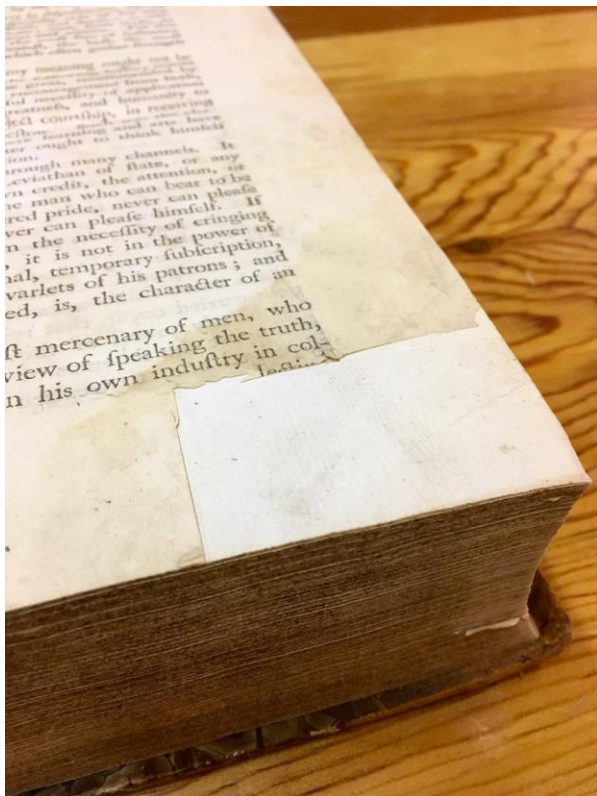




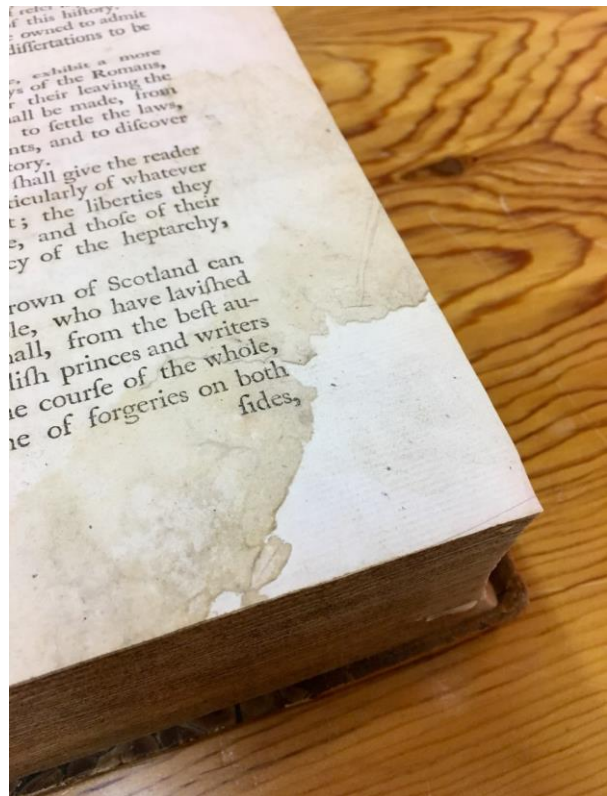
(1) Vol.I - title page



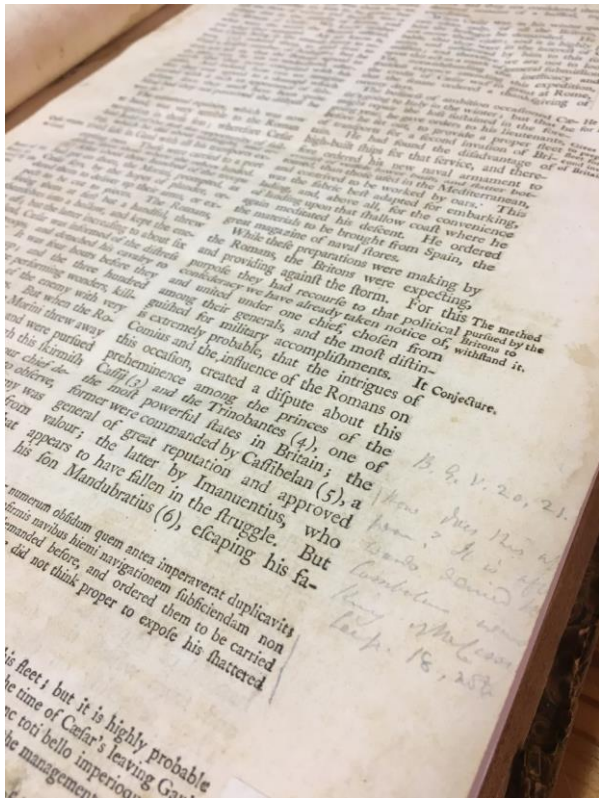
(2) Vol.I - repairs to bottom corner, verso title page



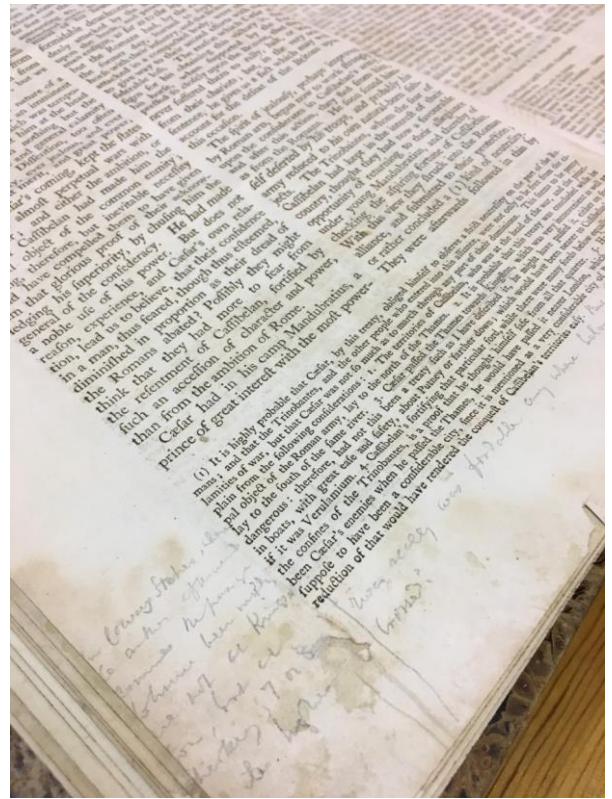
(3) Vol.I - repairs to bottom corner, p.i



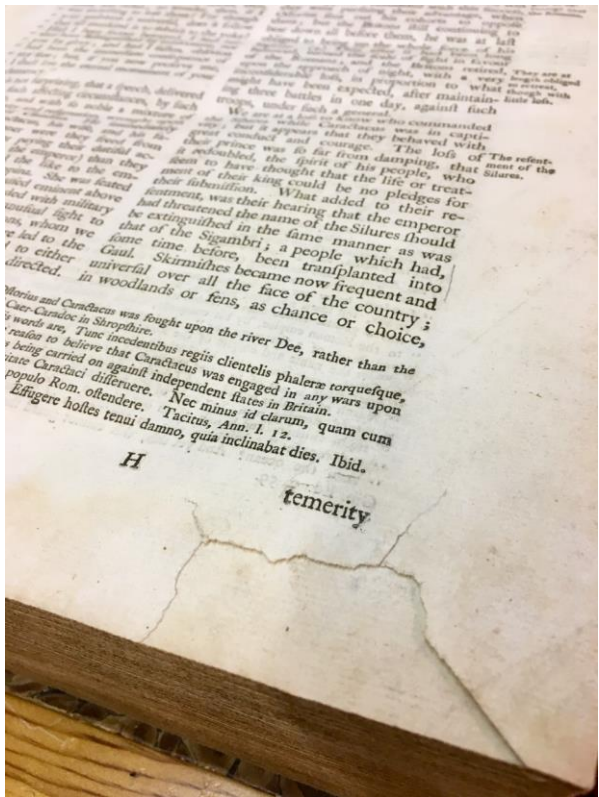
(4) Vol.I - repairs to bottom corner, p.iii



