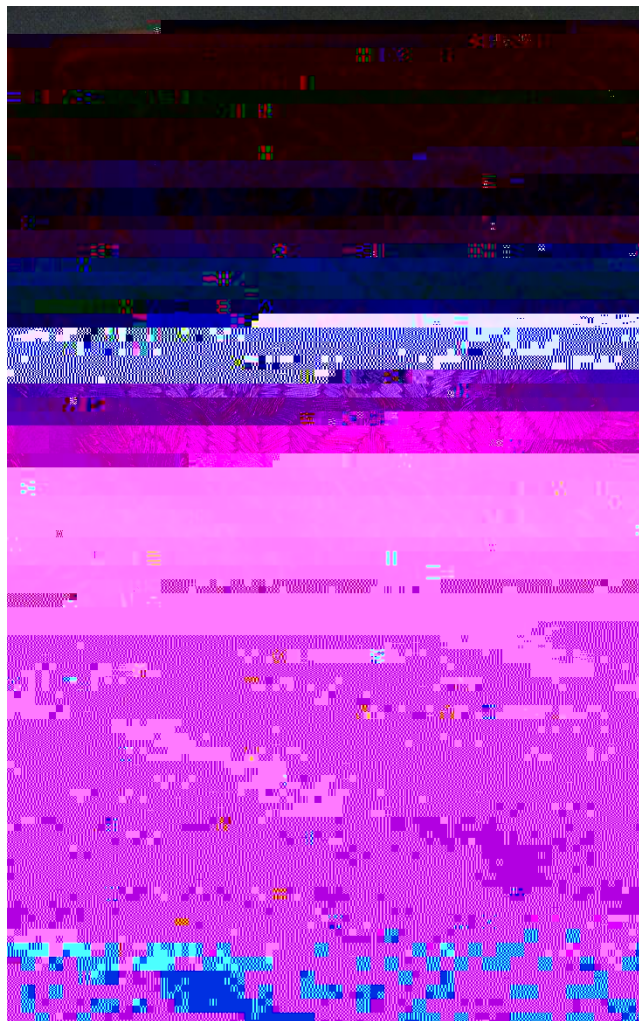


'A very unusual binding': A Remarkable Julius Caesar in New College Library

New College Library is fortunate to possess many highly notable items among its collections, from spectacular medieval illuminated manuscripts to rare early printed books, from the papers of Sir Isaac Newton to first editions of the novels of Jane Austen. It has been noted elsewhere that some of these have most elaborate bindings—*Einfältiges Bedenken, worauf eine christliche, im Worte Gottes gegründete Reformation . . . anzurichten sei*, for example, intended as a gift for King Henry VIII, has lavish gold-tooled roll, patterning, and lettering.¹

One item in the collections, however, is most remarkable and unusual. *Commentarii Caesaris* is an edition of Julius Caesar's commentary on the Gallic wars, *De bello Gallico*, edited by Filippo Beroaldo (1453–1505) and published in Lyon, France, in 1512. As such, the text of the book is, in all honesty, nothing special—versions of it abound and have been studied by students of the classics for, literally, centuries. What sets this copy apart, however, is the extraordinary attention paid to the binding.



New College Library, Oxford, BT1.127.9

The book features tanned red goatskin applied to the boards in a standard form. Into this, however, has been stitched an abundance of gold thread and silver wire, forming a decorative panel design on both the upper and lower boards. Small holes in the design on both boards indicate

¹ New College Library, Oxford, MS 136; see James Willoughby, '[The King's Eye](#)', *New College Notes* 6 (2015), no. 11, and Jason Morgan, '[Maria Regina Angliæ: A Gift for a Tudor Queen](#)', *New College Notes* 10 (2018), no. 4.