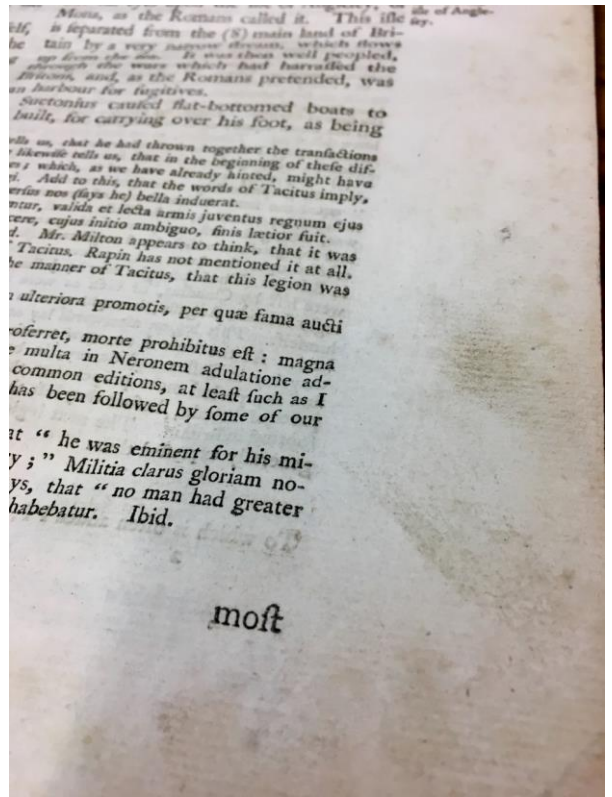
(5) Vol.I - marginalia example, p.7



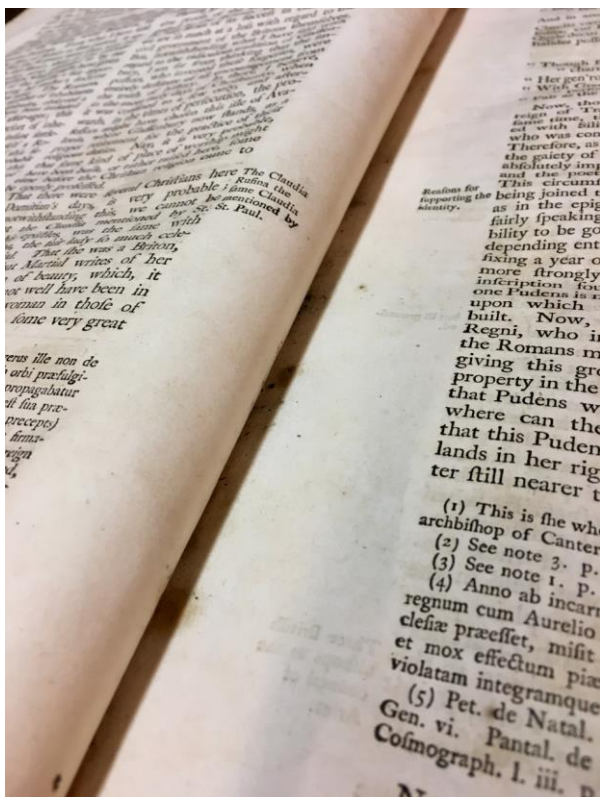
(6) Vol.I - marginalia example, p.10



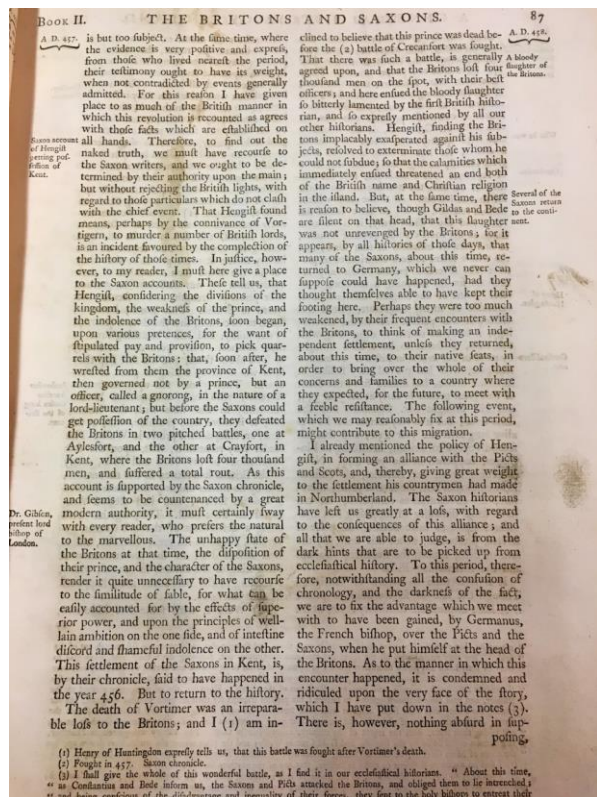
(7) Vol.I - unrepaired paper loss, p.25



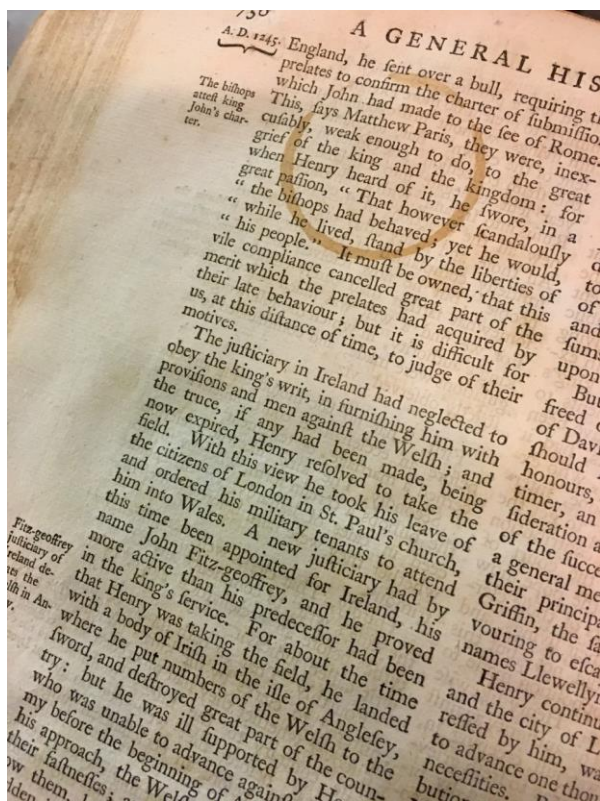
(8) Vol.I - dirtying to margin p.27



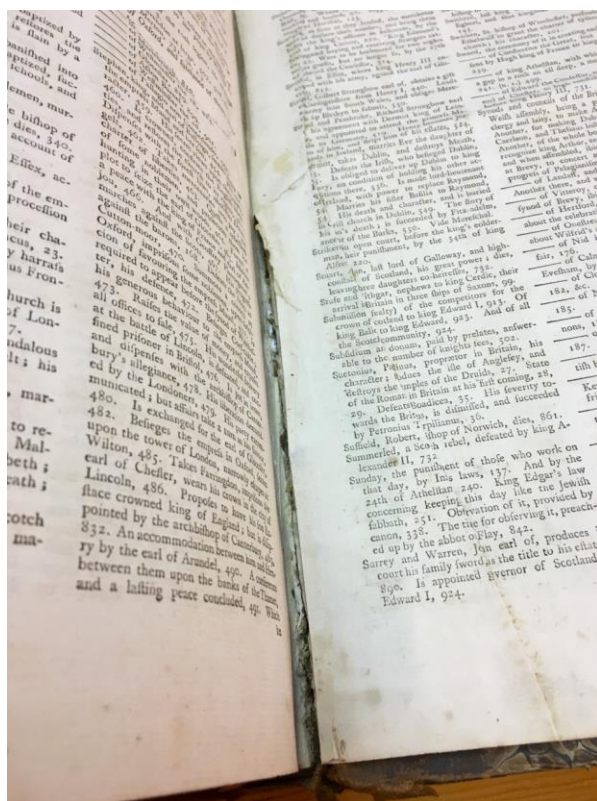
(9) Vol.I - soiling in gutter, p.73



(10) Vol.I - dirtying to margin as well as text, p.87



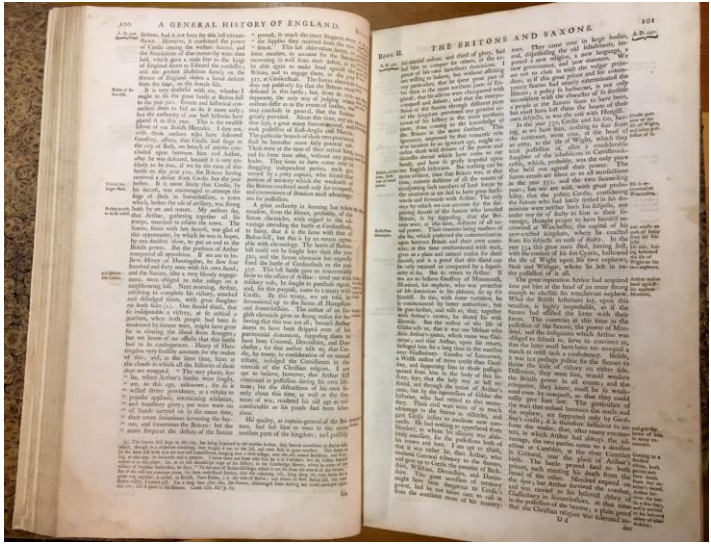
(11) Vol.I - toned (cup) ring, p.750



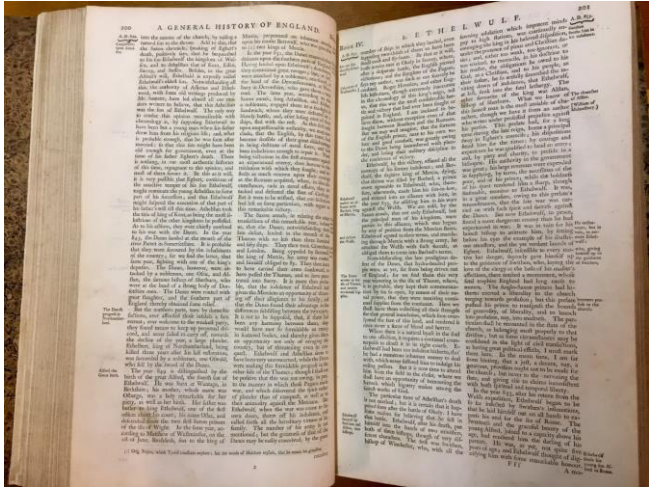
(12) Vol.I - 3<sup>rd</sup> last lead starting at bottom third



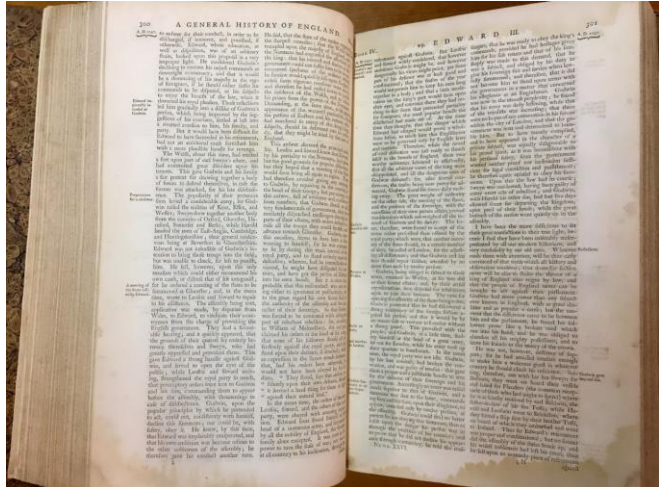
(13) Vol.I - foreign matters, soiling p.[index]



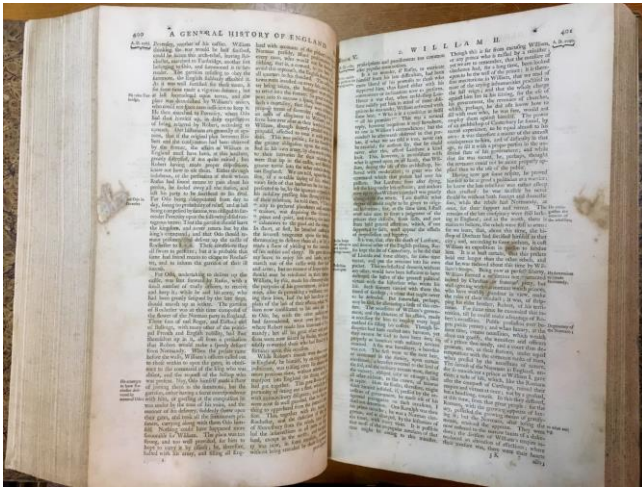
(14) Vol.I - textblock example (100-101)



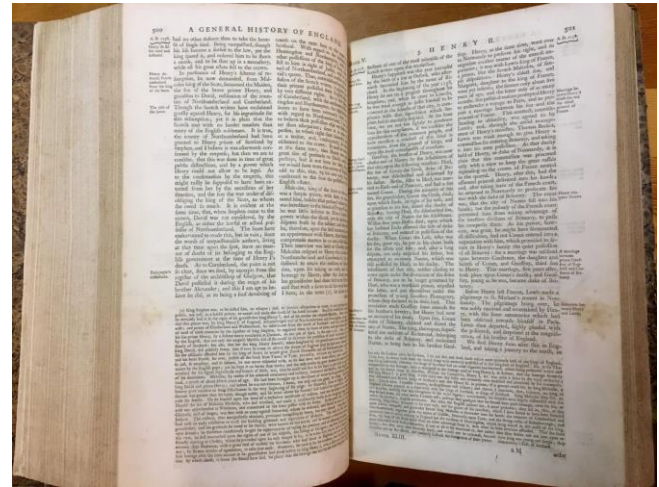
(15) Vol.I - textblock example (200-201)



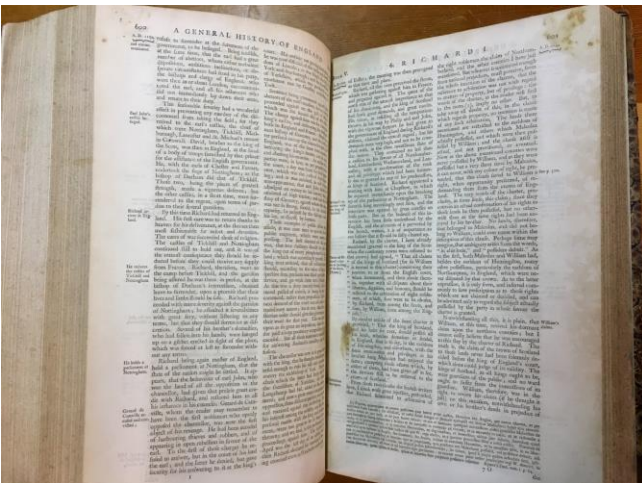
(16) Vol.I - textblock example (300-301)



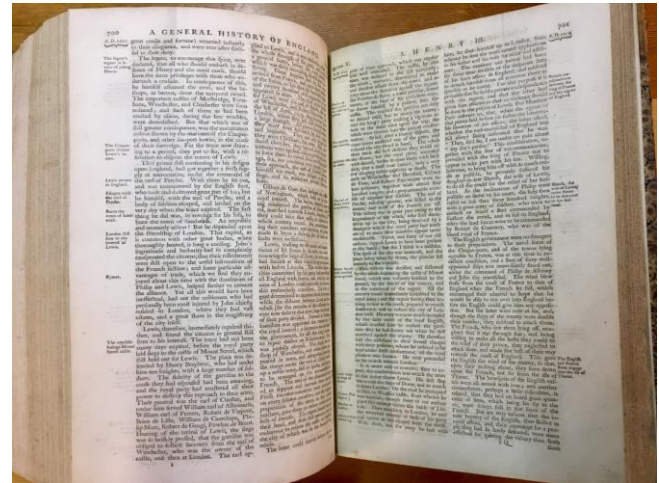
(17) Vol.I - textblock example (400-401)



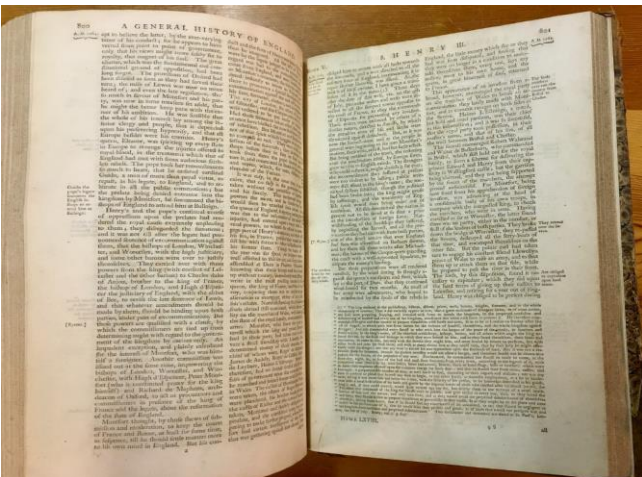
(18) Vol.I - textblock example (500-501)



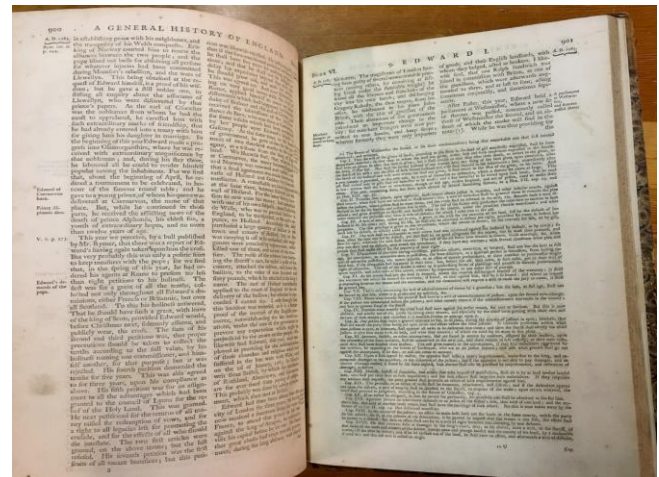
(19) Vol.I - textblock example (600-601)



(20) Vol.I - textblock example (700-701)



(21) Vol.I - textblock example (800-801)



(22) Vol.I - textblock example (900-901)



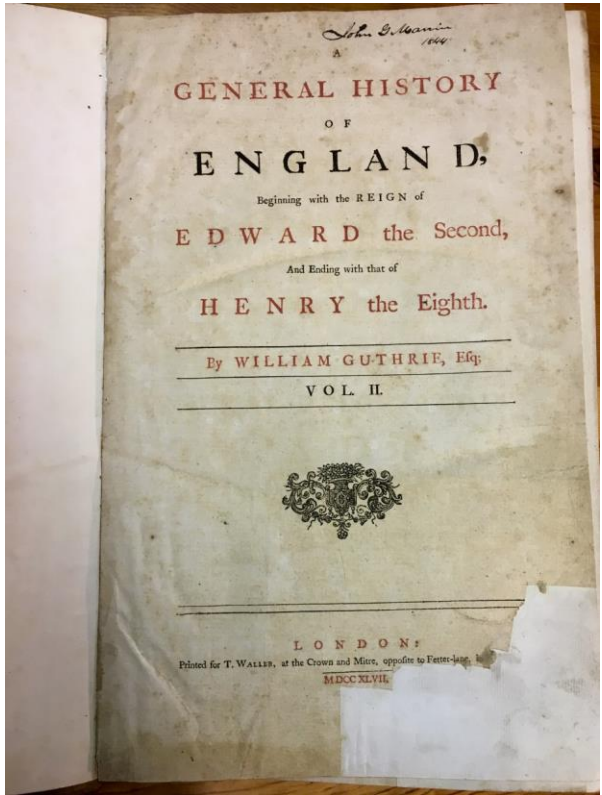
(23) Vol.I - wear to binding example, corner



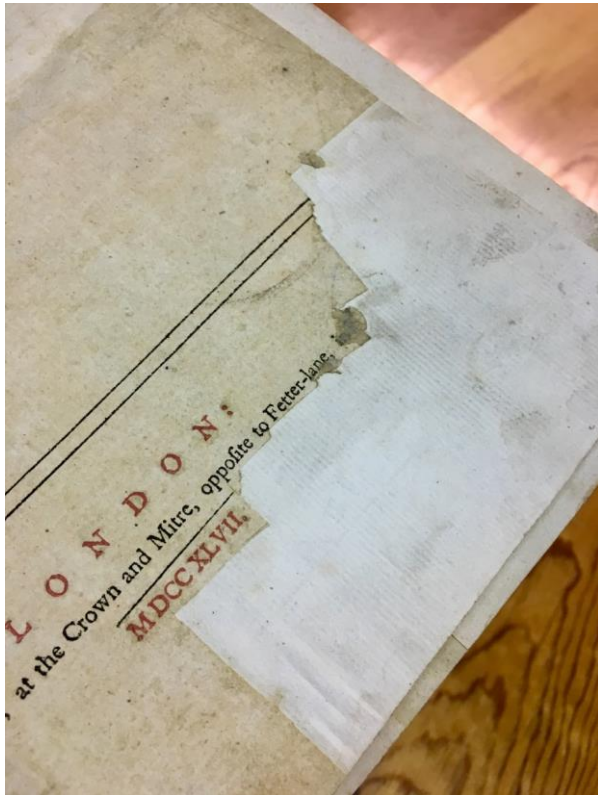
(24) Vol.I - wear to binding example, runners/edge



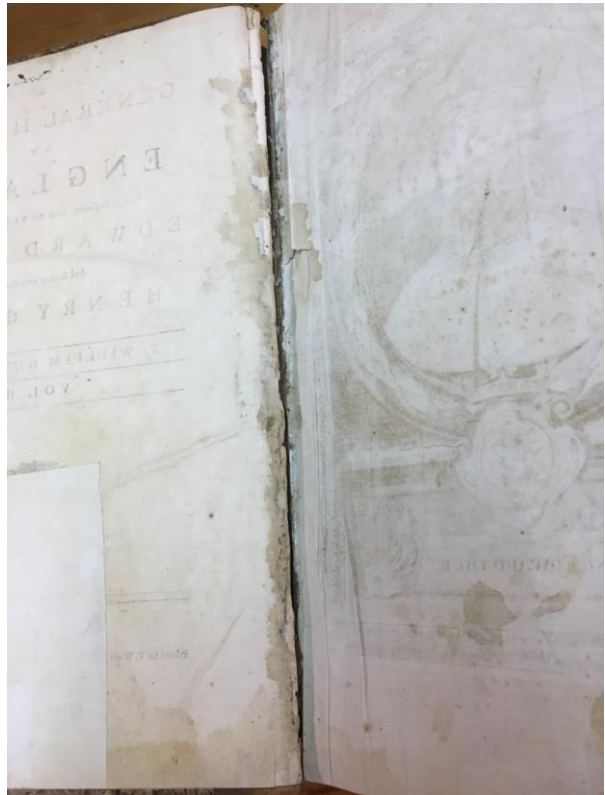
(25) Vol.I - detached top board



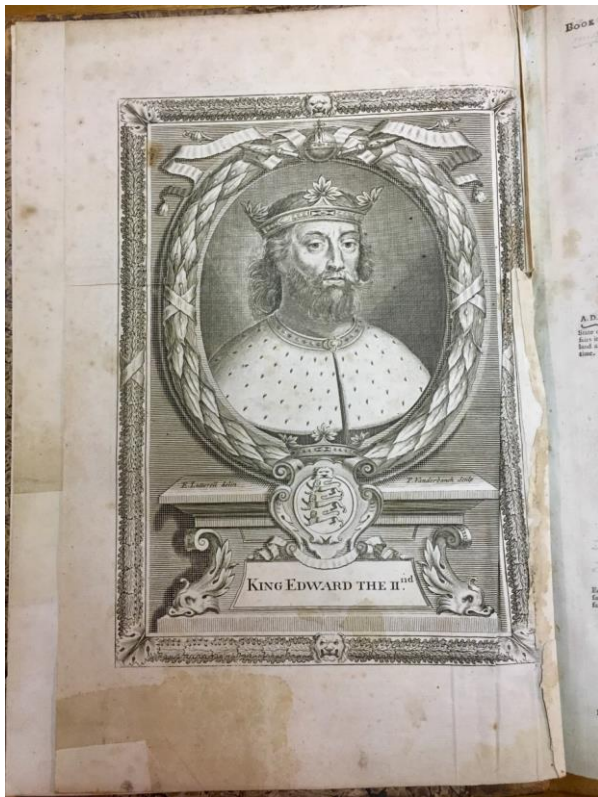
(26) Vol.II - title page



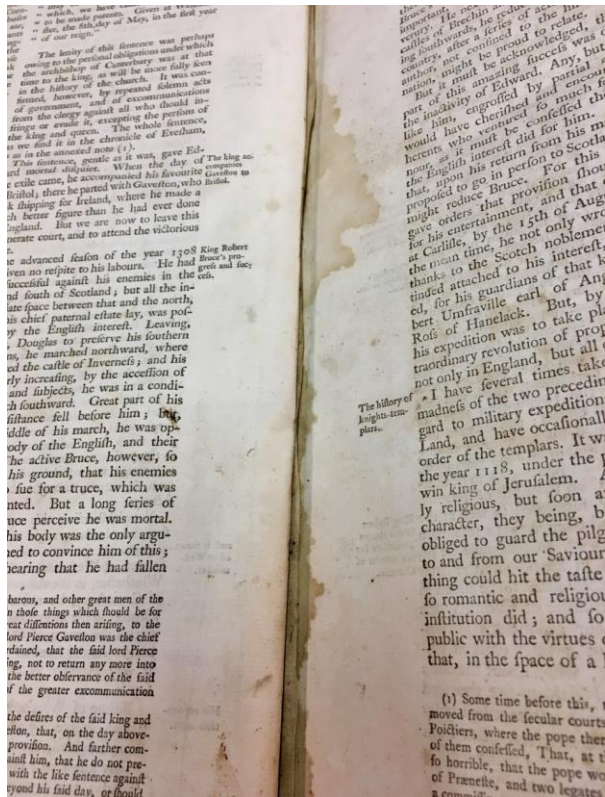
(27) Vol.II - repairs at foot of title page, trimmed



(28) Vol.II - starting verso-title page



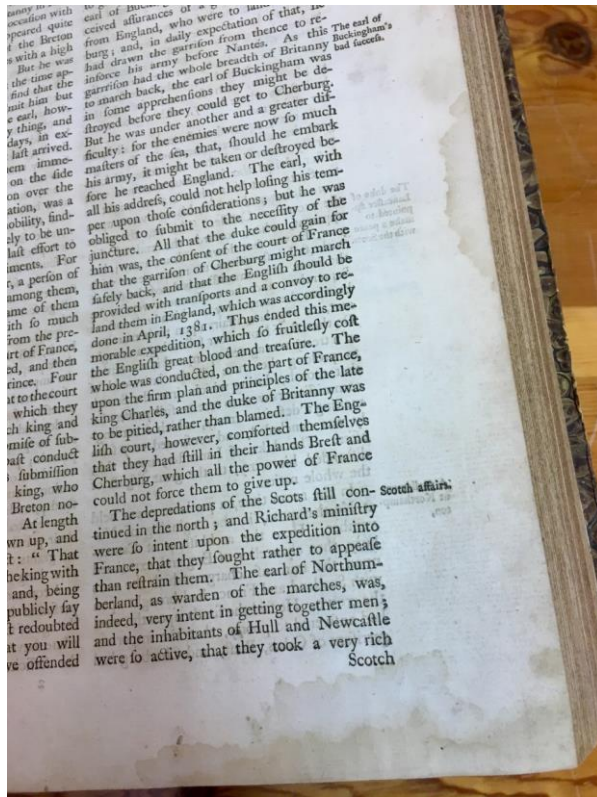
(29) Vol.II - damaged portrait of Edward II



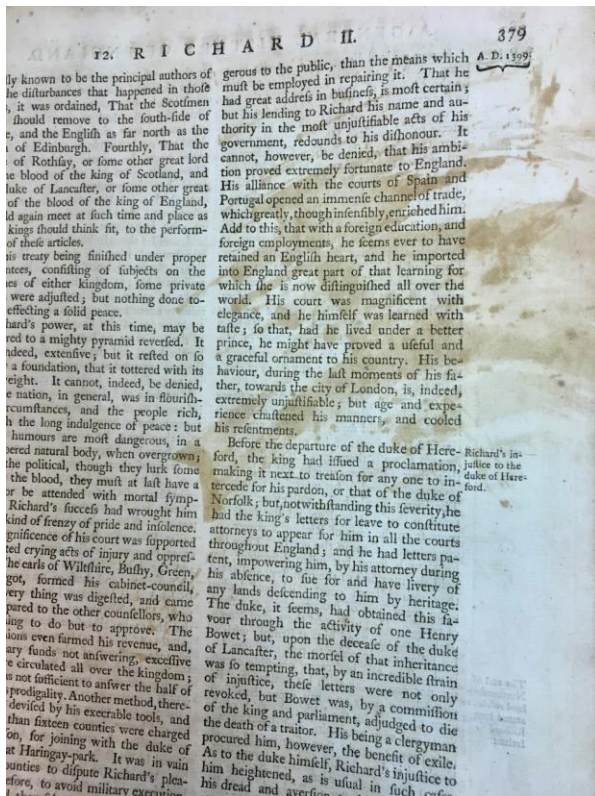
(30) Vol.II - dampstaining in gutter, p.5



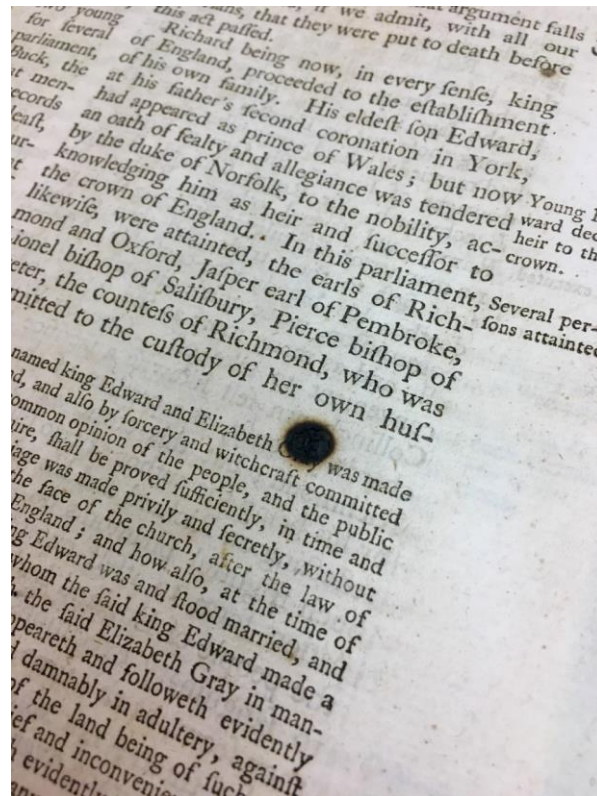
(31) Vol.II - dirtying at fore-margin, p.9



(32) Vol.II - dampstaining in margins, p.307



(33) Vol.II - stain, toning to textblock, p.379



(34) Vol.II - small burn, beginning at p.759



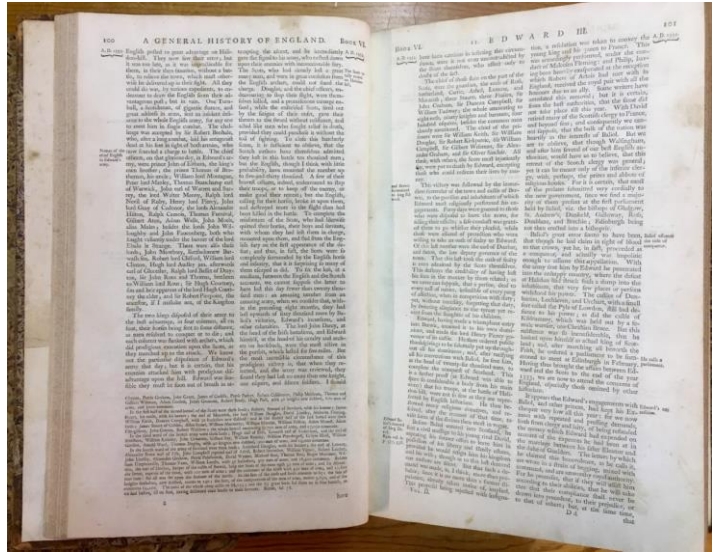
York and London, 526, 626. The two towers  
 approved of, 535, 636. Henry VIII's hatred  
 toward, 775. Archbishop of, Alexander Nevill, great  
 benefactor, 775. York, archbishop of, Richard II, 532. In and  
 favour of Richard II, 549. His and  
 his temporalities seized, 549.  
 — Archbishop of, Richard Scrop, rebels  
 against, 549.  
 — Archbishop, George Nevill, kept Ed-  
 ward IV in Middleham castle, 706. Received  
 into favour, 709, 716. Imprisoned, 721.  
 Released by Richard III, 733. See 1 Henry  
 VI, 400.  
 — Archbishop, taken possession of by Henry VIII,  
 1006. See White-hall.  
 — York place, taken possession of by Henry VIII,  
 1006. See White-hall.  
 — Young Dr. lost by Henry VIII. to the French  
 court, 862.  
 — Ypres, besieged by Edward III, 521.

**Z.**  
 — Zich, general of the Huffines, dies, 530.  
 — Zouch, lord, attainted, 775.

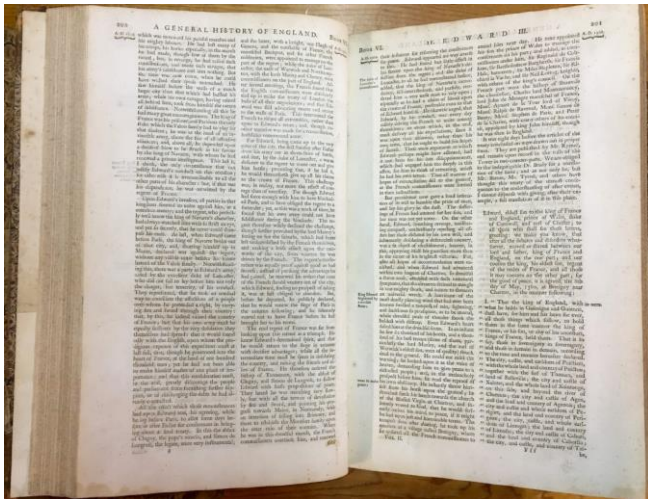
The End of the Second VOLUME.



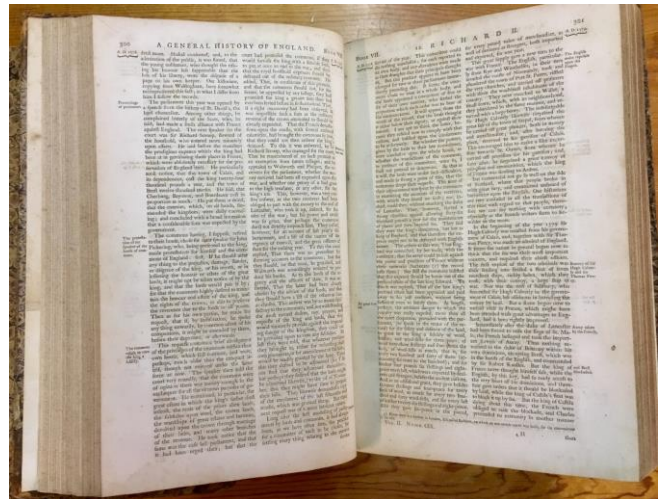
(35) Vol.II - torn final leaf of index



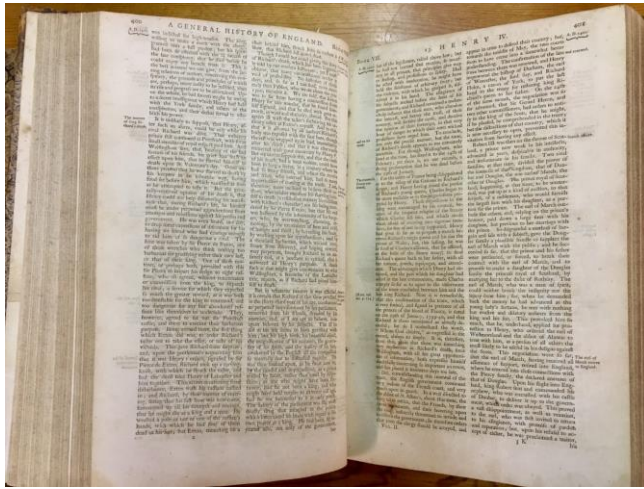
(36) Vol.II - textblock example (100-101)



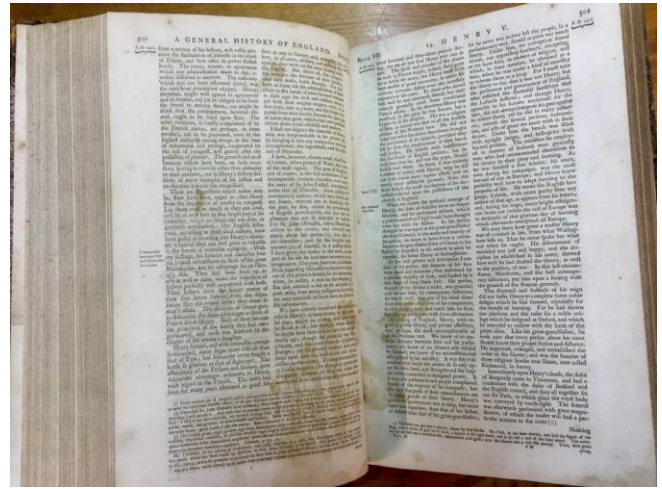
(37) Vol.II - textblock example (200-201)



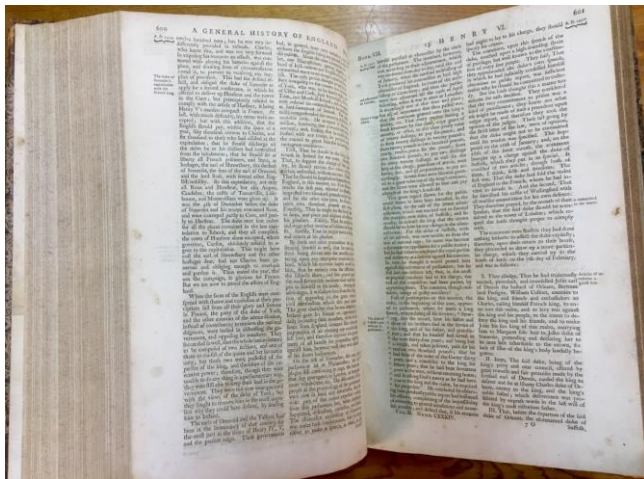
(38) Vol.II - textblock example (300-301)



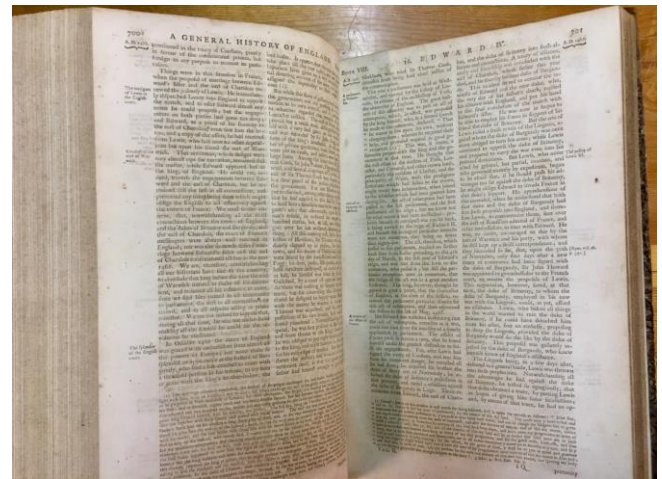
(39) Vol.II - textblock example (400-401)



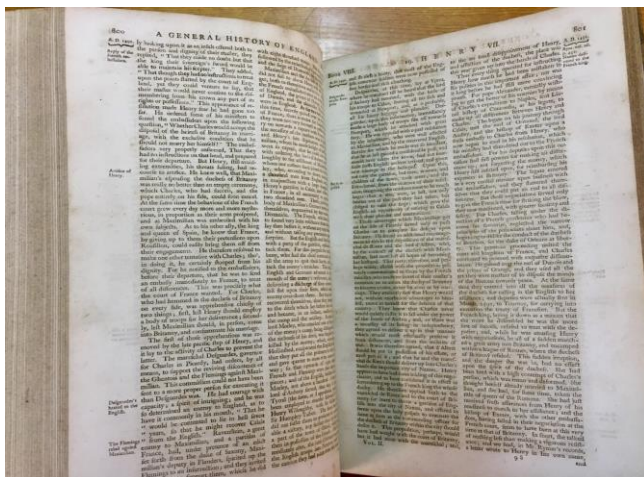
(40) Vol.II - textblock example (500-501)



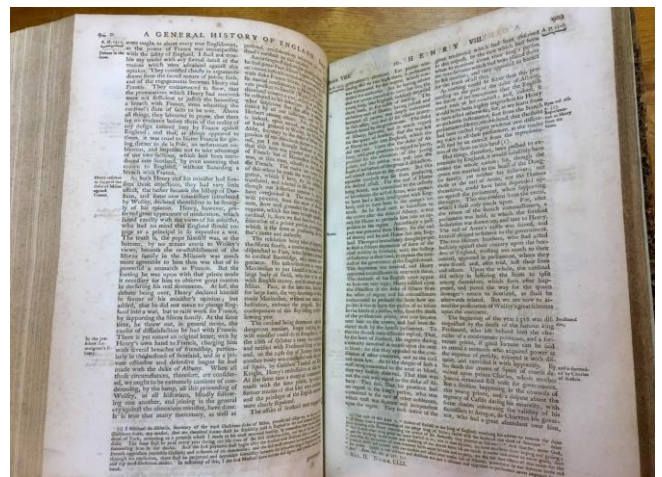
(41) Vol.II - textblock example (600-601)



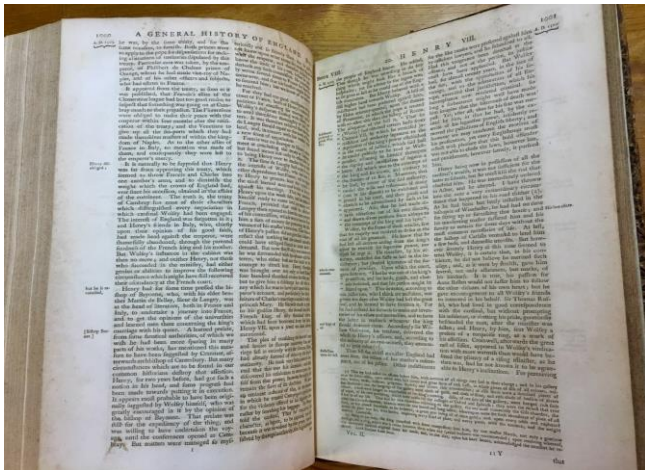
(42) Vol.II - textblock example (700-701)



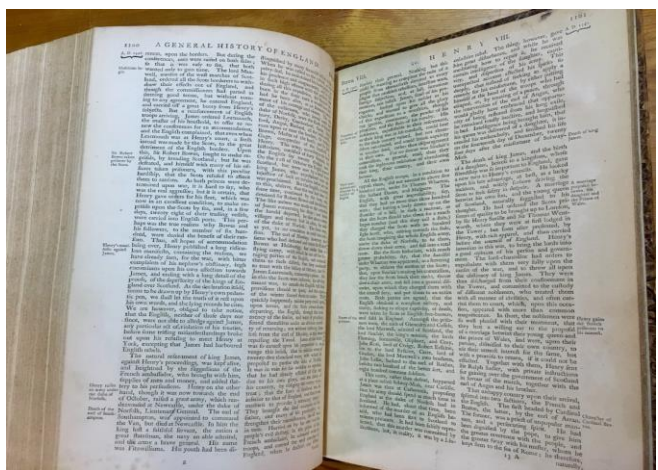
(43) Vol.II - textblock example (800-801)



(44) Vol.II - textblock example (900-901)



(45) Vol.II - textblock example (1000-1001)



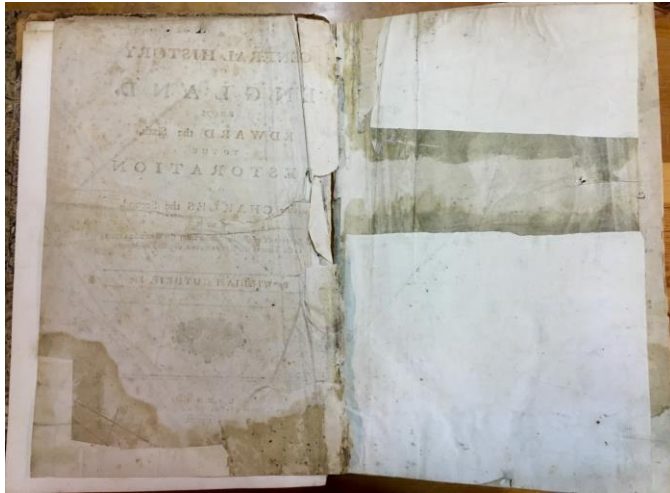
(46) Vol.II - textblock example (1100-1101)



(47) Vol.II - detached bottom board



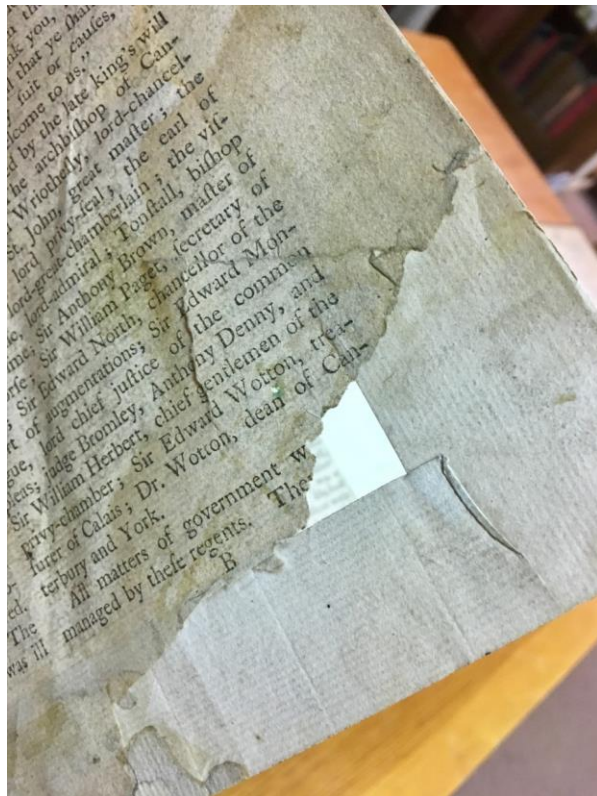
(48) Vol.III - title page



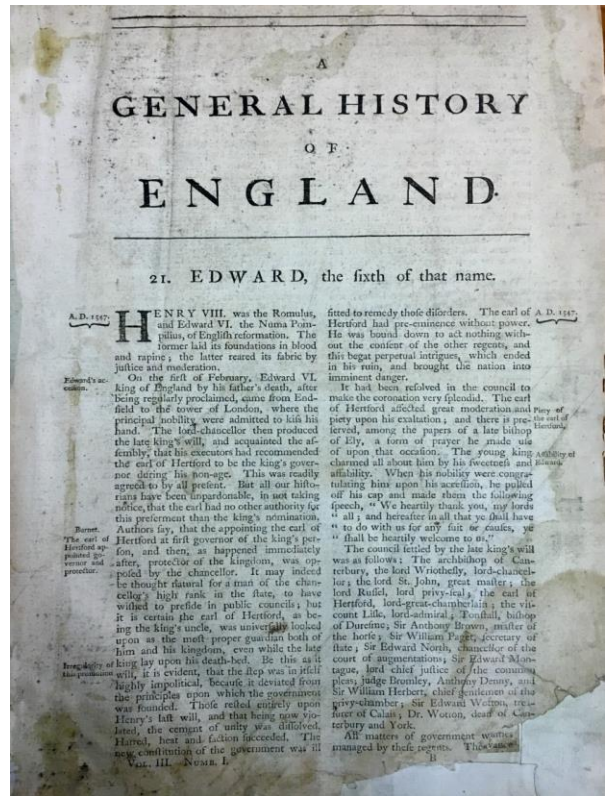
(49) Vol.III - verso-title page and initial portrait



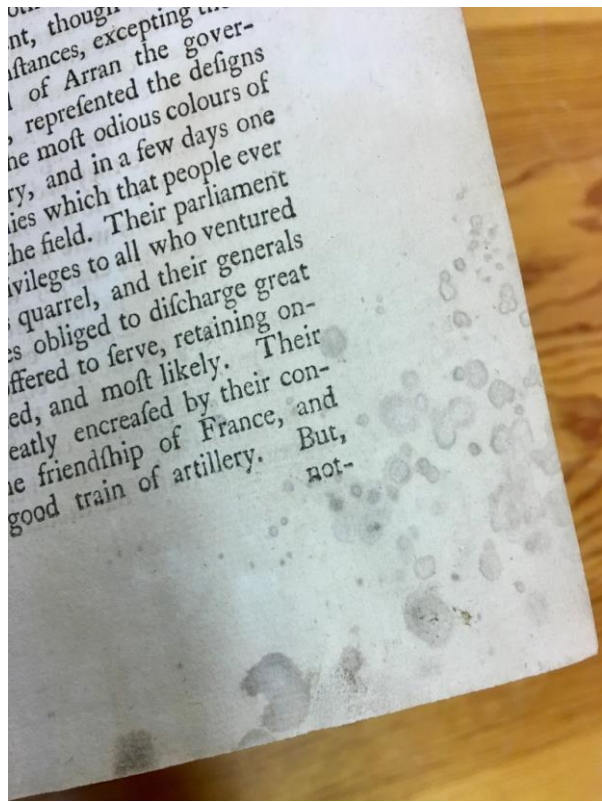
(50) Vol.III - damaged portrait of Edward VI



(51) Vol.III - repairs to bottom corner, in margins



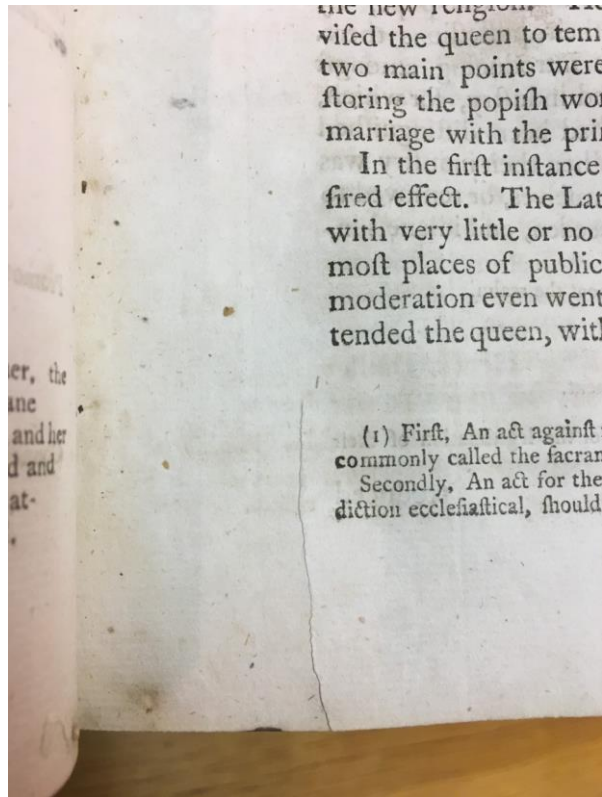
(52) Vol.III - page more extensively soiled, p.1



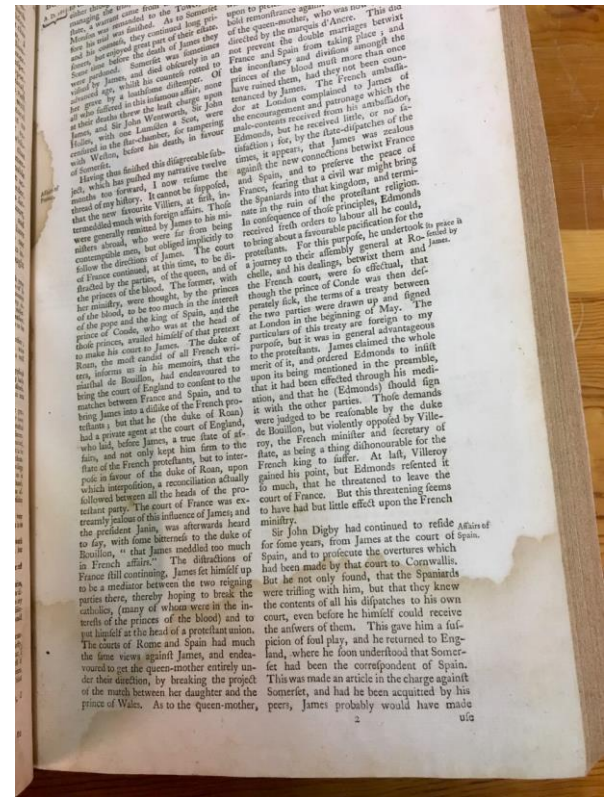
(53) Vol.III - spotting to bottom corner, p.15



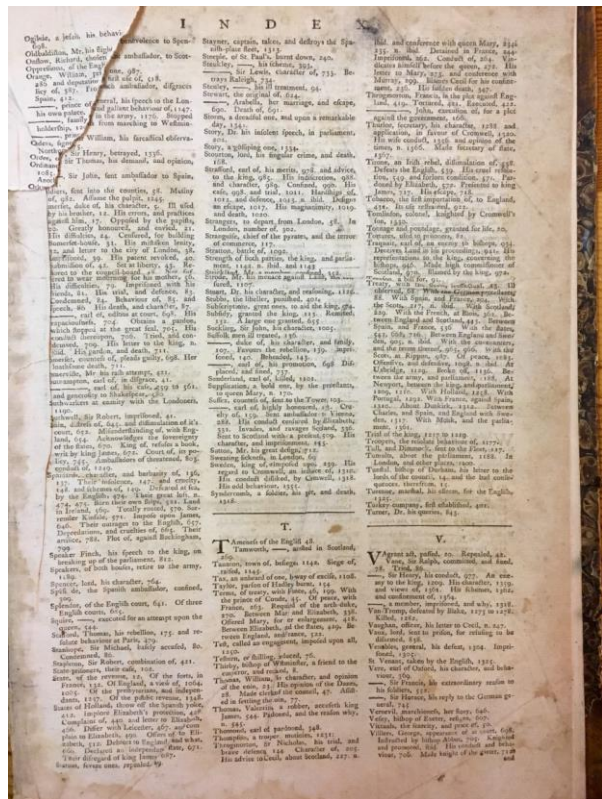
(54) Vol.III - dampstaining to fore-margin, p.121



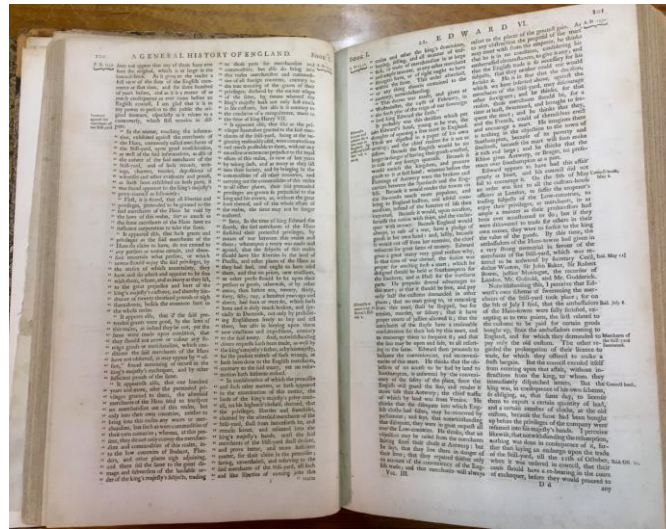
(55) Vol.III - closed tear to bottom margin, p.135



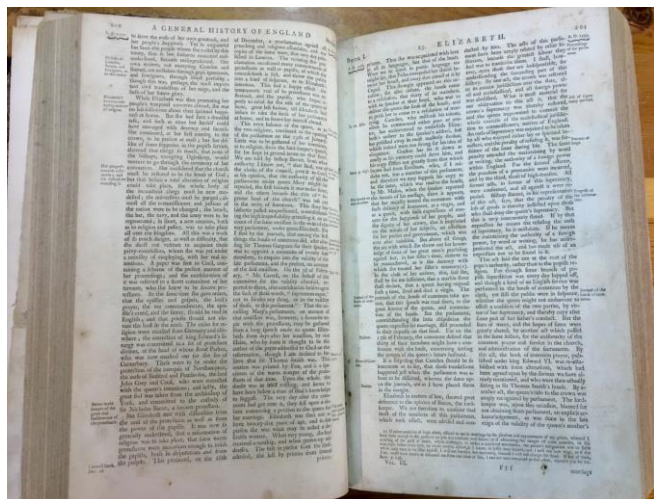
(56) Vol.III - more extensive dampstaining, p.711



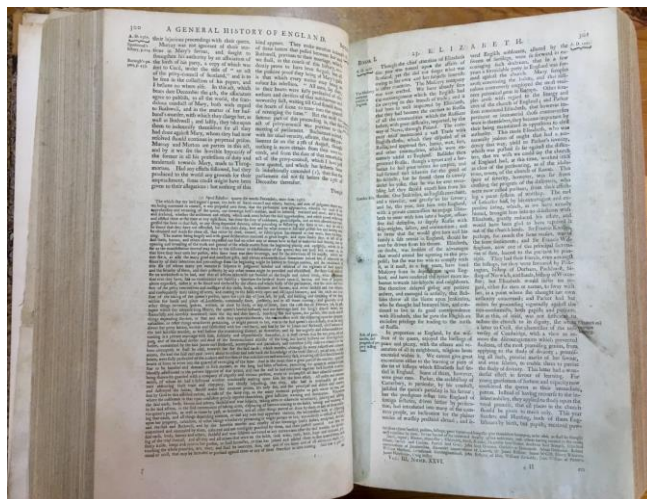
(57) Vol.III - damage/soiling, final index leaf



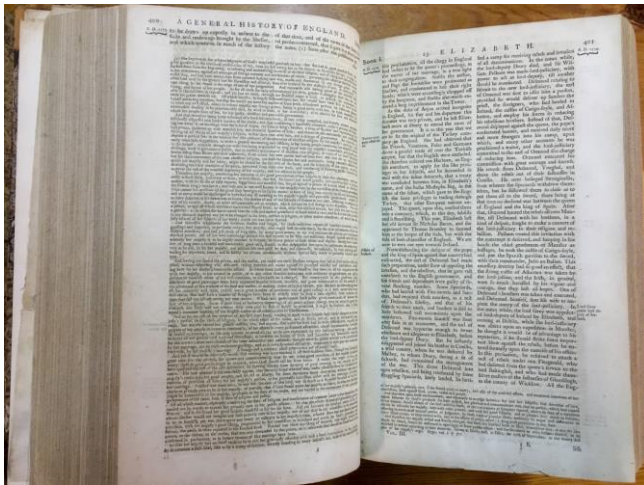
(58) Vol.III - textblock example (100-101)



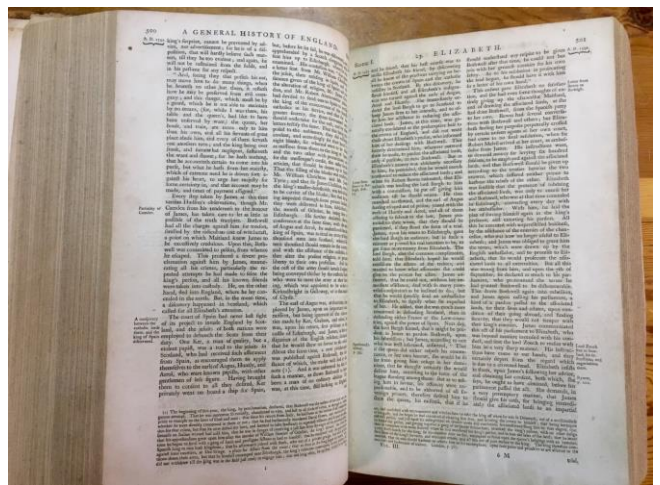
(59) Vol.III - textblock example (200-201)



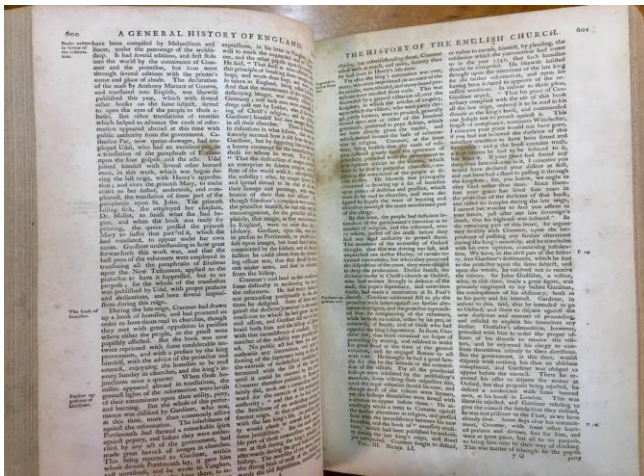
(60) Vol.III - textblock example (300-301)



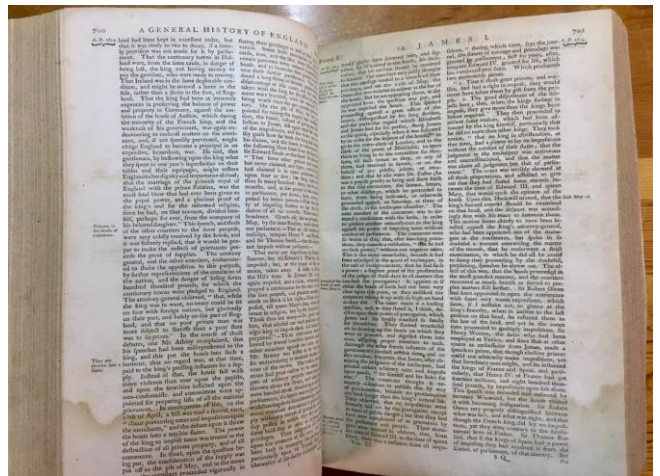
(61) Vol.III - textblock example (400-401)



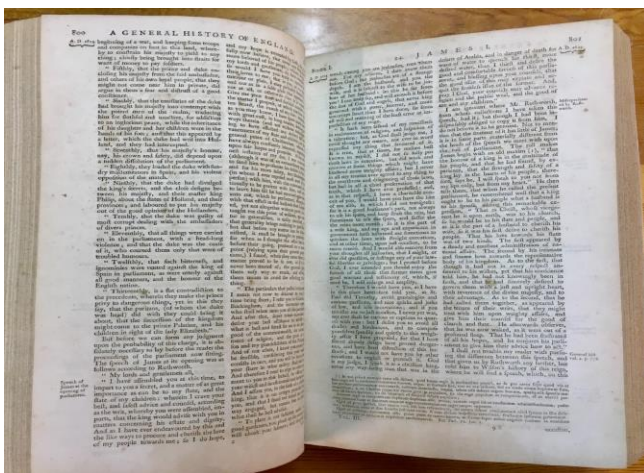
(62) Vol.III - textblock example (500-501)



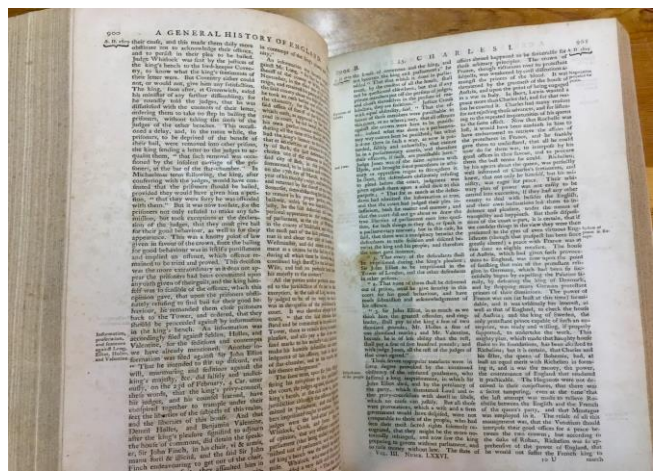
(63) Vol.III - textblock example (600-601)



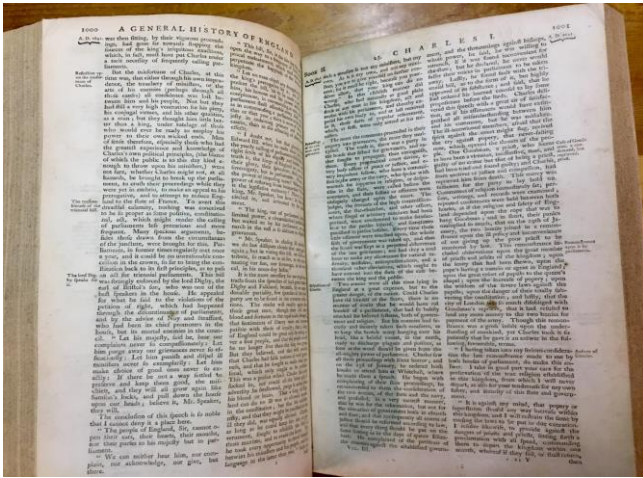
(64) Vol.III - textblock example (700-701)



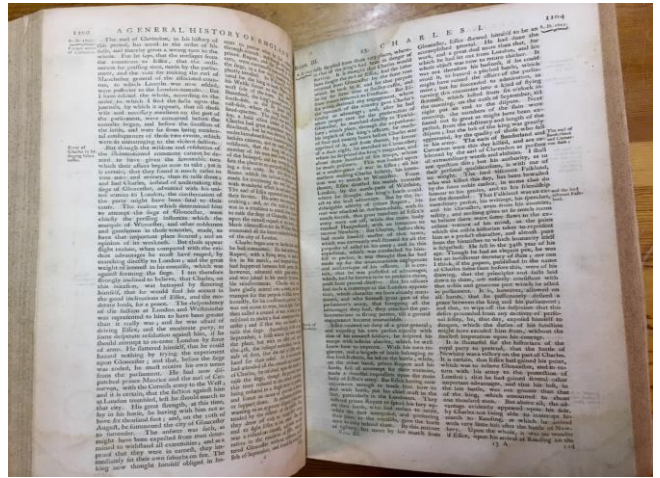
(65) Vol.III - textblock example (800-801)



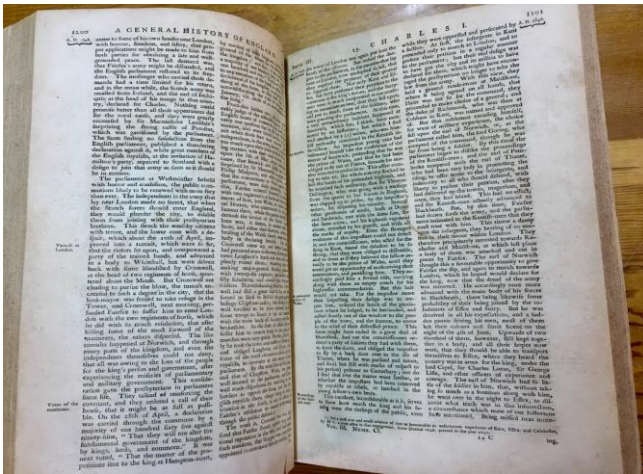
(66) Vol.III - textblock example (900-901)



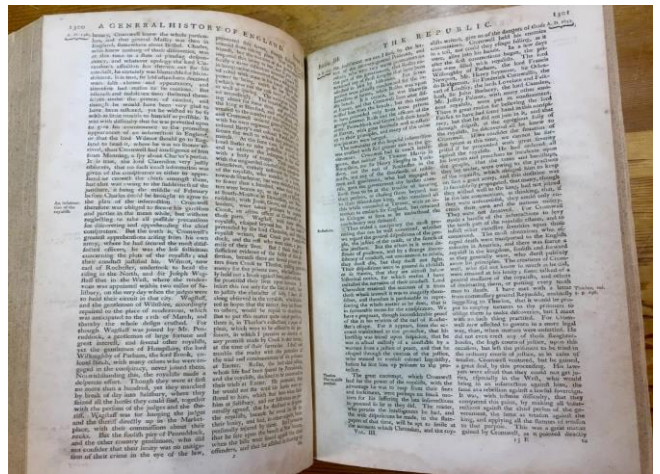
(67) Vol.III - textblock example (1000-1001)



(68) Vol.III - textblock example (1100-1101)



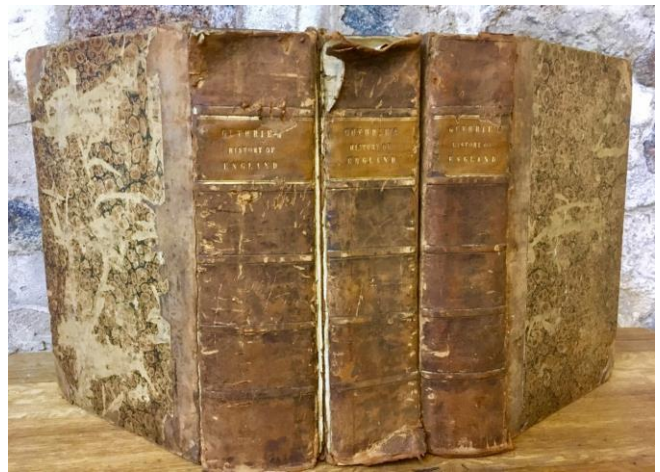
(69) Vol.III - textblock example (1200-1201)



(70) Vol.III - textblock example (1300-1301)

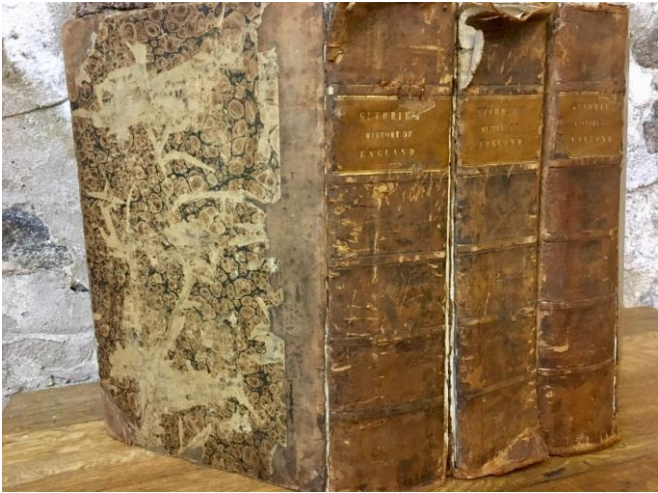


(71) Vol.III – detached boards



(72) Set – Binding (1)

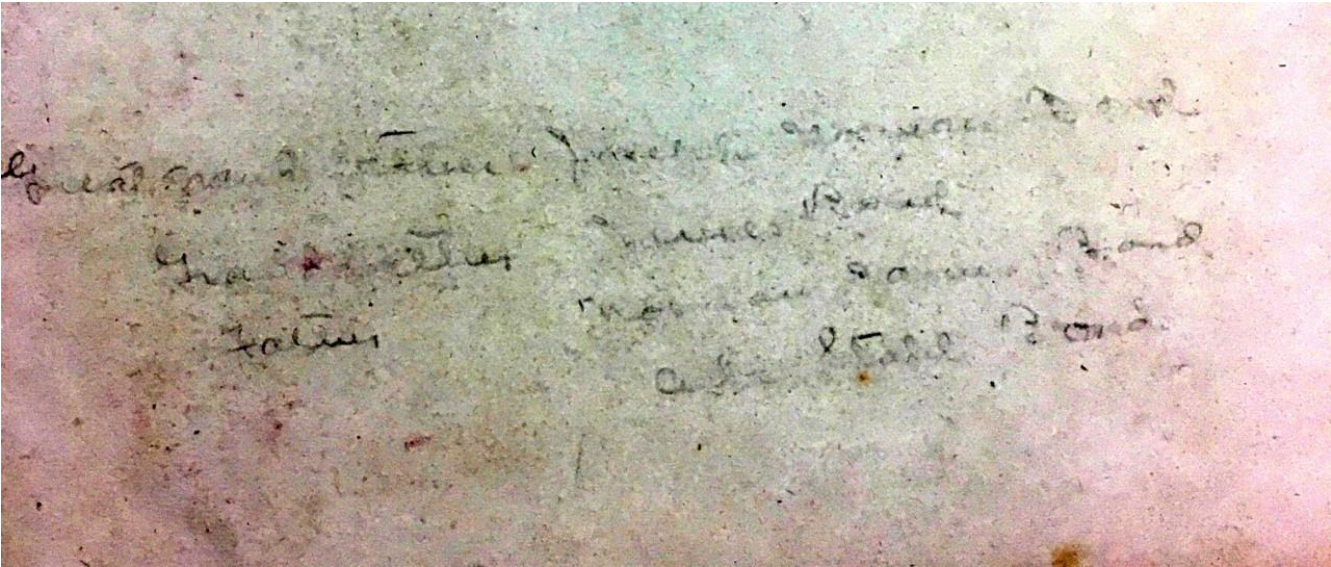




(73) Set - Binding (2)



(74) Set – Binding (3)



(75) Genealogical information on Vol.III ffep [digitally enhanced]